

“The Second Palestinian Intifada”

Review of Ramzy Baroud's recent book

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Ramzy Baroud is a veteran Palestinian-American journalist and former Al-Jazeera producer. He also taught Mass Communication at Australia's Curtin University of Technology and is the founder and Editor-in-Chief of the Palestine Chronicle, a vital resource for information on Israel/Palestine and much more.

Baroud is an international media veteran. He publishes many articles, commentaries and short stories, is a frequent radio and television guest, and has been a guest speaker at top universities around the country and abroad. He was also once guest speaker at the British House of Commons.

Baroud published his first book of Arabic poetry at age 18 and has since written two others – “Searching Jenin: Eyewitness Accounts of the Israeli Invasion” and “The Second Palestinian Intifada” and subject of this review.

Baroud is well-qualified for his task. He was born and raised in a Gaza refugee camp and saw how Israeli soldiers repressed and humiliated young Palestinians like himself – “forcing (them) to their knees....and threatening to beat them if they did not spit upon a photo of Yasser Arafat.” They refused to insult his image even under threat, and “would endure pain and injury, but would say nothing.” They’ve taken plenty, and it’s unrelenting.

Baroud’s book is poignant and masterful. It blends his personal experience with a gripping narrative of his peoples’ struggle for justice. It’s about the strong against the weak, war, repression, displacement, massacres, targeted assassinations, and yet Palestinians resisted throughout the painful Second Intifada years. Baroud’s book was published in 2006. His timeline is from September 29, 2001 (the Intifada’s onset) through September 29, 2005. The Uprising ended, but the struggle continues.

Forward and Introduction

Two introductory sections precede the Intifada years that Baroud recounts. The first is by Kathleen and Bill Christison. They both formerly worked for CIA. Kathleen resigned after 16 years service. Bill retired after 28 years. Over time, their views ideologically changed, and both husband and wife are now vocal Israeli critics.

They reflect about Baroud’s grandfather. He was a Beit Daras village refugee, who lived in a Gaza camp for 40 years until his death hoping one day he’d return to his home. It was lost in the 1947-49 Nakba, an old man’s dream proved fruitless, and it “symbolizes....the tragedy of the Palestinian people and their great strength.”

For decades, Zionists tried to ignore the historical record, delegitimize Palestinian claims to their land, dehumanize and remove them from more of it, crush their spirit, seize their land, destroy their homes, and erase their existence. Yet a proud people persist. The Christians refer to their “great strength: their resilience and remarkable endurance (despite being) ignored, exiled, repeatedly dispossessed, (viciously) oppressed, occasionally massacred,” yet their struggle for liberation continues.

Jennifer Loewenstein is a political activist and University of Wisconsin Associate Director of the Middle East Studies Program. She added her reflections in an introductory section. From her travels to Occupied Palestine, she wrote of her experience – getting through checkpoints, for her as an American Jew, what it’s like for Palestinian Arabs, how demeaning and punishing it is, how Israelis control the Occupied Territories, and how they take full advantage to dismember “Palestinian culture and society....”

She describes how Israeli settlers live compared to their Palestinian neighbors – “neatly packed housing units....cheerfully clean, with an assortment of modern businesses available to (their) residents.” Some homes have swimming pools, “all of them (have) small, green gardens,” streets are lined with “flowers, glossy green shrubs, and well-tended trees.”

In contrast, across the West Bank and Gaza (before the disengagement), “poor Arab villages (are) huddled together in valleys overlooked by hilltop settlements” on the choicest land. In most cases, they’re “encircled by....IDF military outposts with....watchtowers, barbed wire fences, jeep patrols....scores of entrapping checkpoints” and for-Jews only roads. Big cities are separated from smaller ones, which, in turn, are “cut off from villages....” They, in turn, are detached from farmland, water, businesses, schools, clinics and “access to the outside world.”

Under these conditions, Palestinians are viciously confronted. They’re vilified as “militants, gunmen and insurgents.” These are code words for “terrorists,” and the spring 2002 “Operation Defensive Shield” was one of many assaults against them. Israeli forces rampaged through Ramallah. They destroyed civic institutions and NGO records; ransacked buildings and homes; randomly smashed furniture and appliances; scrawled graffiti on walls; covered floors with food, drink, mud, urine, feces, and other type trash; removed computer hard drives; then smashed the equipment beyond repair.

It wasn’t enough. They wrecked everything in sight – burning, shredding and at times shooting at photos, posters and pictures on walls. They vandalized radio and TV stations, banks, schools, hospitals, clinics, government facilities and cultural centers. In the end, they justified their actions as “a necessary part of the ‘war on terror.’ “

This was a single instance of what Israelis inflict willfully, wantonly, viciously, and randomly throughout the Occupied Territories. All the while, world community support is firm, while Palestinian self-defense is called terrorism. Both sides are urged to show restraint as if the struggle were between equal adversaries.

Nonetheless, in spite of everything Israel unleashes, the dream of a liberated Palestine remains strong. That’s the goal in spite of continued repression, Oslo’s betrayal, fiasco at Camp David in 2000, decades of built up frustration, and Hizbollah’s forcing Israel’s May 2000 South Lebanon withdrawal remains inspiring. It sowed the seeds of the Second Intifada. Anger and discontent were building, then erupted in a popular uprising on September 29, 2000. Ariel Sharon provoked it by “visiting” the Haram al-Sharif (the Noble

Sanctuary) the previous day. Israel responded harshly, a cycle of resistance and retaliation followed, and the struggle continued ever since. Baroud recounts its nominal five year period.

He begins by stating that it “will be etched in history as an era in which a major shift in the rules of the game occurred.” It was fueled by:

- decades of continued, repressive occupation;

- desperate young people in frustration voluntarily blowing themselves up; their resistance and defiance is called “terrorism;” Palestinians call them heroic; Baroud urges Palestinians to resist targeting civilians regardless of how Israel acts; he believes it’s vital to seize a higher ground, maintain moral values, and confine resistance to self-defense and targeting an illegal occupation;

- the construction of the 721 kilometer Separation Wall on confiscated Palestinian land; the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled it illegal and ordered it be removed; Israel ignored the ruling and continues to build its unfinished parts; its consequences have been devastating; Palestinians have been cut off from work, schools, medical facilities, and their community life is seriously impaired; farmers are separated from their land; it’s an act of land seizure and collective punishment; and

- a decades-long struggle now “an eternal divide between two peoples,” and its gulf continues to widen.

Baroud was in high school when the First Intifada erupted in December 1987. In spite of it, residents of his Gaza refugee camp “were consumed with....other more” daily concerns: “would they eat today, would they find clean water, would they seize their long-awaited freedom?” Palestinians took to the streets, and Baroud joined them in their chants. He also began to write with poetry his earliest efforts. They evolved into chants, were “published” on Gaza refugee camp walls, and there they stayed.

Baroud was studying in America when the Second Intifada began. Like the first one, Palestinians were unfairly blamed and condemned by a media as one-sided as the nations they report from. Baroud confronts them, and his book and writings are his “contribution” to the mostly neglected Second Uprising narrative and the Palestinian struggle overall.

He has no political affiliation and intends it solely as an independent view. His aim is direct and forthright - to represent and report on “the same principles espoused by countless (numbers of Palestinians) in small and over-crowded refugee camps where freedom is proudly cherished over life.” Without comment, his book is dedicated to them and everyone who supports his efforts to reveal what the mainstream continues to suppress.

Intifada - Year One (2000-01)

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is the main protagonist. He willfully incited violence before becoming Israel’s 11th Prime Minister in March 2001, and consider what Palestinians were up against.

He was brutish and violent from his earliest days as a platoon commander during Israel’s “War of Independence.” He later led the infamous Unit 101 that carried out vicious and criminal assaults against Palestinian civilians, including women and children.

As IDF's southern command head, he conducted a reign of terror against Gaza - indiscriminate killings, targeted assassinations, wanton destruction of hundreds of homes, displacement of thousands of civilians, and uprooting their lives. It got him called "the Bulldozer," and for all of it he was never held to account.

In 1981, as defense minister, he led the infamous Lebanon attack. He bombed civilian populations, killed around 20,000 Lebanese, and oversaw what British journalist Robert Fisk called "one of the most shocking war crimes of the 20th century" - the Sabra and Shatila massacres of about 3000 men, women, children and infants in a 62 hour proxy Phalange militia force rampage.

He always opposed peace. He voted against the 1979 treaty with Egypt, the southern Lebanon withdrawal in 1985, the 1991 Madrid peace conference, the Knesset 1993 Oslo agreement plenum vote, the Hebron 1997 agreement, and he abstained from voting on peace with Jordan in 1994.

He was at it again on September 28, 2000 prior to becoming Prime Minister. Accompanied by over 1000 Israeli troops and police, he staged a provocative (photo-op) visit to Islam's third holiest site - the Haram al-Sharif sacred shrine and Al-Aqsa Mosque. It ignited "uncontainable violence" and Second Intifada the following day.

Baroud suggests that the Second Uprising may have been "rooted in south Lebanon." After years of "empty promises, meaningless summits and equally barren accords," Palestinians were at a "numbing impasse." To the north, things were much different. After a decade of occupation, a few hundred Hizbollah fighters defeated the IDF, forced their withdrawal in May 2000, then did it again in summer 2006 (beyond Baroud's timeline).

It shook the notion of IDF invincibility, made its commanders want to regain their machismo, emboldened Palestinians to resist, and ignited the events that followed. A political element is important as well - the failed Camp David II July 2000 talks. They were all take and no give. Clinton, Arafat and Barak were the protagonists. The major media played up Barak's "generous offer," Arafat spurning peace, with no mention that Israel presented nothing in writing and had no documents or maps.

Barak presented a take it or leave it betrayal, no different than similar past ones. Palestinians were offered nothing in return for renouncing armed struggle, recognizing Israel's right to exist, leaving unresolved issues for later, and agreeing to be Israel's enforcer and have the West Bank divided into four isolated cantons surrounded by expanding Israeli settlements on the Territory's choicest land. Arafat had to reject it and was blamed for not being a serious peace partner. It later sealed his fate.

In the meantime, Barak fortified settlements, sent in more military forces, set the stage for September 2000, and Sharon took full advantage as explained above. The majority of Israelis approved and elected him Prime Minister on February 6, 2001 with the Intifada already underway.

In his new capacity, Sharon escalated things further by "unleash(ing) a bloody onslaught on the disadvantaged, disappointed, and fed-up Palestinian masses...." Khan Yunis was one of his first targets. Its refugee camp houses 60,000, it's one of the most crowded places on earth, its homes are makeshift, the residents are impoverished, garbage is everywhere, and human misery and despair are very real for these long-suffering people.

Earlier, the IDF attacked them in March 1956 killing 275 civilians in one night. It emboldened the camp's resistance, made it a target during the First Intifada, dozens were killed, thousands injured, maimed and arrested, yet survivors continued to resist. It became a target again during the Second Uprising with a horrific toll on the people. IDF forces savagely attacked, unknown chemical agents were used, missiles and helicopter gunships were unleashed, bulldozers destroyed homes, many were killed and wounded, and when it ended an entire neighborhood was obliterated. The Palestinian Authority (PA) couldn't intervene, appealed for outside help, but had to stand by helpless when none came.

Targeted assassinations are also ignored. They violate international law, but not according to Israel's High Court of Justice. In December 2006 (beyond Baroud's timeline), it ruled that these killings aren't in violation, and that each one must be evaluated on its own merit. This is what passes for justice in a nation that affords it only to Jews. It's also one that systematically kills, starves and brutalizes an entire people. It collectively punishes them, gets full western backing, huge US funding, and one-sided media support without exception. Criticizing Israel is the most taboo of all issues. Journalists who dare can count on a very short career.

Instead they go along to get along and label victims terrorists with clever code words like "militants" and "gunmen." Baroud knows them well, the overwhelming force they face, and how ruthlessly it's unleashed. He calls resistance fighters: "dedicated and honest individuals, men and women (and children) who represent large segments of Palestinian society with its wide spectrum of political and ideological affiliations." They embrace "freedom, liberty, and human rights." They show courage and will, have endured for six decades, survived every Israeli harsh tactic, won't ever surrender, so the "free" world views them as "terrorists."

It doesn't matter how often Israel violates international law, how many UN resolutions it ignores, or that it disdains the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling against the Separation Wall. With western backing against a disenfranchised people, it gets free reign, and it became easier post-9/11. Sharon took full advantage.

Baroud cites lessons from the Intifada's first year:

— "audacious....institutionalized violence," but even worse

— Israeli Knesset legislation "in willful and blatant violation of international law."

In place of Geneva and Nuremberg, Sharon's model is Machiavelli's "The Prince:"

— ruthlessly seizing power (in Sharon's case manipulating public opinion to get it);

— justifying any actions to keep it;

— believing a stable state is the only morality;

— people are of no consequence;

— it's best to be feared and loved but if can't have both fear works best;

— using the law to institutionalize repression;

- having a strong military to enforce it;
- today a supportive media as well;
- the enemy must be portrayed as criminals, savages, terrorists; they're wicked; we're righteous;
- mass-killings and imprisonments, repression, occupation, land seizures and total disregard for civil and human rights are acceptable ways to govern;
- then convince the world, you're the victim acting in self-defense.

Intifada Year Two (2002)

The struggle continued and got world attention and International Solidarity Movement (ISM) support. It's an August 2001-founded "Palestinian-led movement committed to resisting the Israeli occupation....using nonviolent, direct-action methods and principles." It provides "international protection and a voice....to nonviolently resist an overwhelming military occupation force."

Israel tolerates no opposition. It attacks its members - kills, wounds, imprisons and deports them. Yet, like Palestinians, they persist. They're volunteers from around the world, coming to the Occupied Territories (OPT), risking their lives, "laying down before tanks, breaking curfews, (acting as) human shields," and defying an illegal occupation. The UN gives them no legitimacy, and Israel calls them "anti-Israeli radicals."

Its anti-Palestinian jihad persists, and it came to a head in early April 2002 with the infamous Jenin refugee camp invasion. It's the home of 13,000 displaced Palestinians in the northern West Bank. The IDF cut off the camp and city from outside help; destroyed hundreds of buildings; buried people inside under rubble; cut off power and water; kept out food and essentials, including medical aid; and killed dozens of mostly civilian men, women and children.

With no outside help and little for self-defense, Palestinians resisted, and inflicted losses on the vaunted IDF. One Palestinian inside the camp on a cell phone with a dying battery reached Al-Jazeera television and said: "I just wanted to tell the proud people of the world not to worry, we are resisting and will fight to the last drop of blood." It's the price many there paid and keep paying as the struggle continues.

Throughout the ordeal, the West, US administration, Congress and dominant media react the same way - justifying Israeli actions and condemning "Palestinian terror."

A definition is in order, and noted scholar and activist Edward Ahmad offered one a decade ago. He identified five types of terrorism:

- crimes of any sort, individual or organized;
- pathology (by the disturbed) who "want the attention of the world" and may kill to get it;
- political by a private group;
- religious like Christian and Muslim killings during Papal crusades; Catholics killing

Protestants and the reverse in Northern Ireland; Sunnis and Shiites killing each other; any groups claiming God-inspired violence is justified; and by far the worst of the five types -

— state terrorism committed by nations against other states, groups, or individuals, including state-sponsored assassinations.

Individual one-on-one violence makes headlines and is condemned. So is individual self-defense and retaliation against state repression; but when Israel or America commit state terror, it's called self-defense; when they wage aggressive wars, they're called liberating one.

When Palestinians demand international law protection, they're denied and ignored. When, in frustration, they blow themselves up in a crowd of Israelis, no one understands, they're condemned as "terrorists" and are called "enemies of peace." Who listens to how to end this - stop attacking them, and they'll have no reason to retaliate.

Instead, Israel commits more state terrorism, calls it part of America's "war on terror," and Baroud puts it this way: "Fighting terror is the new trend." It so "aggressive, powerful countries (can) crush weaker foes, deprive them of freedom (and keep) blam(ing) them for all the woes of the world." We're "expected to believe (that) Israel is defending itself as though Palestinians....occup(ied) Israeli territories, besiege(d) Israeli people, bl(ew) up their homes, st(ole) their land, and gun(ned) down their children." We're supposed to hate the victim and praise the powerful. "How long will we be blinded by empty slogans," truth reversal, "unexplained hatred, and pretentious condemnations?"

Intifada Year Three (2003)

Israeli killings and targeted assassinations escalated in the third Intifada year. Retaliatory suicide bombings followed, and the cycle of violence begot still more. It claimed the lives of two of Baroud's cousins. They were PA Bureij refugee camp police officers who were celebrating the Eid al-Fitr feast when they were killed. Israeli tanks invaded the camp. The two men got their rifles to face heavy armor. They fought so others could flee, then died from a shell explosion they couldn't avoid.

Bureij is "ingrained in (Baroud's) mind." It was his mother's first refugee home and his grandmother's. Now it's special because his cousins died there and for their valor were branded "militants" - meaning "terrorists."

Baroud calls the Second Intifada "uniquely different" from the first one. Efforts from 1987 to 1993 were largely symbolic. The Second Uprising used new methods and went beyond "the traditional stone-throwing (and sling shots) of the past." Armed resistance was more significant and legitimate than ever, and international law supports it. It clearly gives sovereign states the right to self-defense under Article 51 of the UN Charter. What about individuals and groups?

The General Assembly's 1965 20th session affirmed it for the first time. It recognized "the legitimacy of struggle by the people under colonial rule to exercise their rights to self-determination and independence." It also urged "all States to provide material and moral assistance to the national liberation movements in colonial territories." In 1974, the General Assembly passed Resolution 3236. It fully and properly recognizes collective Palestinian rights and UN Charter self-determination affirmation. It also granted their right to national

independence, sovereignty, and right to return to their homes.

The General Assembly went further in 1975. Its Resolution 3375 recognized the PLO as a liberation movement and its right to represent its people under Resolution 3236. Additional Palestinian support came from the 1977 Geneva Convention Protocol I (Act 1 C4). It declared that armed struggle may be used as a last resort to exercise the right of self-determination. These measures affirmed the Second Uprising's legitimacy, now with strong international law backing it.

Year three also saw the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) appoint Mahmoud Abbas as Prime Minister. An intense debate followed as it represented Yasser Arafat's first challenge as PA President. Abbas' prominence was the result of two separate Palestinian movements – one wanting true reforms and democracy; the other purely political to forge “peace” with Israel using the US-devised “Road Map.” It caused a PA and Fatah split. One side refused to negotiate under military assaults and settlement expansions. Their leaders (including Marwan Barghouti) were either assassinated or arrested and imprisoned. Others still at large are wanted men.

Abbas represents the other side. He was an Oslo formulator, only “moderately corrupt,” and, in deference to Israel and Washington, insists that all violence end and Palestinians disarm. Even worse, he wanted negotiations to resume with a sweetener – his willingness to “compromise” (read surrender) on fundamental issues that ignited armed struggle in the past. The Sharon government loved Abbas because he'd sell out his people for his own self-interest. He was very unpopular as a result, and only an Israeli-rigged election made him PA President later on. More on that below.

On August 6, Palestinian factions concluded a meeting with Abbas. Although described as positive, it was full of grievances. Hamas, Islamic Jihad and others agreed to a three month “hudna” (ceasefire) starting June 29 on condition Israel reciprocate. Palestinians honored its commitment, but Israelis didn't and claimed it had no obligation to do it. As a result, killings, assassinations, land seizures, arrests and more incitement followed as before. Washington backs everything Israel does, the ceasefire wouldn't last, and another peace process was stillborn.

Frustration led to rage with two August 12 bombings in Israel after a multi-week one-sided lull. Sharon's position was clear. He ignored the ceasefire, demanded unconditional surrender and insisted resistance groups be disbanded. On top of it, throughout his life, he threw all his weight against a peace he never wanted and wouldn't accept. For decades (and most notably under George Bush), Washington has the same design and showed it repeatedly in UN Security Council vetoes of everything unfavorable to Israel. In the eyes of many independent observers, the US is a “dishonest broker and a biased party (with no) genuine interest in (Middle East) peace and stability.”

At the same time, rumors about an Arafat-Abbas “power struggle” emerged. It was hard to imagine with the long-time Palestinian leader hugely popular and convincingly elected. In contrast, Abbas had a rock-bottom 3% approval rating so where was the disagreement. It was over differing visions. Abbas favored nonviolence and surrender while Arafat opposed suicide bombings but knew Israeli violence demanded resistance.

In the eyes of Tel Aviv and Washington, it made him persona non grata with Abbas a preferred safe alternative. He was even more conciliatory by vowing to crack down on

Palestinian resistance, step up security, and pretty much tow the Israeli line. The plan ahead was clear – remove Arafat and replace him with a reliable Abbas.

It was a bad time for Palestinians to lose one of their iconic best. Baroud learned of it in a troubling email – “Edward Said passed away this morning.” He’d suffered for years and finally succumbed to a decade-long battle with leukemia. Baroud describes him like many other admirers, including this reviewer: He “stood for everything that is virtuous. His moral stance was even more powerful than (his) essays, books, and music (as critic and consummate performer)....”

“He was an extraordinary intellectual....thoughtful (and) inimitable. And because of that, he was a target for those who wish to silence (powerful voices) of truth.” Said was never silent or compromising in his beliefs or virtue. As a Palestinian, he was denied the right to live freely in his homeland. He spent his life instead teaching, writing, speaking forcefully and traveling the world to “convey the pain of his people (like no) intellectual” before him had done. No “wonder he....was adored by (his) people (and) detested by the” powerful he opposed. He died on September 25, 2003. He’s sorely missed.

Others now carry on in his place and Baroud is one of them. He notes that the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights may work in some places but in others, like Occupied Palestine, it’s just “ink on paper.” Nonetheless, it endorses the notion that we’re all “born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Its Article 3 declares: “Every one has the right to life, liberty and security of person.” Article 4 says: “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude,” and under Article 6 “Every one has the right to recognition everywhere before the law.”

Palestinians enjoy none of these and other basic human rights. They’re falsely imprisoned and tortured; viciously attacked and killed; surrounded, harassed and humiliated; ethnically cleansed from their land; stripped of their homes and crops; denied their livelihoods and right of free movement; forced to endure a brutalizing occupation; and yet, on their own and without aid, they’re united in their decades-long liberating struggle. “Why,” asked Said? “Because (their cause is) just..noble (and) a moral quest for equality and human rights” everyone deserves.

In Intifada year three, Palestinians were sacrificed on the alter of continued Israeli viciousness. Attacks against them increased, they resisted as international law allows, media vilification followed, and Baroud reflects what most of them believe: that “the will of the people might some day prevail over tyranny and occupation. And it will, of this I am certain.”

Intifada Year Four (2004)

The new year brought more pain and agony as well as “profound changes (and) insurmountable challenges.” Hundreds of Palestinians died, countless others kept suffering, and Sharon’s Separation Wall “became a reality” in spite of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling it illegal in July.

Targeted assassinations continued as well. Khalil al-Zabin, a 59-year old Palestinian journalist was gunned down outside his Gaza office in March. He was a close Arafat advisor, ran a newspaper, was funded by the PA, and “was entrusted with the complex and controversial subject of human rights.”

Later in the month, Israelis targeted Hamas' spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. The IDF murdered him while he was returning from early morning prayer at a Gaza mosque. He was old, paralyzed, confined to a wheelchair, and no match for an Israeli missile that killed him and nine others.

Less than a month later, Israel assassinated Dr. Abdelaziz Rantisi, a top Hamas leader. Yassin's importance was spiritual, and he was respected and cherished for his role. Rantisi, on the other hand, was a hands-on political operative. Removing him was part of Israel's scheme to destroy Hamas' infrastructure and render it ineffective. More killings followed against even moderate leaders, Israel's reign of terror was relentless, it flagrantly violates international law, and Baroud called the elimination of resistance leaders "a counter-productive military strategy."

Gaza's history since the 1970s shows why. After the 1967 occupation, Palestinians sought alternative strategies. Armed struggle surged in the 1970s, Gaza was its hub, extreme poverty and overcrowding fueled it, and proximity to Egypt aided it at a time Palestinians "were determined to become the defenders of their own plight...."

Israel's response was savage, and it took its toll. Almost all resistance members were killed, imprisoned or forced into exile. A period of "hibernation" followed. Israel then invaded Lebanon in 1982, PLO factions were dispersed, and "homegrown resistance" reborn. It led to the 1987 Uprising - the First Intifada, a popular revolt against a repressive occupation. It also gave birth to Hamas. It became an integral part of Gaza, a full-fledged political and military force and much more. It provided essential services Gazans lacked - clinics, universities, vast charity networks, even daycare centers. It's little wonder it drew support it now enjoys.

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, Palestinian resistance changed. It fostered solidarity, and unlike in the 1970s "the killing of one resistance fighter (encouraged) ten others (to) join the struggle." For Israel, it was disastrous. Eliminating old leaders gave rise to new equally effective ones. It kept Israelis busy assassinating them, one by one, and by assaults on Palestinian towns taking scores.

A May 14 Rafah attack was one of many. It lasted a week and claimed 40 mostly civilian lives along with many more elsewhere in Gaza. Targeted assassinations continued as well. Sharon kept murdering with impunity with plenty of US funding, weapons and political support. Bush administration officials also rejected the ICJ ruling against the Separation Wall. They called the Court an "(in)appropriate forum to resolve a political issue (that should) specifically (be left to) the road map."

As for the Palestinians, the ruling reaffirmed their right to resist with full World Court backing. It also exposed the "PA's bankrupt approach" - localizing the Palestinian struggle instead of pursuing it within a regional and international context. In addition, it led to a PLC report and its galling evidence of corruption. It revealed that Palestinian companies had been smuggling and selling Israel (discounted) cement to speed up the Wall's construction, and some PA ministers were involved in the scheme.

Meanwhile political crises affected the PA. Israel battered Arafat's Ramallah headquarters, confined him inside it, and co-opted his prime minister, Ahmed Oorei, to pressure him. For a while crisis was averted, but Israeli efforts persisted - to force out an unwanted leader and replace him with a more "moderate" one.

At a time prospects looked grim, Israel killed 140 mostly civilian men, women and children in a devastating Gaza raid. The media championed it, said Arafat orchestrated the Uprising, called him no partner for peace, and vilified him for turning down Barak's "generous (Camp David 2000) offer."

Another element was Sharon's "Disengagement Plan" that was all political subterfuge and no gracious gesture. Washington referred to his "painful concessions." It was all a sham, and close Sharon advisor Dov Weisglass explained it to Haaretz. He said the scheme was to "freeze" the peace process, assure 80% of West Bank settlements remain unaffected, erase any chance for an independent Palestinian state, and do it all with Washington's blessing and funding. He added that this also shuts down discussion of the right of return, borders and Jerusalem. In other words, it was all win for Israel and more defeat for Palestinians with Gaza even after "disengagement" staying occupied and reentered or attacked militarily at Israel's discretion.

Baroud closes out the year with the passing of Arafat. He took ill in his compound, there's strong evidence Israel poisoned him, and his personal physician (Dr. Ashraf Al Kurdi) believes it. He was flown to France on October 29 and died in Paris on November 11 at age 75.

Some suggested it ended an era, but Baroud believes that it's rash to represent the Palestinian struggle through the legacy of one man, even Yasser Arafat. Some called him autocratic, but they ignore his "political, cultural, and intellectual mix....his ability to mean many different things to....different people." Whatever his faults, he was an important figure who unified the Palestinian struggle and symbolized it. "But Palestinians are resilient," states Baroud. They'll learn "how to deal with life without Arafat and his mystique....the march to freedom would certainly carry on."

At the end of another painful year, Baroud remained hopeful and awaited the new year with his annual thought: "I pray that the coming year will bring peace and justice in our troubled world." He noted that "Onslaughts that were designed to ravish and destroy a land and its people were in fact creating unity and igniting an awakening among the forces of good all over the world."

The Fifth and Ending Intifada Year (2005)

No official announcement signaled its end, and talk at the time was of a Third Uprising because of a one-sided ceasefire. Presidential elections were scheduled for January with Hamas more concerned about parliamentary and municipal ones later on. Winning substantially would establish its popular legitimacy - politically as well as morally and religiously.

As Israel's presidential choice, Abbas was favored to win, and how could he lose the way Israel arranged it. He was safe and reliable, represented the status quo, and categorically opposed armed struggle. Baroud describes him as a man without vision and with "no meaningful alternative to armed resistance."

To assure he won big, "Israel resorted to its usual tactics of intimidating other candidates who dared" challenge their choice for the top PA job - a man more concerned about Israeli security than his own peoples' rights and wishes.

Dr. Mustafa Barghouti was his main opponent. Baroud calls him an “eloquent and dedicated physician and activist....He was never (involved in) corruption (and he provided) free medical services (for) tens of thousands of the poorest Palestinians.” He respected human rights, believed in democracy and national unity, and was “one of the most influential founders and leaders in the democratic opposition movement.”

Those aren't attributes Israel prefers, so he was targeted with a vengeance for having them. While campaigning, IDF soldiers beat him at checkpoints, choked him with his necktie, and inflicted wounds on his hands, foot and nose. He and other candidates were arrested repeatedly, harassed and beaten, demeaned in the media, and Israel called it democracy.

Imagine the outrage if this happened in America or any western country. It got scant notice in Occupied Palestine and Israel where the election was reduced to charade, and its outcome preordained. Abbas, of course, won. Israel got its puppet, and Palestinians were again betrayed.

The February Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt) summit followed. Western leaders hailed its success. Once again, Palestinians got nothing. Concluding pro forma statements promised continued efforts to pursue the Road Map, and a formal Intifada end was declared.

Baroud chose to defer judgment on the outcome and examine the Second Uprising in a historical context. He noted how “Israeli governments....mastered the technique of pushing Palestinians to the brink,” punishing them collectively, seizing their land, and destroying their homes and lives. Resistance naturally followed. The First and Second Uprisings reflected the aspirations of most Palestinians – “a truly sovereign Palestinian state in all territories illegally occupied...in 1967.” After decades of abuse and disappointment, they're willing to sacrifice 78% of historic Palestine and settle for the remaining (OPT) 22%.

Israel, however, rejects even these modest demands. Its notion of peace is to “drive Palestinians out of their land....expand (illegal) settlements....expropriate large (West Bank) chunks as ‘security zones,’ and further alienate and completely fence off Occupied East Jerusalem.”

In 2000, Israel's scheme got sidetracked for a time. Arafat refused any further sacrifice, and the Second Intifada erupted. After Arafat's 2004 death, Sharm el-Sheikh followed and with it revived Israeli hopes. Palestinians were told to “overcome their violent tendencies,” assure Israel gets the security it “rightfully needs and deserves.” The term “occupation” was never mentioned. No Palestinian grievances were addressed. Settlements expansions would continue, the right of return was a non-starter, occupation remained, seizing all of East Jerusalem is planned, unconditional Palestinian surrender is demanded, and all that matters is what Israel wants.

Abbas is the perfect “peace partner.” But Hamas in Gaza became credible after its December 2004 electoral success. Baroud called it a “dramatic shift in the way the movement was perceived nationally and internationally.” The defining event was Arafat's passing. It “shifted the political momentum in (their) favor.” Fatah was deeply corrupted and without its leader thrown into “structural and organizational mayhem.” Hamas won control of over one-third of OPT municipal seats, including most major cities. It signaled what would soon follow.

Palestinians view Hamas as credible – for its social services and confronting Israel militarily.

Its unilateral ceasefire commitment, in spite of repeated Israeli violations, also enhanced its reputation. Before its January 2006 stunner, British diplomats met with Hamas twice and EU officials did it “every 10 days to two weeks,” according to a senior Hamas member. Reports were that Israel was “fuming” about it and the Foreign Ministry said “Europeans should be strengthening ‘moderate’ Palestinians and not appeasing the ‘extremists.’ ” Israel applies that designation to anyone opposing its OPT agenda or who confronts its worst abuses, let alone the way Hamas does.

Post-“disengagement,” Gaza remained occupied, but talks, nonetheless, proceeded on core Palestinian issues – border crossings, free movement, the airport, seaport, and Israel’s stranglehold on the OPT economy. After the 1967 occupation, Israel controlled border crossings into Egypt and Jordan. The economic impact was devastating.

Both countries offered Palestinian professionals employment that could lead to better opportunities in oil-rich Arab states. In addition, income earned abroad was sent home, and needy families relied on it.

With border crossings controlled, traffic across them halted, so Palestinians had to depend on Israel for relief. Its economy is vibrant, jobs plentiful during good economic times, and Israeli employers exploited a vulnerable labor pool. With no other option available, Palestinians were easy pickings. They became part of Israel’s cheap labor force, were forced to work “under harsh and even inhumane conditions,” accept meager compensation, and be offered no benefits like health care, pensions, or insurance covering personal injury. It was the beginning of a “historic....economic dependency” that was all downhill from there.

It’s the reason Oslo was welcomed and each successive engagement to address needs previous ones hadn’t met. With Israel controlling the process and having one-sided western support, outcomes each time were predictable – hopes again dashed, talk only empty rhetoric, promises made and then broken, and no end to an occupation and all its harshness. Israel wanted PA partners for one purpose – as “prison guards” for the Territories so forget about peace and concessions.

Conflict is planned, a “high level of chaos” assured, and the idea is to show that Palestinians are “innately lawless and irresponsible” to justify continued crackdowns and occupation for a people not ready for prime time on their own.

The Second Uprising marked its fifth anniversary on September 29. The cost in bloodshed was huge, the suffering immense, and there was nothing to show for the sacrifice as the struggle entered “one of its most consequential challenges yet.”

Epilogue

Baroud symbolizes the spirit of his people. It’s magnificent and contagious. He reflects on “reality versus rhetoric.” In spite of decades of disappointment, “peace and justice movements (everywhere see) the Palestinian people as an icon of resistance....no other struggle in the world....symbolize(s so much) to so many people.” Palestinians are a “rallying point for the dispossessed and the aspiring underdog.”

Their reality – repression, occupation, suffering, isolation, anger, “packed prisons, ruined lives,” six decades of hopes raised and then shattered.

“Symbolic Palestine – the dream....for (the) long hijacked....reality.”

On December 26, 2005, barely months after the Second Uprising ended, a historic era did as well. Sharon suffered a stroke, sunk into coma, and some believe he's dead. The "Butcher of Beirut" is a brutish war criminal, but the US media extolled him. "Replacing the Irreplaceable" read one headline, and lots of others picked up on the theme to honor a "great statesman" whose crimes went unmentioned.

On January 25, 2006, one month later, Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections were held. Their outcome was stunning and historic. It was the second PLC election ever and a momentous event in Palestinian history as Hamas won in a landslide - 74 of the 132 seats at stake. Baroud explained it this way:

"...Palestinian voters were obviously fed up with the Israeli occupation, the US's dishonest role as a 'peacekeeper,' and the indefensible corruption of the Palestinian Authority." They chose Hamas for its "commitment to social services and corruption-free history...." The movement is the "antithesis" of Oslo's ills and betrayal. Palestinians voted for "unity, not exclusion."

The western response was harsh and predictable - no donor money to a government that won't acknowledge Israel's existence and is "dedicated to Israel's destruction." It was grossly hyperbolic and exaggerated, but easy to say when Hamas' response is silenced. It's also easy to ignore its exemplary unilateral ceasefire throughout most of 2005.

Baroud's book ended before the West's crackdown on Hamas began - before all outside aid was cut off, economic sanctions and embargo instituted, political isolation enforced, Israeli rule tightened, daily attacks increased, a Fatah insurgent force enlisted to confront the new government militarily, and then (since June 2007) a medieval siege imposed.

It's taken a horrific toll on the Territory and its people. They face isolation, repeated incursions, abductions, killings, targeted assassinations, and mostly against civilian men, women and children. Their power and fuel supplies were cut, essentials denied, the most inhumane punishments imposed, they continue to be at this writing, and the world community remains dismissive. They sanctified the siege, fully stick by Israel, uncompromisingly vilify Hamas, ignore its conciliatory efforts, so Palestinians continue to suffer and die.

Baroud covers it all on his Palestine Chronicle web site. It's a vital resource for what's happening in the Territories and much more. He calls the Palestinians a "force to be reckoned with," and ends his book with four thoughts:

— despite the Second Uprising's initial success, the PA reverted to its same failed approach; the Intifada's legacy is thus discredited;

— any resolution of the decades-long struggle must include the diaspora - the millions of scattered-around-the-world refugees and their right of return; international law guarantees it; so does UN Resolution 194;

— some issues are non-negotiable - the existence of Palestine for generations; resolution demands it be duly recognized; and a final important point -

— Palestinian resistance will continue; struggling for six decades proves it; in the face of intensified Israeli oppression it's resilient, and history's lesson is clear; ferment builds, then erupts; renewed Palestinian response is assured, and their struggle for "freedom, human

rights, and justice” will persist; more important, it’s unbeatable; ultimately, it’ll prevail.

In the meantime, Baroud lists the five-year Intifada toll at his book’s end. Citing multiple sources, it includes:

- 4166 Palestinian deaths, including 886 children and 271 women;
- 554 extra-judicial assassinations; 253 of them were bystanders;
- 3530 disabled or maimed;
- 8600 imprisoned, including 288 children and 115 women;
- 576 students killed, including 199 university-level ones and 32 teachers;
- another 4713 students injured and 1389 detained;
- 2,329,659 dunums of confiscated land;
- another 73,613 dunums of razed land plus 1,355,290 uprooted trees; and
- 7761 demolished homes and another 93,842 damaged.

This was a five-year toll. The six-decade holocaust is incalculable. It will take generations to heal and renew. For now, conditions continue to worsen. They can no longer be tolerated. In Israel’s 60th year, the world no longer can wait.

Ramzy Baroud is a frequent contributor to Global Research. [Global Research Articles by Ramzy Baroud](#)

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