

US Attitude to Hamas: The Disturbing Parallel With Nicaragua

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Global Research, April 06, 2006

6 April 2006

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

What is currently transpiring in the Occupied Territories is by far a worst-case scenario, ironically one made possible with the direct help of many Palestinians themselves. The democratically elected Palestinian government is now officially isolated, as many Palestinians cannot see beyond their own narrow — and frankly irrelevant — ideological differences and immaterial factionalism.

Others cannot resist their total reliance on foreign, mostly European funds to run their mostly self-exalting NGOs, whose tangible contribution to Palestinian life is still disputed.

The final outcome is that turning Palestine into another Nicaragua is working. That was the intent from the moment Hamas was declared victorious in the Parliamentary Elections last January. US mainstream media conveyed the over-all feeling that an utter miscalculation in US foreign policy took place. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice charged back, leading a campaign of defamation and coercion aimed at politically and financially isolating the democratically elected Palestinian legislators, further solidifying with the former corrupt political elite.

Similarly, Nicaragua of the 1960s and 70s seemed of little concern as long as our formidable man, Somoza, ruled with an iron fist. His elites robbed the country senseless until the Sandinistas vigorously emerged, toppling him and eventually his US-armed National Guard. Predictably, the US took on the new Sandinista government, which was described then by the international development organization Oxfam as “exceptional..(in its) commitment to improve the conditions of the people and encourage their active participation in the development process.” On the other hand, it was obvious that Somoza had fled with his country’s entire movable assets.

For obvious reasons that have more to do with US strategic reasons than the welfare of the people of Nicaragua, the Sandinistas were labeled a ‘cancer’ that had to be extracted. To do so, Nicaragua was completely cut off, denied any form of aid and was forced to squander its resources to fight off Somoza’s former National Guard, renamed the Contras. The rest, of course, is history. Bullied, isolated and terrified, the people of Nicaragua couldn’t withstand the US-led multifaceted pressures, and were forced into submission, ditching the Sandinista government in a rare democratic election, orchestrated by the Sandinistas themselves. The human cost for such American adventurism was of course unbearable to ordinary Nicaraguans, though it constituted a mere continuation of US foreign policy in Central America and all over the world.

The Palestinian case is, more or less, being handled the same way: the multi-faceted

internal and external pressures, the unreasonable demands, the boycott and the collective punishment. All elements are indeed falling into place to remanufacture that same nightmarish scenario which is hoped to eventually lead to diplomatic deadlock, regional and international isolation and further deterioration in the already unstable (read non-existing) Palestinian economy. On the external front, the new Palestinian government was met almost immediately with unfair demands of unilateral renunciation of violence and the unconditional recognition of Israel. The fact that Israel was not urged to reciprocate was an obvious indication of the objective of such demands. The intent was of course discrediting the new Palestinian government, knowing fully that it was unlikely to succumb to such pressure.

Similarly, a regional isolation campaign was underway, one that resulted in denying the Palestinian government an invitation to the Sudan Arab League Summit, a sign that Arabs are too adhering to the assigned task. The real mockery is that various Palestinian factions too have opted to steer away from what they sense might be a challenging and perhaps costly period in their history. Rather than solidifying in the face of danger, Fatah intentionally impeded Hamas' attempt to join the new government and the socialists failed to see through their ideological constrictions.

Unfortunately, Hamas was forced to form a government and to seek its legislative approval alone. The ground is now prepared for the US to unabashedly cement its international boycott of the 'terrorist', democratically elected Palestinian government, and for Israel, to finish off demarcating its border as it pleases, turning the scattered leftovers of the Occupied Territories into South African-style Bantustans.

In fact, the escalation of the US-Israeli war is already underway as US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters on March 27 that his government rejects Hamas' call for dialogue, once again outlining Washington's incongruous conditions as a stipulation to precede any talks. Israel on the other hand, according to the Sunday Times, is preparing a massive military campaign in the West Bank that would continue 'until the last of the terrorists are dead or under arrest.' Considering that Hamas has unilaterally refrained from counter violence for over a year, Israel's anticipated campaign, which will reportedly see the reoccupation of most population centers, is an act of collective punishment against the Palestinian people for electing a parliament that refuses to unconditionally concede to Israel's egotistical definition of peace.

The bottom line is that the stage is set for Palestinians to pay, for Israel's illegal settlements policy to be officiated as part of the country's permanent borders and for the US to prolong its international campaign of economic and political suffocation. Even if Palestinians stubbornly resist the pressure, as they most certainly will, Israel will be allowed to dictate its own 'solution' to the conflict unhindered, for reprimanding Israel is now equal to siding with a terrorist group.

For some Palestinian groups to completely succumb to the role of abetting such a scenario is most troubling. It's this thoughtlessness that has indeed continued to expose the vulnerability of Palestinians before Israeli and American schemes. While, in my opinion, a religious ideology is not the most helpful formula for any Palestinian polity and that suicide bombings were the single most tainting act employed by Palestinians in recent years, I believe that all Palestinians must recognize that the impending fight is of greater consequence than the dialectics of religion and politics. Israel is clearly reaching the final stretch in its fight to deny Palestinians every single legitimate demand for freedom,

sovereignty and true peace and justice. Failing to see that is tantamount to partaking in the Israeli plot to deny Palestinians any say in the shaping of their future, which is sadly growing dimmer by the day.

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