

Palestine: The Advancing Ethnic Cleansing

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The stage for ethnic cleansing of Palestinians has been set in the Occupied Territories, and ethnic cleansing is in progress. At present, this is the major project of the State of Israel. For an impartial person of medium intelligence, a tour of the Occupied Territories may be sufficient to understand this fact. The prime ethnic cleansing tool is, forever, Palestinian land grab in conjunction with settlement expansion. Various stages of annexation process are in evidence in the originally rural part of the West Bank, constituting 60% of its area. By now, nine percent of the West Bank land has been transferred to the direct control of the settlements [1]. A recent Peace Now investigation revealed that only 12 percent of this land is being used at all. "The state earmarks huge tracts for the settlements, out of all proportion to their size, in order to prevent Palestinian construction in those areas. Yet once an area is closed to Palestinians, the settlers begin seizing adjacent Palestinian lands, often privately owned, that lie outside their jurisdiction" [1,2]. According to B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization, already in 2002, 41.9% of the West Bank was assigned to the Israeli regional councils [3]. And for years, the entire rural Area C has been under administrative control of the so called "Civil Administration", which, in close cooperation with the Israeli army and the settlers, toils to make the life of its Palestinian residents as miserable as possible; the obvious objective being to make them leave [4,5].

In the remaining West Bank, Palestinians became virtual prisoners in their own towns and villages. Every aspect of normal Palestinian life – economy, health, education, is being crushed by a well organized and deliberate military-bureaucratic machine, masquerading as a security establishment [5]. Every now and then, the strangulation noose around the Palestinian existence is being tightened, inexorably, by one more notch. Ethnic cleansing, by means of home and field demolitions, is also pursued diligently by the State of Israel towards its Bedouin citizens residing in the Negev desert [6].

All of the above scarcely registers in minds of my compatriots. No wonder, since it is covered by a monumental but eagerly believed hoax [7] of "negotiations with Abu-Mazen", diplomatic efforts, and promises of good will gestures towards Palestinians (which are forever un-implemented, or implemented marginally for short periods). For reasons of their own, some Palestinian politicians including President Abbas chose to participate in this farce.

An average Jewish-Israeli does not know – or does not want to know – about the ethnic cleansing program executed by their state – she or he prefers to think of it as "fight against terror". Jewish-Israeli citizens live in virtual reality, thoughtfully provided for them by the leaders, the media, and the education system. In this reality, the Israelis figure as good guys, fighting for their existence, rather than as colonizers and occupiers. In this virtual world, it is believed that our government has worked hard to achieve a peace agreement with the Palestinians; and if this goal was not achieved, it was because of the Palestinian

intransigence. Impediment of negotiations by settlers is admitted, but (Sasson report notwithstanding [8]) settlers are viewed as troublesome extremists, rather than as an offshoot of deliberate and consistent annexationist policy of the Israeli government [9].

But the key Israeli politicians KNOW – the ethnic cleansing project could not possibly proceed otherwise. I have been wondering if every new minister in Israeli government gets a manual spelling the facts of life, written in the past by somebody like Golda Meir or Arik Sharon . Otherwise, how would you explain the remarkable continuity of Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories during the long years of the Occupation? How come the current maps of the Jewish settlements and the Palestinian enclaves match the Drobles and Sharon’s blueprints for colonizing the West Bank, prepared tens of years ago [10]? However I rather think that no such manual exists, and every minister is expected to figure it out by himself/herself. Yitzhak Rabin paid with his life for what then appeared to be a sincere effort to break away from the ethnic cleansing program (although Rabin never even tried to remove the settlements; and his was the idea of the infamous “bypass roads” for settlers; in the end, the Oslo years turned out to be a golden opportunity for settlement expansion under the cover of the bogus “peace process” ; see Ref. [5](c)). Barak, promoter of large scale colonization projects in the West Bank, seems to have made the last failed effort to set a (very limited) form of coexistence with Palestinians. But he must have finally decided that “if you cannot fight it, join it”, as indicated by his current activities as a new Minister of Defense [11].

It was Sharon, a brilliant politician, who, under the cover of the “disengagement from Gaza”, converted the ethnic cleansing program to the “only game in town” in the Israeli politics. By now, the entire Zionist establishment has been enlisted, from the Hebron settlers to the Shomer Hatzair (socialist youth movement), who, as army conscripts, provide those same settlers with security cover [12]. The current policies of the State of Israel are determined by the collusion of settlers’ insatiable appetite for land, and generals’ insatiable appetite for “action”. The elected leaders who execute these policies range from whole-hearted supporters to more or less willing accomplices, mindful of their careers. Presently, none of the leaders opposes actively the ethnic cleansing program. In the background, there is the ever-intensifying humming of propaganda which designates Palestinians – both citizens and non-citizens – as DEMOGRAPHIC DANGER WHICH SHOULD BE ADDRESSED [13].

The Israeli policy towards Palestinians can be summarized briefly – “inflict all the damage you can get away with”. But how do the Israeli leaders envisage the end of this game? The hard core nationalists spell it loudly – “transfer”, i.e. expulsion of Palestinians. But what do the main-stream leaders think – the ones who actually carry out the expulsion (presently – the internal one, to the Palestinian ghettos and the enclaves)? The operation is too well organized for one to believe that the end-game was never considered.

I believe that the final objective of our rulers is to set the stage for the second Naqba. Otherwise what is the point of the endless goading of Palestinians into violence? Any minimally thoughtful person understands that the Israeli policies in the Occupied Territories will lead to an eventual paroxysm of violence. Do not tell me that our leaders never thought about it. Granted, amongst them there are total opportunists who do not care about anything except staying in power. But somebody is pushing the ethnic cleansing forward – Sharon was the foremost among them, but judging from the well organized continuation – his associates are fully operational and in business. I think that these people are actually looking forward to the violence. They have the eyes on the real-estate prize – the West Bank. A paroxysm of violence would enable the State of Israel to annex the West Bank – the

entire West Bank , that is, while getting rid of most of Palestinian inhabitants. Just like in 1948. This is, in my view, the envisaged end-game. Where do they propose to expel the Palestinians? Jordan? The Gaza Strip? Syria? I do not know.

Will the ethnic cleansing succeed? The authors of these policies obviously count on it. The opening is there, with the present US administration backing Israel whatever it does, and the EU and the Arab countries unable or unwilling to stand up to the US. It is likely that the forthcoming outburst of violence will be initiated by the desperate and destitute Palestinians; and then, for umptieth time, our propaganda machine will be able to present us to the world as victims, and Palestinians as victimizers. Israeli responses will be presented as legitimate defensive actions. Later, the history may judge otherwise, but meanwhile (if the present political constellation persists for a while), who cares about the Palestinians.

But in the long run, disaster looms for Israel . This is since we are a small nation, and Palestinians are a similarly sized nation which is moreover a part of the vast Moslem world. The experience of South Africa suggests that the apartheid-type system imposed on Palestinians is not viable in the long run, even if it seems invincible at the beginning. As exemplified by the last year invasion to Lebanon, the performance of the Israeli army is deteriorating, corrupted by years of operating as a colonial militia. At the same time, the generals are becoming increasingly unbridled and reckless [14]. The Israeli economy rests on support of the similarly reckless US corporate-political establishment, but this very expensive support is unlikely to last forever. The ability of US to dictate the world is also likely to wane as Russia and China are coming to their own. And perhaps most importantly – the Dome of the Rock – the third holiest place of Islam – is at stake.

In my view, my country Israel has embarked on suicidal policies. Something like that already happened in the Jewish history, some 1940 years ago – see the “The Jewish War”, by Josephus Flavius. And just like in those days, most of Israeli public does not realize, that they are being dragged to disaster by their own leaders.

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Notes

[1] “Construction and development of settlements beyond the official limits of jurisdiction – July 2007”. A special report presented by the Peace Now Settlement Watch

http://www.peacenow.org.il/data/SIP_STORAGE/files/1/3201.pdf

[2] “Peace Now report: Settlements build on just 9 percent of state-allocated land”, by Amos Harel, Haaretz,

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/878925.html>

[3] “Land grab – Israel’s Settlement Policy in the West Bank” – B’Tselem ,
http://www.btselem.org/Download/200205_Land_grab_Eng.doc

[4] For recent glimpses into mechanisms of oppression and Palestinian land grab, and lives of Palestinians living under the occupation see, e.g., the following recent reports of anti-

occupation activists:

http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=22133

http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=19718

http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=22023

On the Civil Administration, see article by Ahiya Raved, YnetNews, 26 December, 2005

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3190569,00.html>

Quotation from the article "Sasson said Israel's Civil Administration in the West Bank, which was meant to take care of Palestinians and was established in accordance with international law, has in fact turned into the main body that handles all matters related to Israeli settlement activity."

[5] Comprehensive information on mechanisms of oppression and of Palestinian land grab, and on life under the occupation can be found, for example, in the following website sources:

a) Occupation Magazine – compilation of reports, news articles and

commentary from various sources – Israeli, Palestinian and international

media, and human rights and anti-occupation organizations, updated daily

<http://www.kibush.co.il>

b) Weekly reports of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights

<http://www.pchrgaza.org/>

c) Peace Now website, settlement section; see in particular subsections "Settlements in Focus", "Reports", and "Special Reports"

<http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=62>

<http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61>

<http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61&fld=495>

d) Palestinian media in English e.g. IMEMC <http://www.imemc.org> or Ma'an News <http://www.maanneews.net/en/>

e) BTselem The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories

<http://www.btselem.org>

f) The Electronic Intifada

<http://www.electronicintifada.net/>

g) MahsanMilim – Reports from the West Bank (Hebrew website run by anti-occupation

activists, English translation of many articles can be found at the bottom of each report)

<http://www.mahsanmi.lim.com/>

h) UN/OCHA (Office for Coordination of Human Rights Affairs in the Palestinian Occupied Territories) <http://www.ochaopt.org/>

f) Reports of Israeli women's human rights organization MachsomWatch (checkpoint watch)

<http://www.machsomwatch.org>

[6] "Unrecognized" – a tutorial movie by Adalah – the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights

<http://www.adalah.org/flv/eng.html>

See also recent reports of Bedouin home demolitions in the Negev http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=22078

http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=20783

[7] "The Middle East Peace Process Scam" by Henry Siegman London Review Bookshop (London Review of Books) Aug. 16 2007. (Henry Siegman, the director of the US/ Middle East Project, served as a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations from 1994 to 2006, and was head of the American Jewish Congress from 1978 to 1994.)

http://www.lrb.co.uk/v29/n16/sieg01_.html

[8] "What is the Sasson Report?"

<http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61&fld=343&docid=2012&pos=0>

Download summary of the Sasson Report from

<http://www.peacenow.org.il/site/en/peace.asp?pi=61&fld=343&docid=1454&pos=1>

Additional articles on the Report can be found in the Occupation Magazine www.kibush.co.il

[9] In support of the above beliefs, psychology kicks in, in addition to propaganda. Most people are blinded by the overwhelming need to believe in their collective righteousness. As the high school citizenship teacher of my daughter used to preach "Whatever happens, kids, remember, that WE ARE RIGHT".

[10] "1967", by Gadi Algazi, Mitzad Sheni, June 2007; English translation can be found at

http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=20936

[11] One recent example can be found in the article "Hamastan as a challenge", by Shlomo Gazit, NRG, June 25, 2007 <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/599/882.html>:

"Simultaneously with its total takeover of the Gaza Strip, the Hamas leadership implemented a unilateral ceasefire with Israel. For a whole week, not a single Qassam was fired at Sderot and the surrounding district. But then, after only one day as Defence Minister, the new Minister [Ehud Barak] authorized a new operation to seek out people on

the wanted list in the Khan Younis region. Five Palestinians were killed while others were injured. As if by magic, the firing of Qassams towards Sderot resumed the very next day.” At present, maintaining low grade violence appears necessary for the Israeli policies of presenting Palestinians as terrorists, and presenting Israeli colonization projects and military operations to crush Palestinians (both in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip) as “œfight against terror” .

[12] A telling if minor example is the well publicized pre-election breakfast of Yossi Beilin – the leader of the left-most Zionist party – with the right-winger Lieberman, promoter of “transfer” of Palestinians. Beilin was signaling – “I would also like to join the ruling club, I am flexible, and oh-so-decorative”. But the “decorative” slot was already taken by the unbeatable Shimon Peres, the Nobel Prize Winner for Peace. So Beilin was left behind, to linger in the unwanted opposition.

[13] See, e.g.,

“Jerusalem mayor: Israel may lose capital”, YNETnews, August 5, 2007 ,

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3397293,00.html>;

“Arab population in Jerusalem growing, study says”, Lilach Shoval, YNETnews, August 5, 2007,

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3397174,00.html>;

“On the conference on “demography” in the Haifa University” – Avraham Oz – Occupation Magazine –

http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=3217;

“It’s ideology, not demography”, by Avraham Tal, Haaretz, Oct 23, 2006

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/776636.html>

“New proposal: Transfer-for-cash plan”, by Mathew Wagner, The Jerusalem Post, January 21, 2007

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1167467783009&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

“The threat of the `demographic threat`”, by Gideon Levy, Haaretz, July 21, 2007,

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/884512.html>;

“Little Ahmadinejads” – by Gideon Levy, Haaretz, June 8, 2007 ;

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/868829.html>;

“Poll: 68% of Jews would refuse to live in same building as an Arab”, by Eli Ashkenazi and Jack Khoury, March 22, 2006, Haaretz,

http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=12824;

see also the Adalah movie “Unrecognized”, ref. [6], on treatment of the Bedouin citizens of Israel

[14] There is a possibility of use of nuclear weapons by the state of Israel but it is unlikely that such use will bring a stable geopolitical future for the country.

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