

Gaza Aftermath: Progress in Palestine or Zionist stalemate?

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“Today, the first issue of the world of Islam is the issue of Gaza. Perhaps, it can be said that this issue is the first issue of humanity.”

— Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei¹

The 51-day terror tirade on Gaza executed by the Israeli entity has claimed over 2,100 lives, wounded over 10,000,² left over 100,000 homeless³ and inflicted \$4.4 billion in damage to infrastructure that may take up to \$7.8 billion and 20 years to rebuild.⁴ After bombing Gaza with 20,000 tons of explosives causing vast areas of massive destruction,⁵ Tel Aviv finally agreed to an indefinite cease fire brokered by Cairo on August 26, 2014.⁶ With both sides claiming victory,⁷ what, if anything, has been accomplished by this latest round of Zionist barbarism?

The announcement of a cease fire agreement in Gaza led to exuberant celebrations by residents and a declaration of victory by Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri. “We announce the victory today after achieving our goals,” he said, adding, “Netanyahu has failed to force Gaza to surrender.”⁸ Another senior Hamas official, Izzat al-Risheq, pointed out that the Zionist forces “could not achieve any military success in 51 days of fighting aside from its war crimes on defenseless citizens, the majority of whom are women, elderly, and children.”⁹ Samah Sabawi, a Palestinian writer and policy adviser, wrote, “Hamas was able to establish deterrence, displaying an incredible level of resilience and strength, even when equipped with primitive weapons.”¹⁰

While the terms of the truce were not disclosed, Palestinians appear to have compelled the Zionist regime to agree to relax the 7-year long blockade, expand the fishing zone and reduce the size of the so-called security zones.¹¹ Regarding the truce Sabawi stressed that Hamas “was able to force Israel to agree to ease the siege by allowing for the easier flow of goods, humanitarian aid and reconstruction equipment, narrowing its security buffer zone to allow Palestinians more access to their farmland, and extending the fishing limit off Gaza’s coast to 9.6 km.”¹²

Apparently not addressed in the truce were other demands presented by Palestinian negotiators to Egyptian mediators in Cairo, including the release of Palestinian parliament members, pre-Oslo Accords detainees and about 60 recently re-arrested prisoners freed in a 2011 exchange for captured Israeli occupation soldier Gilad Shalit. Also unaddressed were ensuring direct access to the world by rebuilding the Gaza airport and its seaport, however, the demands for freeing Palestinian prisoners, and the construction of an airport and seaport are included on the agenda for discussion in upcoming talks between Palestinian resistance factions and the Israeli entity.¹³

For his part, Zionist prime minister Netanyahu also declared victory. “Hamas was hit hard and it received not one of the demands it set forth for a cease-fire, not one,” he said.¹⁴ Right-wing hardliners however disagreed and bemoaned the “feebleness” of the recent Zionist aggression. “Despite the heavy price, we haven’t defeated Hamas,” insisted Danny Danon, Likud central committee chairman and member of the Knesset. “We needed a decisive victory to convey to the entire Middle East, including Hezbollah, ISIS and Iran, that you don’t mess with Israel.”¹⁵

Having failed to achieve his goal to defeat Hamas, Netanyahu blamed threats posed by ISIL and Al-Qaeda as the reason for cutting short the crusade. “We fought for 50 days and we could have fought for 500 days,” he said with characteristic braggadocio, “But we are in a situation where the Islamic State is at the gates of Jordan, Al-Qaeda is in the Golan and Hezbollah is at the border with Lebanon.”¹⁶ Unconvinced, Zionist foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman replied, “So long as Hamas controls Gaza, Israeli citizens cannot be guaranteed security, and reaching a diplomatic arrangement is impossible.”¹⁷ No mention is made, of course, of the ongoing Zionist land grabs, housing demolitions, the apartheid wall and arbitrary detention of Palestinians,¹⁸ as being contributory factors to the impasse.

Yiftah Curiel, the Israeli embassy spokesman in London, concurring with Lieberman on who is to blame for the standoff, wrote that “Hamas today is the single greatest obstacle to the prosperity of Gaza, and in the longer run, to a peace agreement.”¹⁹ However, Nathan Thrall, a senior analyst at the International Crisis Group, disagreed over the cause of the recurrent conflict and wrote, “[T]he most immediate cause of this latest war has been ignored: Israel and much of the international community placed a prohibitive set of obstacles in the way of the Palestinian ‘national consensus’ government that was formed in early June.”²⁰ And it is precisely the threat of a Palestinian consensus government that prompted Netanyahu to find an excuse to launch another bloody campaign against Gaza.

Executive Director of the Israel Institute Ariel Ilan Roth implied that Hamas has emerged victorious, and that the Gaza stalemate cannot be maintained, since, according to him, Hamas has “shattered the necessary illusion for Israelis that a political stalemate with the Palestinians is cost-free for Israel.” Additionally, the Zionist onslaught “has also raised the profile of the Palestinian cause and reinforced the perception that the Palestinians are weak victims standing against a powerful aggressor.” The latter, suggested Roth, may lead to increased pressure on the Israeli entity “by politicians and certainly by social movements whose objective is to isolate Israel politically and damage it through economic boycotts.” Oddly enough, Roth remarked that the Iron Dome missile system acted as a strategic deficit, since it made covering news within the Israeli entity “boring for outside journalists.”²¹

There are signs of tangible progress for Palestinians arising from the human tragedy of this latest Zionist-imposed war on Gaza. The United Nations has formed a commission to inquire into human rights violations and war crimes committed “with a view to avoiding and ending impunity and ensuring that those responsible are held accountable.”²² In addition, a group of senior British lawyers and law professors have written a letter urging the International Criminal Court in The Hague to launch an investigation into war crimes perpetrated in Gaza. The letter emphasized that the investigation “would bring about an end to the impunity which has prevailed in the region to date.”²³

Professor William Schabas, chair of the commission, explained that the findings of this panel, unlike the Goldstone inquiry, may yield a huge victory for Palestinians. “The big difference this time, compared to what the inquiry that was done five years ago about Operation Cast Lead, is that the International Criminal Court is sitting in the wings,” he explained. This means that if the commission finds evidence of war crimes, the information will be handed over to The Hague for prosecution,²⁴ something the U.S., its European allies and the Israeli entity are already working

feverishly to prevent due to the far-reaching implications, which would not only involve the Zionist regime's crimes in Gaza, but also illegal settlement activity in the Occupied West Bank.²⁵

After urging that humanitarian assistance be expedited to Gaza, Secretary of State John Kerry stated that the U.S. is ready to begin a "major reconstruction initiative, with appropriate measures in place to ensure that this is for the benefit of the civilian population in Gaza, not Hamas."²⁶ But as desperately as Washington and Tel Aviv wish otherwise, ignoring the resistance movement will not make it go away. "Hamas cannot be wished away, nor will it cooperate in its own demise," former president Jimmy Carter²⁷ stated, and postwar polls in Palestine show him to be correct.

Indeed, some 94 percent of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are satisfied with Hamas' military performance in confronting Israeli occupation forces. Moreover, if an election were held in Palestine today, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh would win with 61 percent of the vote while "President" Mahmoud Abbas would only receive 32 percent. More telling perhaps is that an overwhelming majority of Palestinians in the West Bank want to transfer "Hamas' way" into their area. Clearly, with only 3 percent feeling that the Israeli entity "won," the Zionist aggression has only served to unite Palestinians behind the Islamic Resistance Movement.²⁸

While Gaza remains the first issue in the world of Islam, and should be elevated to the first issue of humanity, Palestinians have emerged remarkably triumphant from this latest U.S.-backed confrontation with the only nuclear-armed power in the Middle East, and by uniting behind Hamas, they have broken the Zionist stalemate.

Endnotes

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