

“Demonstration” Government in Palestine

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In 1984 (a year of Orwellian significance), activist and media and social critic Edward Herman wrote one of his many important books titled “Demonstration Elections.” In it, he analyzed the US-staged elections in the 1960s in the Dominican Republic and Vietnam and the 1982 one in El Salvador. In the book’s Orwellian glossary of terms, he defined the process as “A circus held in a client state to assure the population of the home country that their intrusion is well received. The results are guaranteed by an adequate supply of bullets provided in advance (and freely used as necessary to achieve the desired outcome).”

This writer calls this ugly business “democracy-engineering, American-style” backed by force to win approval of a rigged process people would never accept another way. Noam Chomsky refers to the notion of “Keeping the Rabble in Line,” the title of one of his many books. It can be through soft or hard methods to assure the public goes along with what governments want imposed.

Herman’s main theme was that “elections held under conditions of military occupation and extensive pre-election ‘pacification’ ” aren’t free at all but aim to get an occupying force’s puppet choice accepted by the people it’s installed to rule with influence wielded more by bullets than ballots to create “stability.” Herman defines that term, too, as “a political arrangement free of open warfare and satisfactory to our interests.” By that he means the “rabble” is cowed, induced or pummelled into submission.

Enter the dominant media stepping up to support the effort as lead cheerleader for a process hard to sell without heavy lifting convincing that what government is doing is for the common good. Never mind it isn’t and that destroying democracy and the will of the people to resist are the real aims. Herman’s theme works the same way today, and it’s in play now in occupied Palestine. The difference discussed below is that the US and Israel tried running a “demonstration election” there in January, 2006, but it failed. The people didn’t cooperate and the “wrong” party won.

Imperial powers never accept defeat and attempted to subvert and crush the democratically elected Hamas government ever since because it’s too democratic and refuses to be Israel’s enforcer. So anti-Hamas efforts started off by labeling it a “terrorist” organization. That was followed by political and economic isolation, cutting off all essential aid, open conflict, and on June 17 brazenly installing an illegitimate “demonstration government” with Palestinian quisling President Mahmoud Abbas illegally dismissing the elected government and appointing an “emergency” one. All this is discussed in detail below.

Imposed Illegitimate “Demonstration” Government in Palestine

The beleaguered Palestinians are one of the world’s most victimized peoples of justice

delayed because it's been so long denied them. Long under the Ottomans, they then had to endure imperial British mandate rule after WW I until it ended in May, 1948. Ever since, they've suffered intolerable hardships under brutal Israeli oppression and illegal occupation with little outside support to end it.

The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was founded in 1964 as a result and Yasser Arafat became its leader in 1969 to try. At first, it was militantly, then later through negotiation and international consensus. Nothing worked because a hard line Israeli – US nexus with Western and Arab state complicity prevented it. The predictable result was festering anger in the Palestinian Territories. They've been occupied since June, 1967 after Israel seized them in its long-planned six day war of aggression. The illegal occupation continues and Palestinian anger boiled over in two Intifadas, first in 1987, and ever since after Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to the sacred Al Aqsa Mosque in September, 2000.

By January 25, 2006, Palestinians had enough of Fatah's institutionalized corruption and willingness to be Israel's enforcer under the quisling governments of Yasser Arafat and his successor Mahmoud Abbas. They elected a dominant majority of Hamas members to Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) seats because they promised change and its candidates were untainted by corruption or willingness to serve as puppets of Israeli interests at the expense of their own people. They meant what they promised and proved it once in office, even offering to partner with Fatah at the outset in a spirit of unity. Under orders not to, Fatah refused. It guaranteed Israeli and Washington antagonism that erupted immediately once Hamas assumed office.

Palestinians endured a life and death survival struggle before the election and especially ever since, and they've been on their own doing it. After Hamas' election victory, all desperately needed outside aid was cut off, and they've been mercilessly persecuted under repressive Israeli rule. They've also been attacked viciously and relentlessly by the world's fourth most powerful military IDF forces and enlisted Fatah-led paramilitary death squads with only light and crude weapons and their spirit to endure and fight back.

Hamas – From Its Charter and How It Governs

Hamas in Arabic means courage and bravery. It's also an abbreviation of the Arabic words meaning Islamic Resistance Movement. It was formed in 1987 during the first Intifada and early on was supported by Israel to counter Arafat's PLO the Jewish state opposed at the time. Ever since, it's been an effective resistance movement against repression and occupation providing essential social services like medical clinics; education, including centers for women; free meals for children; financial and technical help to those whose homes Israelis destroyed; aid to refugees in the camps; and setting up youth and sports clubs.

It also has the Izz Al-Din Al-Qassam Brigades, an elite military wing, headed by Abu Abieda and other forces it needs for self-defense and law enforcement. Included among them is the "special operational force" known as the Executive Force (Tanfithya) used on the streets for policing and security.

Israel, Washington and the West call Hamas' political and social activities and its legitimate right to self-defense "terrorism" and tried to isolate and destroy its democratically elected government from birth. So far, they haven't succeeded, or are likely to, because Hamas' strongest assets are its will, readiness, and majority support from its people.

Hamas is a heterogeneous democratic Islamic Resistance Movement allied with all resistance fighters for the purpose of liberating Palestine from Israeli oppression and occupation. Its method of choice is through negotiation and international consensus, not war or terrorism as falsely portrayed through the dominant media. But it states in its charter it will fight for its rights if they can't be gotten peacefully and rightfully blames Zionist Israel for its plight. They have plenty of evidence to prove it.

In its founding charter, it states it "draws its guidelines from Islam; derives from it its thinking, interpretations and views about existence, life and humanity; refers back to it for its conduct....adopts Islam as its way of life....Its ultimate goal is Islam, the Prophet its model, the Qur'an its Constitution....In the absence of Islam, conflict arises, oppression reigns, corruption is rampant and struggles and wars prevail....(The Movement) will do its utmost to....support....the weak, (and defend) all the oppressed.

(It) regards Nationalism (Wataniyya) as part....of the religious faith." Peace initiatives and international conferences are rejected if their intention is renunciation of Palestinian land. It rejects Zionist intentions to destroy Palestinian society, its values and "wipe out Islam." It describes itself as "a humane movement, which cares for human rights and is committed to the tolerance inherent in Islam as regards attitudes towards other religions. It is only hostile to those who are hostile towards it....(Under Islam) it is possible for the members of the three religions: Islam, Christianity and Judaism to coexist in safety and security" as long as other religions "desist from struggling against Islam over sovereignty in this region."

It believes "World Zionism and Imperial forces have been attempting....to push the Arab countries" to end conflict with Zionism "to isolate the Palestinian people." It states its members don't seek "fame....nor material gains, or social status....It will never set out against any Muslims....or non-Muslims who make peace with it." Overall, Hamas has moderate political and religious views in contrast to militant hard line ones by ruling Israeli governments and the current one in Washington and other past ones.

It wants peace, equity and justice for all Palestinians while Israel and the Bush administration pursue an agenda of conflict, imperial domination and firm intention to deny Palestinians all rights they're entitled to and the UN General Assembly adopted in December, 1948 in its Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This historic (non-binding) document guarantees them to everyone regardless of "race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (including) the right to life, liberty and security of person."

Hamas has always called for peace with Israel and is willing to negotiate on the basis of "hudnah" or temporary truce. Its founder, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, said Hamas was willing to end its struggle for the legitimate rights of Palestinian people "if the Zionists ended its occupation of Palestinian territories and stopped killing Palestinian women, children and innocent civilians." As the elected Palestinian government, it declared a unilateral cease-fire with Israel, ended all suicide bombings, wants to negotiate, and is willing to recognize the Jewish state if Israel accepts and recognizes a Palestinian one. After being elected, it governed in good faith and agreed to a national unity government with Fatah to share power it democratically won to have alone. Israel, the US and West rejected all good faith efforts opting instead for a divide and conquer strategy.

A New Stage of Occupation for Palestinians

Israel, Washington and the West, pursued an aggressive agenda for months through armed conflict causing many deaths. From the start, Washington's point man has been Iran-Contra criminal and now deputy national security adviser, Elliot Abrams. Documents have surfaced in Middle East capitals with evidence of Abrams' role in an anti-Hamas "hard coup" strategy of violence and armed insurrection. They call for "maintain(ing) President Abbas and Fatah as the centre of (Palestinian) gravity....avoid accommodating (Hamas), undermine Hamas' political status (and) strengthen the Palestinian president's authority to be able to call and conduct early elections by autumn 2007."

The document also called for Mahmoud Abbas to reject Saudi Arabia's Mecca agreement leaving Hamas in charge. It further indicated \$1.27 billion would be allocated to Abbas to add seven special battalions of 4700 new security forces to his 15,000 in place for "safeguard(ing) decisions such as dismissing the cabinet and forming an emergency government."

This all played out violently on Gaza streets leading up to Hamas' defeating opposition insurgent forces and seizing control of the Territory to establish law and order. As planned in Washington and Jerusalem, Palestinian Authority (PA) President Abbas then conspiratorially declared a "state of emergency." He dismissed Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniyeh and his national unity government replacing it with his own illegitimate "emergency" one.

It's illegally headed by newly appointed prime minister Salam Fayyad whose electoral list posted a 2.4% showing in the January, 2006 PLC elections Hamas won overwhelmingly. Fayyad's a pro-Western former IMF and World Bank official chosen by Washington and Jerusalem. His job is to do their bidding the way he served capital interests during his tenure at the international lending agencies. There he did it by forcing borrowers into debt slavery and their people into extreme poverty and deprivation for the sake of profit. That made him a western darling now promoted to enforce imperial domination on his people who want freedom and won't likely tolerate his portfolio to deny it to them.

Abbas, Fayyad and others in the "emergency" government are shamelessly partnered with Israel and Washington as their coup d'etat-installed puppets working against the interests of their own people. They control the West Bank alone with Hamas firmly in charge of Gaza unless or until Israel intervenes which now seems likely. It suggests a repeat of last summer's mass assault on the Territory and its sure to follow dreadful consequences for its near-defenseless people.

Plans to weaken and oust Hamas have been in place for months with Washington supplying the Abbas leadership tens of millions of dollars in aid and weapons. It's gone to paramilitary militia death squad groups like Gaza-based Fatah warlord and another Israeli-Western darling Mohammed Dahlan (Fatah's security chief now in the West Bank) and his "Preventative Security Force." It's part of a conspiratorial coup d'etat effort headed by traitorous Palestinians on the take for their own gain. Abbas is their nominal leader. Dahlan has the muscle and real power as it chief enforcer. All newly appointed members of Abbas' sham "emergency government" share equal guilt. They're junior quislings serving their puppet-masters in Jerusalem and Washington, but events are just beginning, the struggle is far from over, and its outcome very much uncertain.

Money and weapons will continue flowing into the West Bank, and from what Hamas already seized in a Gaza stash it found, it should be plenty. Uncovered were huge amounts of mounted machine guns, assault rifles, ammunition, armored personnel carriers, jeeps,

armored cars and trucks, military-sized bulldozers, water cannon-dispersing trucks, large quantities of munitions including rocket-propelled grenades and launchers, explosives and various other supplies and equipment.

In total, it appears enough to equip a small army of fighters and may be worth as much as \$400 million. It's sure to be replaced so Fatah traitors are heavily armed to continue fighting Israel's proxy war and acting as its West Bank enforcer against their own people. They almost certainly will resist with Hamas leading them courageously. It means Fatah's hold on power is tenuous at best and Abbas' fate equally shaky. His shameless act may in the end cost him all credibility, his job, and eventually make him liable to be held to account for his open betrayal of his own people.

Hamas prime minister, Ismail Haniyeh, has no intention stepping down and responded at length live on Al-Jazeera rejecting Abbas' "hasty" moves saying 96% of Palestinians support a unity government as the best chance for peace and security. He affirmed his democratically elected government would continue functioning and maintain law and order. He also called for an end to conflict and a general amnesty. He stressed his fight is not with Fatah, but only with rogue traitorous elements in it like the dominant one headed by warlord Dahlan firmly doing Israel and Washington's bidding.

He explained Hamas' takeover was no coup and only a last resort attempt to end lawlessness, conflict and a Dahlan-led conspiracy against all Palestinians. He spoke of conciliation, unity, and conflict resolution to heal divisions in contrast to Abbas' traitorous behavior as Israel and Washington's pawn. He followed Israeli and Washington-dictated orders responding by denouncing Hamas as terrorists, refusing to negotiate, and saying he'll (illegally as explained below) order new elections that will exclude Hamas.

At this stage, Hamas' task is daunting as Haaretz reports Israeli Labor Party Chairman, former prime minister, and new Olmert government defense minister Ehud Barak, plans to launch a large-scale military operation on Gaza in weeks. It will include 20,000 troops and an air assault aimed at destroying Hamas' military capabilities quickly. Haaretz cited a close Barak aide saying Israel won't allow a "Hamastan" in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) and an attack on it is certain. Air attacks are now ongoing daily, border crossings are closed, and Israel cancelled Gaza's commercial customs code. That cuts off essential supplies like food and medicines from entering the territory. Israel is now increasing its collective punishment against 1.4 million Palestinians already enduring unbearable hardships in what's considered the world's largest open-air prison with a population density three times that of Manhattan.

Israeli-Washington-Directed Fatah Declared Coup Illegal Under Palestinian Law

Virginia Tilley is a South African-based political science professor. On June 18, her article appeared on The Electronic Intifada titled "Whose Coup, Exactly?" It documented in detail that according to the Basic Law of Palestine, serving as the PA's constitution, "Abbas has violated a whole stream of Articles as well as the spirit of its checks and balances" limiting the power of the presidency. He "badly trashed numerous provisions" in it "with full US and Israeli support." The Basic Law states:

— Under Article 45, the President can remove a Prime Minister but can only appoint a new one from the majority party – Hamas.

- Under Article 83, if the Prime Minister is removed, the serving (Hamas-led) Cabinet is to govern until the (Hamas-led) Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) appoints a new one.
- Only the PLC has authority to confirm a new Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- Under Article 43, in emergencies, the President can rule by decree subject to all decrees approved by the PLC.
- Under Article 113, in emergencies, the President cannot suspend the PLC.
- The Basic Law gives the President no power to call for early elections.
- No provision in the Basic Law authorizes an “emergency government.”

Conclusion: Abbas’ actions constitute a lawless coup d’etat usurpation of power, or as Tilley puts it: “The (Fatah) Fayyad government is the step-child of an extra-legal process with no democratic mandate. The whole manoeuvre is not precisely a palace coup,” but enough like one, in fact, to be one. She also notes “the diplomatic landscape is now in utter disarray” with the extra-legal Fayyad government only a “facsimile” of the real thing.

So far, its illegitimate creation hardly seems to matter to Israel, the US and European Union shamelessly flouting Palestinian and international law. They’re ending their political and economic PA West Bank (only) embargo to bolster Fatah and Abbas while continuing to isolate Hamas in Gaza. It’s an outrageous effort rewarding lawlessness and continuing to crush democratic movements when they become too democratic as Hamas did. Hamas spokesperson Sami Abu Zuhri denounced it accusing the West of hypocrisy. He noted Hamas was democratically elected and added “This confirms the falseness of the international community’s support for democracy.”

From Dublin, Ireland at a human rights conference, former President Jimmy Carter denounced it as well. He accused the US, EU and Israel of harming and seeking to divide the Palestinian people by aiding Abbas in the West Bank while withholding similar help to Hamas in Gaza. Carter stressed Hamas is entitled to be the ruling Palestinian government because it was democratically elected. Representatives from his Carter Center observed the election and judged it free, open and fair. He urged the international community to work toward reconciliation of Hamas and Fatah but sees nothing being done to do it.

He condemned US, EU and Israeli efforts to undermine Hamas as “criminal.” He continued saying “The United States and Israel decided to punish all the people of Palestine and did everything they could to deter a compromise between Hamas and Fatah.” He then added Washington and others supplied Fatah security forces with superior weapons aimed at “conquer(ing) Hamas in Gaza, but the plan failed because of Hamas’ “superior skills and discipline.”

A Hopeful Look Ahead

Everything happening in the Middle East in Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon and Afghanistan in Central Asia is interconnected. In all of it, Washington is partnered with Israel and the EU aiming to subdue the people in both regions, control their resources, and rule over this vast area in colonial-occupier fashion directly on the ground or ideally with puppet-installed governments. Washington leads the effort and intends taking the lion share of what it can plunder provided things go as planned. The EU is tagging along led by Britain and Israel in

key roles with the Jewish state getting huge amounts of funding to do it. According to a James Tucker American Free Press May, 2003 report it was at a level of \$10 billion a year then with Israel wanting it upped to \$12 billion.

This figure came from a Library of Congress “briefing paper” titled “Israel: US Foreign Assistance.” It listed categories including direct funding aid, huge amounts in loans and loan guarantees, military aid, R & D help, and considerably more that noted academic and author James Petras documented in his important 2006 book “The Power of Israel in the United States.” In total, Israel, with 5.2 million people in 2005, about the size of a large US or other city, receives more in total aid in all forms than all other nations in the world combined. It uses it to seize Palestinian lands for Jewish resettlement, build separation/apartheid walls, and wage illegal wars of aggression in pursuit of its own imperial agenda for regional dominance as an adjunct to its US partner and very generous funder.

Despite considerable effort and huge amounts of financial and other resources employed, US and Israeli imperial adventurism hasn’t fared too well giving reason to hope more of it will turn out as badly for both nations. Palestinians have endured everything Israel’s thrown at it for six repressive decades. In spite of it, they’re still holding up maintaining their courageous struggle for equity, justice and a free and independent state they intend one day to have and likely will regardless of Israel’s determination to prevent it. History is on their side.

In just the last century, nations around the world struggled for the same rights and prevailed, though for many it took decades or longer and what was gained was far from perfect or even unacceptable too often like in South Africa. The end of apartheid there was replaced by neoliberal “Thatcherism” resulting in greater poverty and hardship for the poor majority than in the earlier era. However, progress usually comes slowly and rarely without setbacks or disappointments. The point is it can come when people seeking it never stop believing it will or working for it until it does. Palestinians have been doing it since 1948, and one day they’ll have what they and all others deserve everywhere, their own state in which to live free from foreign occupation secure at last on their own land.

An early hopeful sign was reported in Haaretz by correspondent Shlomo Shamir June 22. He noted in spite of US, British and French pressure (with new UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s shameless backing) for a Security Council declaration of confidence in the Abbas government, it was withdrawn before its drafting stage because of strong protests against it by Russia, South Africa, Indonesia and Qatar. These countries objected to anti-Hamas policies and attempts to characterize it as a terror organization and isolate it. In addition, Russia and South Africa questioned the emergency government’s legitimacy arguing instead for a unity government as the solution to the conflict in occupied Palestine.

It’s a small, maybe temporary victory, but important one nonetheless. It shows mighty America, Israel and the EU can be challenged and forced to back down giving Palestinian people hope more victories will follow and in time the one they want above all others. With faith, courage, patience and redoubtable will, one day they’ll prevail, their Nakba will have ended, and their right to live freely on their own land will be affirmed and recognized.

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