

Hamas Condemns the Holocaust

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As the Palestinian people prepare to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Nakba ("catastrophe") – the dispossession and expulsion of most of our people from our land – those remaining in Palestine face escalating aggression, killings, imprisonment, ethnic cleansing and siege. But instead of support and solidarity from the western media, we face frequent attempts to defend the indefensible or turn fire on the Palestinians themselves.

One recent approach, which seems to be part of the wider attempt to isolate the elected Palestinian leadership, is to portray Hamas and the population of the Gaza strip as motivated by anti-Jewish sentiment, rather than a hostility to Zionist occupation and domination of our land. A recent front page article in the International Herald Tribune followed this line, as did an article for Cif about an item broadcast on the al-Aqsa satellite TV channel about the Nazi Holocaust.

In fact, the al-Aqsa Channel is an independent media institution that often does not express the views of the Palestinian government headed by Ismail Haniyeh or of the Hamas movement. The channel regularly gives Palestinians of different convictions the chance to express views that are not shared by the Palestinian government or the Hamas movement. In the case of the opinion expressed on al-Aqsa TV by Amin Dabbur, it is his alone and he is solely responsible for it.

It is rather surprising to us that so little attention, if any, is given by the western media to what is regularly broadcast or written in the Israeli media by politicians and writers demanding the total uprooting or "transfer" of the Palestinian people from their land.

The Israeli media and pro-Israel western press are full of views that deny or seek to excuse well-established facts of history including the Nakba of 1948 and the massacres perpetrated then by the Haganah, the Irgun and LEHI with the objective of forcing a mass dispossession of the Palestinians.

But it should be made clear that neither Hamas nor the Palestinian government in Gaza denies the Nazi Holocaust. The Holocaust was not only a crime against humanity but one of the most abhorrent crimes in modern history. We condemn it as we condemn every abuse of humanity and all forms of discrimination on the basis of religion, race, gender or nationality.

And at the same time as we unreservedly condemn the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis against the Jews of Europe, we categorically reject the exploitation of the Holocaust by the Zionists to justify their crimes and harness international acceptance of the campaign of ethnic cleansing and subjection they have been waging against us – to the point where in

February the Israeli deputy defence minister Matan Vilnai threatened the people of Gaza with a “holocaust”.

Within 24 hours, 61 Palestinians – more than half of them civilians and a quarter children – were killed in a series of air raids. Meanwhile, a horrible crime against humanity continues to be perpetrated against the people of Gaza: the two-year-old siege imposed after Hamas won the legislative elections in January 2006, which is causing great suffering. Due to severe shortages of medicines and food, scores of Palestinians have lost their lives.

It cannot be right that Europeans in general and the British in particular maintain a virtual silence toward what the Zionists are doing to the Palestinians, let alone supporting or justifying their oppressive policies, under the pretext of showing sympathy for the victims of the Holocaust.

The Palestinian people aspire to freedom, independence and peaceful coexistence with all their neighbours. There are, today, more than six million Palestinian refugees. No less than 700,000 Palestinians have been detained at least once by the Israeli occupation authorities since 1967. Hundreds of thousands have so far been killed or wounded. Little concern seems to be caused by all of this or by the erection of an apartheid wall that swallows more than 20% of the West Bank land or the heavily armed colonies that devour Palestinian land in a blatant violation of international law.

The plight of our people is not the product of a religious conflict between us and the Jews in Palestine or anywhere else: the aims and positions of today’s Hamas have been repeatedly spelled out by its leadership, for example in Hamas’s 2006 programme for government. The conflict is of a purely political nature: it is between a people who have come under occupation and an oppressive occupying power.

Our right to resistance against occupation is recognised by all conventions and religious traditions. The Jews are for us the people of a sacred book who suffered persecution in European lands. Whenever they sought refuge, Muslim and Arab lands provided them with safe havens. It was in our midst that they enjoyed peace and prosperity; many of them held leading positions in Muslim countries.

After almost a century of Zionist colonial and racist oppression, some Palestinians find it hard to imagine that some of their oppressors are the sons and daughters of those who were themselves oppressed and massacred.

Palestinians had nothing to do with the Holocaust but find themselves punished for someone else’s crime. But we are well aware and warmly welcome the outspoken support for Palestinian rights by Israeli and Jewish human rights activists in Palestine and around the world.

We hope that journalists in the west will begin to adopt a more objective approach when covering events in Palestine. The Palestinian people are being killed by Israel’s machine of destruction on a daily basis. Nevertheless, we still see a clear bias in favour of Israel in the western media.

The Europeans bear a direct responsibility for what is befalling the Palestinians today. Britain was the mandate authority that handed over Palestine to Israeli occupation. Nazi Germany perpetrated the most heinous crimes against Jews, forcing the survivors to migrate

to Palestine in pursuit of safety. We, therefore, expect the Europeans to atone for their historic crimes by restoring some balance to the inhuman and one-sided international response to the tragedy of our people.

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