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Gaza, or the "drip-fed hope"

- To understand - Analysis and debate -



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In memory of Marah Diab [1]

For a moment, just imagine yourself in Gaza. You live in a city on its knees, in an isolated and narrow strip of land with another 1.8 million fellow citizens. 360 square kilometers of prison, no more. Your children still bear the scars of several wars in their minds - some on their bodies - as well as the harrowing memory of the bombs - including phosphorus bombs - from the summer of 2014.

Israel is already preparing its next attack, having justified the slaughter during its previous attack on the podium of the UN General Assembly. Drones buzz above your head, between two deafening F-16 flights, through the cold nights of this endless winter. Israeli gunboats patrolling off the coast fire on fishing boats which venture into waters that no longer belong to them. Near the fields destroyed by Israeli bulldozers and vast quantities of pesticide making the crops unfit for consumption, Merkava tanks are positioned at a bombshell's distance, ready to open fire upon the first request from a government that will justify itself in the name of the right to "self-defense" and "security".

Soon the cameras will return to film the blood under the rubble, the lingering smoke of blown-up ambulances, and the panic in wounded children's eyes. Under neon lights, surgeons will once again hold small mutilated bodies up to photographers - pictures which will be shown around the world, however, with a total lack of perspective or analysis. Of course, the aggression will only be talked about in reference to home-made Hamas rockets, although most of them land in fields. No mention of the violence of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the siege as a collective punishment, the colonization, the stealing of natural resources and the daily discrimination by the Apartheid regime. The dead and wounded will be scrupulously counted.

Soon, once again you will see onlookers lying on their sofas in the hills surrounding Sderot, exulting with joy at each bomb explosion, between sips of lemonade. Statistics of charred flesh will be published in NGO reports about the humanitarian crisis, which will soon be forgotten, like the previous ones neatly filed on Embassy bookshelves. Spokespersons with solemn faces will call for calm and deliver speeches using carefully chosen words to make one believe that the conflict is one-sided and that "terrorism" comes exclusively from the Palestinian side.

But above all, once again, you will soon have to grab your terrified children in your arms and run breathlessly towards UN shelters, schools or hospitals, which might also be bombed. There will be no sanctuary, no rest, little rescue, but a lot of indifference. Whatever nausea the initial images portrayed by the media may have caused those in the rich western world may quickly fade away as their thoughts return to their own trivial, self-centered interests.

Meanwhile, you await the humiliation that will befall you, as like most people here, your life will depend on under-financed international aid in order to rebuild your home, obtain clothes and food for your family, i.e. to meet your most basic needs. In Gaza, power and water cuts are a daily recurrence. The water is undrinkable. Your short moments of life and freedom depend on an uncertain supply. Your future lies between parenthesis, your life consists of surviving from one flood to another; from one attack to another. Watching the waves at sunset is the only way to briefly forget your fate.

It is impossible to find a decent job, a home, to get quality healthcare, to enjoy cultural life without censorship, or to have some kind of normality in your confined life. Nothing is normal here but you are no longer aware of the abnormality of it all. Actually, you know very little about the outside world which, in turn, ignores you, despite the constant, but severely flawed, media coverage. This conflict is projected as being "too complicated"; its centennial

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roots/causes are considered unworthy of a press release or an in-depth article, in order to provide the broader public with factual insights. Only blood and sensation appear to be of importance. The fact that leaving this open-air prison remains an illusion, attests to the moral degeneration of the supposed civilization of the "Enlightenment". Hoping for a better life is an illusion.

Living without surveillance day and night or hardships for your generation and those to come remains an illusionary dream.

Your contacts and movements are under close scrutiny. Some drones are said to be no bigger than dragonflies. Each detail of your life - your sick child who requires medical care or your sexual preferences - can be exploited by the Israeli intelligence services to force you to reveal information about your neighbour or friend.

All this is taking place with indifference, not to mention disdain, by western governments, who prolong this terrible situation because of cynical geostrategic and economic interests. And to rid themselves of their feelings of guilt regarding a genocide which you had absolutely nothing to do with. Your horizon is characterized by suffering, due to the constant restrictions imposed on you and your loved ones as a result of this trauma. This suffering makes your heart bleed and leaves you speechless with outrage and desperation. The same outrage and desperation which produces trembling nightmares in your children and robs them of their innocence prematurely, due to their repeated exposure to violence and devastation.

The simple fact of mentioning your nationality raises suspicion in ignorant minds, stirred up by polished propaganda towards an audience that is more than willing to lend an ear. Such propaganda aims to create confusion and guilt, and is a grotesque insult to the memory of victims of a past era.

You have nothing, not even the recognition of your rights, entrenched in vain by international treaties, not to mention the possibility to make long-term plans in peace. The little pride which you have left diminishes by the day. All the actions of the occupying forces aim at robbing you of your dignity as a human being. Your life has little significance to those who hold the power to bring about change, beyond the barbed wire fences and across the ocean. To the contrary, laws are being introduced aimed to criminalize the freedom of speech of citizens around the world who are aware of such injustice and refuse to be accomplices. An increasing number of speeches with false accusations of anti-semitism aim to fuel hatred and muzzle criticism, while the powerful hide behind a cloud of silence, if not express outright support for this seemingly legitimized barbarism. Inciting confusion, through any available means of communication, is a tactic intended to discredit your vulnerable supporters. In Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Ramallah, peace activists and human rights organizations are now being labeled as "traitors" and are being intimidated and prosecuted, in an attempt to limit their access to media coverage and reduce the scope of their message.

You are living, I should say surviving, in Gaza, a blessed and at the same time cursed land, bathed by the Mediterranean Sea, lying at the crossroads of various civilizations. The dream of recovering your land that has been confiscated and colonized since the Nakba, will only come true through the conscience and integrity of those who are fed up with the generalized blindness and dare to fight cynicism and lies. There is too much hatred, too many empty promises and supposed attempts to reach a just peace, which all failed as a result of despicable political calculations and motives. The stones of your family home were turned upside down long ago, to be slowly forgotten amidst the tall grass in forests now designated as "nature reserves" or buried under concrete constructions of new Jewish-only settlements. The village of your childhood no longer appears on maps. The generation of the elderly, who are able to tell our story first hand - particularly women, given their proficiency in passing down memories - is slowly dying off. Notwithstanding, some historians go as far as to claim in best-sellers that your country never existed. Sometimes you smile in the night-time breeze, looking up at the birds mocking you with their arrogant freedom, while you walk in the dust of the ruins, searching for a happy memory.

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You are Palestinian. Actually, you are nobody. Palestine is but a mirage, maintained by people in high-ranking positions who do not genuinely believe their own discourse and merely represent their own interests. But Palestine continues to exist for all those who still dream of it. Close scrutiny of the disingenuous Oslo Accords, portrays a state worth no more than the paper on which the numerous futile, failed UN Security Council resolutions are written. A country with a flag, indeed, but a country which has been drip-fed for decades, for which sovereignty is a mere illusion, a country lacking territorial congruence, political unity, a national development plan, or a future. For the present, at least... Because a gradually shifting wind, carrying the enduring will of evermore citizens worldwide who advocate a just peace in Palestine and the Middle East at large, will lead to a democratic revival of the entire region.

The day will come, yes the day will come, when your children will be free from oppression and the master of their fate, and they will propose to their children on a nice, sunny day: "How about going to visit our cousins in Hebron?" [2]

Geoffrey Bailleux

[1] Marah Diab was 10 years old when she died of kidney failure in a hospital in Gaza on 17 February 2016. Marah was one of the victims of the lack of medical facilities in Gaza due to the blockade by Israel. This text was written the same night her death was announced, as a reaction to it.

[2] For more information :

▶ Russell Tribunal on Palestine, Brussels' extraordinary session on Gaza, 24 September 2014 -

▶ <http://www.russelltribunalonpalestine.com/en/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/TRP-Concl.-Gaza-EN.pdf>

▶ Gaza 2015: A few steps forward and several steps back, Gisha - Legal Center for Freedom of Movement, - - -

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▶ No Safe Place - Gaza 2014, Findings of an Independent Medical Fact-Finding Mission,

▶ https://gazahealthattack.files.wordpress.com/2015/01/gazareport_eng.pdf

▶ Families under the rubble: Israeli attacks on inhabited homes, Amnesty International, November 2014,

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▶ Operation Protective Edge - A War Waged on Gaza's Children, Defense for Children International, April 2015,

▶ http://www.dci-palestine.org/operation_protective_edge_a_war_waged_on_gaza_s_children