

Again, Arabs to Fish in a 'Dead Sea'

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RAMALLAH 23 August 2006. Undeterred by any historic experience, the Arab League foreign ministers meeting in Cairo on July 15 seemed intent not to desist from fishing in the "dead sea" of the United Nations and decided to send a delegation to a ministerial meeting of the UN Security Council in mid-September with the aim of launching a new Middle East peace process.

More of the successive failed "peace processes" as a management practice during intervals between wars is no more convincing to Arab populace as an alternative to real peace-making.

The United Nations has proved a dead-end for making peace in the Middle East. The latest U.S. veto at the U.N. Security Council on July 13 to abort a PLO-initiated and Arab-drafted resolution should be a fresh reminder that the U.N. will lead to nowhere.

Similarly the U.S.-sponsored "peace processes" have proved another dead end if a comprehensive regional peace was the goal. The Madrid Conference process in 1991 was declared "dead" in mid July by none other than the Arab League chief Amr Mousa, six years after declaring its death by the comatose former Israeli premier Ariel Sharon.

The United Nations is widely perceived among Arabs as a tool of war and not as a peace maker in the region, despite its meagre contributions to alleviate the huge humanitarian tragedies of its regional policies and the fire fighting missions of its "peacekeepers" in Sinai, Golan Heights and south Lebanon.

The perception of the Arab leaders is no different; hence their move towards the international body raises high brows because it contradicts their latest history as well as their political alliances.

First Egypt, then the PLO and later Jordan each sought a settlement of their respective conflicts with Israel through secret bilateral or trilateral channels, via the U.S. sponsorship and outside the U.N. forums, despite the occasional symbolic presence of the U.N. now and then. The results were blessed either officially or pragmatically by the Arab League.

The move raises high brows because nothing has basically changed neither in the Arab League political orientation and alliances nor in the United Nations. On the contrary the trend on both sides is being reinforced: The alliances are further cemented and the ranks have become closer under the pressures of the U.S. war on terror while the U.N. decision-making is further hijacked by the U.S.

The Arab League move towards the U.N. would only serve to mislead both the regional and world peace-loving public opinion to believe that a new peace process could be in the offing.

Moreover, a reactivated peace process is no more promising to the peoples of the war-ravaged region.

Reactivation of another doomed “peace process” may serve the internal stability and the external security of incumbent Arab governments, but only in the short run. In the long run only real peace making could secure the official as well as the popular aspirations for peace, liberation, stability, security and development.

For the Israeli Occupying Power the peace processes were the most desirable to prolong its grip on and expand its grab of the occupied Arab land in Palestine, Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

Several facts should deter the regional Arab body to refrain from such a move and there is no harm in briefly recalling both modern and latest history.

The last 100-year old historical experience has instilled in the pan-Arab memory, especially among the Palestinian Arabs, the very well documented fact that the U.N. and its predecessor, the League of Nations, were always used by the colonial powers, old and new, as a tool to impose foreign hegemony in the region.

The British and the French colonial powers had used the League of Nations to deprive the Arabs of achieving their goals from their revolt against their Ottoman Muslim brethren early in the twentieth century by legalizing the foreign mandates on their entire divided pan-Arab homeland.

Those same powers together with their post WWII American leader used the U.N. to pass the resolution that divided Palestine between the indigenous Arab majority and the minority of Jewish immigrants fleeing the European pogroms and holocaust, thus sowing the seeds of so far six regional wars and an ever bleeding wound of human misery.

Recently the U.N. was used as a cover to launch the U.S.-British war on Iraq in 2003 and to prolong the Israeli war on Lebanon in July.

The Arab League seems intent on not being frustrated by the chronic inability of the United Nations Security Council to act, a fact that over 58 years has sent “the wrong message” to the Israeli “occupying Power and fuelled the culture of impunity that had allowed Israel not to be held accountable for its actions,” according to the Permanent Observer of Palestine, Riyadh H. Mansour.

The U.N. could not be accused of being short on pro-Arab resolutions. More than 70 resolutions were adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council during the past 58 years. Thirty more could have been adopted were they not vetoed by the United States.

The crux of the Arab problem with the U.N. was and still is the U.S. diplomatic shield protecting Israel, which condemned more than 100 pro-Arab resolutions as either vetoed or non-applicable.

The new Arab League move towards the U.N. promises neither to neutralize the U.S. veto nor to support any possible pro-Arab resolution with chapter VII of the U.N. Charter to make it applicable. It only promises more of an old practice that would similarly be null and void both in form and content.

Why then the Arab League is going to the U.N.?

How can any observer explain such a move except as a manoeuvring to appease an ever-growing popular disillusion with the status quo of “no peace and no war” by testing what has already been repeatedly tested as a non-starter for peace in the Middle East.

Under the pressures of the latest Israeli war on Lebanon, the U.S-led war on Iraq and the 58-year old U.S.-backed Israeli war on the Palestinian people, the Arab League governments are trying to contain the ensuing possible internal threats and regional turbulence by resorting to the old tactic of creating a “peace process” as an alternative to an overdue real peace-making, to create an illusion of moving away from a desperate status quo instead of changing it.

The old-new manoeuvre would only play in the hands of the U.S. and Israeli initiators and beneficiaries of the status quo.

Fishing again in a dead sea would only create a vacuum that is increasingly being filled by “resistance movements” wherever the state is absent, as is the cases of Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine, or would threaten the role of the state wherever this role is being eroded by inaction on the ground to change the no more bearable status quo.

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