

Three weeks into the Gaza War - a somber and sober assessment of the situation, with some historical perspectives

by Adam Keller

In 1987, the Palestinian uprising, the First Intifada, broke out. The State of Israel was faced with the undeniable fact of millions of Palestinians living at its side and under its military rule - and with the need to deal with them and find a solution.

For more than ten years, Israeli public opinion was leaning towards some kind of a peaceful solution.

The handshake between Prime Minister Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat raised many hopes.

For several years, what was known as "The Peace Process" gained considerable public support.

But the failure of the 2000 Camp David Summit, which was blamed on "Palestinian intransigence", was followed by the Second Intifada and suicide bombers blowing up buses in the streets of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem - and the situation completely changed.

Most Israelis became convinced that peace with the Palestinians was impossible, that "there is no partner" and "no one to talk to".

For the purposes of this analysis it is irrelevant to argue whether or not the Israeli public was right getting to such conclusions. There are people (of which I am one) who believe that peace is entirely possible and that Israel does have a Palestinian partner, should it want one. The fact is that we remain in a shrinking minority.

The Labor Party, the party of Rabin and Peres which became identified as "The Party of Oslo", shrank to a small crumb. Israeli society and the political system turned in other directions.

For several years, Prime Minister Sharon proposed another solution - a unilateral withdrawal.

No need to look for a partner, no need to negotiate. We will shape our borders ourselves.

We will decide from which territory we will depart and where we will stay. In particular, we will carry out a unilateral "disengagement" from the Gaza Strip.

At first, large parts of the Israeli public bought this formula. On its basis, Sharon established the Kadima (Forward) Party. Momentarily Kadima seemed bound to become Israel's next ruling party.

But at the border of the Gaza Strip, Hamas kidnapped the soldier Gilad Shalit.

Hamas then successfully demanded the release of more than a thousand Palestinian prisoners for returning Shalit .

And at the border of Lebanon - from where Israel unilaterally withdrew even earlier - three soldiers were kidnapped and the Second Lebanon War broke out.

These incidents, and rocket barrages from Gaza and Lebanon, convinced the Israeli public that the unilateral withdrawal solution does not work, that an area from which the IDF withdraws becomes a base for hostile activity.

So, what's left? The Status Quo Solution. The Solution of No Solution. Just don't look for any solution.

Leave the situation as it is. Continue the occupation of the West Bank. Continue the suffocating siege on the Gaza Strip from which we "disengaged".

"Manage the Conflict" and leave the Palestinians stuck in some backyard where the citizens of Israel can ignore them and forget about them.

This was the main policy that Netanyahu offered to the citizens of Israel. He won again and again, in repeated election campaigns - not only because of the "Bibist" cult of personality, but also and mainly because most of Israel's citizens agreed with what he had to offer: "Conflict Management", sanctification and perpetuation of the status quo.

Even when Netanyahu was momentarily voted out and for one year Israel had the "Government of Change", headed by Bennett and Lapid, they continued with exactly the same policy. It was the explicitly stated

policy of Bennett and Lapid that they would not take any political or diplomatic initiative whatsoever towards the Palestinians.

Some of us have been warning for a long time that this policy is inherently unsound and bound to eventual failure.

The Palestinians will not accept forever living under occupation and oppression, and the awakening will be painful.

When we sounded such warnings, we were mainly thinking about the escalating situation on the West Bank. We considered the possibility of a widespread Palestinian uprising, a Third Intifada.

In such a situation, it would have been possible to tell the Israeli public that the occupation is the root of evil and that ending the occupation is the only solution.

This would undoubtedly have provoked angry opposition from the right. Still, one could hope that in the face of an uprising by Palestinians, fed up with the occupation, at least a part of Israeli society would have been open to our message.

But as we know, the status quo of the "Conflict Management Solution" shattered in a very different way that no one expected.

The awakening was far more painful than anyone could have imagined. The brutal, violent and criminal path chosen by Hamas united Israeli society in an outbreak of blind hatred and gave Israel tremendous international legitimacy for a destructive war.

In a clear and unequivocal way, Israeli society has now chosen a solution of force and more force and even more force, brutal and unrestrained force. From the abyss of historical memory rose again the "solution" that David Ben-Gurion implemented at the foundation of the State of Israel: the Nakba solution.

The mass expulsion of Palestinians across the border, throwing them as a bunch of helpless refugees into the lap of the Arab countries.

This is clearly the logic behind the IDF's brutal order to residents of Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip to evacuate to the southern part. They were supposed to continue further south, cross the Egyptian border and populate huge new refugee camps in Sinai. The border would have then closed behind them and Israel would have gotten an ethnically cleansed Gaza.

Thus Israel would have "gotten rid" of the Gazans - at least, that's how it

seemed to those who came up with this abominable idea.

But what worked in 1948 no longer works in 2023. General Sisi, President of Egypt, hastened to close the border and explicitly warned that an Israeli attempt to push the residents of Gaza into Egypt could lead to war.

Not that Sisi is really fond of the Palestinians. But he understood very well that Israel pushing a million or two million angry and embittered Palestinian refugees into Egyptian territory could seriously undermine his regime and possibly cause its complete collapse.

But since it is not possible to deport the residents of Gaza to Egypt, a much darker "solution" has already come on the Israeli public agenda - the Genocide Solution, the simple explicit mass annihilation of people. For the first time in the history of the State of Israel - the country whose creation was supposedly a response to the Nazi Holocaust and the extermination of six million Jews - we hear an explicit talk of Genocide. While the official propaganda repeats the assertion that the " Hamas are the new Nazis", there are those among us who actually want the State of Israel to take Hitler's mantle even while fighting the " Hamas Nazis". I already mentioned in a previous article the " Exterminate Gaza" stickers on the streets of Tel Aviv and the " respectable " broadcaster Roy Sharon dreaming of " a million bodies in the Gaza Strip".

These were followed by a startling and nauseating television interview. Avida Bachar, a member of Kibbutz Be'eri, barely survived the massacre perpetrated by Hamas - which in the Israel of October 2023 gave him the moral authority to make a televised call for a Gaza Genocide: " There will be no resurrection for this area called the Gaza Strip! Not one palm tree, not one well will remain there! Not one house, not one person! If I could, I would also poison the fish in the sea!" In place of the city of Gaza, which in Bacher's vision would be razed and completely wiped off the face of the earth, there would be flourishing potato and peanut fields worked by Israeli farmers.

One cannot blame too heavily a man whose wife and children were murdered in front of his eyes just a week ago, and who is manifestly overwhelmed with blind vengeful hatred, bringing him to conceive such monstrous visions.

But it is certainly necessary to be seriously concerned and alarmed at an Israeli public television network (Channel 13 News) broadcasting this

detailed Blueprint for Genocide in a sympathetic interview and without a single word of criticism.

There can be no doubt that at this moment there are quite a few Palestinians wandering the roads of the Gaza Strip, who have just seen their family members killed by the bombings of the Israeli Air Force. It is quite plausible that one of them, filled with anger and bitterness, would nurture the dream of seeing green Palestinian fields where the razed city of Tel Aviv once stood. But no one would get such a Palestinian to express his dreams of revenge in a sympathetic and extensive television interview.

Mass demonstrations are now taking place around the world in support of the residents of the Gaza Strip, replacing the manifestations of sympathy for Israel in the first days after the massacre committed by Hamas. Many such demonstrators are waving banners calling "Stop the Genocide of Gaza!".

As of now, it is (yet?) not Genocide. But even without Genocide, what has already happened and is happening is horrific enough.

As of today (Monday 23.10) the UN Humanitarian Center provides the following data

In 98 Gazan families, ten or more family members were killed. Another 95 families lost six to nine family members. Altogether 4,385 Palestinians were killed, of whom 967 were women and 1756 were children. 13,561 were injured - this, when 19 hospitals were hit by bombings, 23 ambulances were bombed, and the hospitals have difficulty functioning in the absence of fuel and medicines and doctors are forced to perform surgeries without anesthesia.

15,100 housing units were completely destroyed and another 10,656 housing units were damaged in a way that does not allow habitation. 42% of all housing units in the Strip were hit and damaged and it will take a long time before it will be possible to repair the damage.

Entire neighborhoods were completely destroyed and wiped out, especially in Beit Hanon, Beit Lahia, Sajaya, the area between Gaza City and the Shati Refugee Camp, and in Abbasan Kabira. (Is the Air Force already starting to make place for Avida Bachar's potato and peanut fields?)

The UN continues to update the data every day, the number of dead and all the other terrible data continues to rise.

<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-15>

The United States demanded the introduction of humanitarian supplies into the Strip (deliveries so far meet only a small part of the needs). But at the same time it vetoed a ceasefire proposal at the Security Council.

The citizens of Israel for the most part do not care about what is happening in Gaza, they do not know and do not want to know. And there are also quite a few Israelis who do know and who rejoice in what they know, with the joy of unbound revenge. Who want to see ever more blood in the streets of Gaza.

So, what to do in the face of this terrible situation, the like of which we have never known?

First of all, not to give up. Continue to struggle, continue to raise our voice, even in difficult conditions of isolation. Even when anyone who utters a critical voice - even to simply condemn all killing of children, whatever their ethnicity - may be denounced as "a terrorist supporter" and become a target for the harassment of the authorities and the violence of the thugs of the extreme right.

Second, to hope (and pray, those who believe that Someone is hearing prayers...) that the credit that President Biden and the European leaders give to Israel is not unlimited, and that they will at least prevent atrocities and horrors from becoming a full-fledged Genocide.

To struggle, to hope, to pray, and to guard the embers of peace and coexistence between the two peoples in this land. And more elementary than peace - try to nurture decency and simple humanity and let them survive the tide of hatred and bloodshed.

Sooner or later, it will become clear to the citizens of Israel that the "solution" of unrestrained brute force does not work either. It will probably only happen after many horrors - but happen it will, simply because such a solution cannot succeed. And then, the moment just might come when we can again offer to the Israeli public the idea of peace. Such a moment might come, but it might not. Anyway, we will not lose hope.

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