



Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The Israeli War on Gaza



2014:
Year of tension and aggression





The Palestinian Issue Traversing its Most Difficult Stage The Israeli War on Gaza... A Case Study

The Roots... Failure of the Negotiations, Al-Aqsa and the Prisoners:

To the naked eye, the “Hebron Operation” last June 12th may appear to have been the obvious and direct cause of the Israeli onslaught on Gaza, when a group of Palestinians kidnapped and killed three Israeli settlers. The fact is, however, that the ramifications of the Israeli escalation extend much deeper, with the government of the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu having stymied the Americans’ efforts to pave the way for the peace negotiations that were meant to take place last April.

With Netanyahu’s refusal to adhere to his commitments to liberate the fourth batch of Palestinian prisoners on March 29th, 2014, all hopes for the resumption of negotiations vanished into thin air, despite the efforts of the American Secretary of State, John Kerry; and the situation became more explosive with many expecting it to lead to a third Intifada (uprising).

In the thick of the Israeli persistent intransigence regarding the peace files, the City of Al-Quds/Jerusalem was subjected to unprecedented Israeli violations against the Holy Mosque of Al-Aqsa, with increased encroachments on its precincts and with the occupation forces barring worshipers from the right to perform their prayers there, to the extent that the Likud deputy, Moshe Feigaliu, Submitted a proposed bill to have the holy Al-Aqsa mosque partitioned “In time and Space” between Muslims and Jews, in a replication of what happened for the Abrahimi mosque in the city of Hebron in the West Bank.

In the first half of 2014, matters got even worse with Netanyahu persisting in his disdainful policy with no regard whatsoever to the Palestinians, thus igniting their increased mass protests to demand the liberation of the Palestinian prisoners.



Shortly before the War broke out:

Three Israeli settlers went missing in the Southern West Bank, in an operation that was dubbed “The Hebron operation” and the Israeli government capitalized on it to enflame the Israeli masses and prepare for a pre-arranged war in preparation for an onslaught similar in weight to that of the July-August war on the Gaza Strip, which was named the “Protective edge”.

The “Hebron operation” was actually linked to a Palestinian retaliation to the Israeli abusive treatment of the Palestinian prisoners. Some, as a matter of fact, saw it as a direct outcome of such abuse, as well as a result of the Palestinians’ desperation and the rising land-grab operations in Al-Quds/Jerusalem. Also the operation coincided with the 50th day of the hunger strike started by 300 or so Palestinian prisoners; some of whom were nearing death. In the evening of June 30th, the bodies of the three missing settlers were found after an 18-days search, in a cave near Halhal, North of Hebron, and the Israeli army then coldly killed seven Palestinians in reprisal.

The First Bullet:

This heightened tension was a prelude to a bloody aggression against the Gaza Strip on the part of Israel which effectively started, launching raids on July 8th, 2014, prompting a response from Hamas and the Islamic Resistance with rockets launched after the Jewish settlers abducted, tortured and burnt alive a Palestinian child, Mohamed Abu Khadir, on July 2nd 2014. Scores of the Palestinian prisoners liberated under the deal of exchange for the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit were reincarcerated. These developments coincided with the mass protests in Al-Quds and inside the Arab zones of 1948 as well as many other regions in the West Bank. The escalation included an exchange of shelling attacks between Israel and the Palestinian resistance in Gaza, which later developed into a full-blown indiscriminate Israeli aggression on Gaza, its infrastructures and its inhabitants.



A Carnage Under the Pretext of Self-Defence:

The war broke out and grew into an all-out, if not complete, Israeli ground invasion that resulted in an untold amount of human and material damage meted upon the Gaza Strip by this aggression from 8th July to 26th August 2014, the date of the conclusion of long-term ceasefire, with no less than 2,149 martyred and 11,166 wounded Palestinians.

Public statistics indicate that the martyrs included more than 942 children, women and old people, the number of wounded people reached 5,802 and the number of the displaced reached 475,000 Palestinians, as a result of the aggression, not to mention the carnages perpetrated against 91 families that were barbarically wiped out to the last individual such as to be completely cleaned off the slate of the civil registry, in addition to 532 martyrs, along with other carnages carried out at the (Works and Relief) Agency resulting in 40 martyred and 280 wounded people, the raising to the ground of 18,000 homes, the partial demolition of 41,000 homes and structural damages to 145 schools, in addition to another 75 Agency schools which have been destroyed completely, as well as the shelling and destruction of 7 health clinics or hospitals, 13 first aid centres, 16 ambulances, 180 mosques, 71 of which were completely torn down, as well as 10 Islamic and one Christian cemeteries.

The total number of displaced people reached 461,643, out of whom 280,000 were in the Agency's schools, 44,800 in public schools and 138,000, in family refugee compounds.

The total economic losses have been estimated at 2.4 billion US Dollar along with the partial or complete demolition of 19 of the Electric Company's facilities, the destruction of 22 charitable organizations, leading to 180,000 citizens being affected, with the number of demolished water distribution and sanitation centers reaching eight. The time needed for the rehabilitation of the Gaza Strip is estimated at 20 years or so, with a cost figured out by Palestinian officials to exceed 6 billion US dollars, given that the rehabilitation process is likely to be impeded by the Israeli siege over the crossing points.



The First Islamic Ministerial Conference:

Hardly two days after the Israeli aggression on Gaza, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held its first ministerial conference to rally the Member States in a drive to define a number of immediate objectives to build pressure to end the aggression.

On July 10th, 2014, the OIC held a first expanded extraordinary meeting at the foreign minister's level, at its headquarters in Jeddah, in which it reiterated, in the strongest terms, its principled condemnation of the Israeli savage raids on Gaza, using combat airplanes and heavy weaponry, ravaging scores of homes and buildings, blowing them up over the heads of their inhabitants, martyring thus scores of innocent Palestinian citizens and maiming many others.

In its final declaration, the OIC urged the international community, and in particular the UN Security Council, to rise up to their duties and put an end to the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and see to it that Israel complies with the resolutions of international legitimacy and international law. It also called on the OIC Member States to act in favour of the early convening of a Security Council open emergency session to consider Israel's violations and aggressions. It further called on the OIC ambassadorial group in Geneva to act also in favour of the early convening of an emergency session of the Council of Human Right, with a view to set up a special international committee to investigate Israel's crimes and violations against the Palestinian people's human rights and its continued aggression against the Palestinian citizens. Likewise, the OIC launched an invitation for the establishment of a global legal committee to press on with the review of the dossier of the Israeli leaders' crimes, to file suits against them at the International Criminal Court and to follow through with the file against Israel as a racist country.



An International Investigation Committee:

The immense damages thus sustained by Palestine constituted solid grounds for a firm resolution to be issued by the UN Council of Human Rights in Geneva, thanks to the mobilized efforts of the OIC Member States at the Council. The resolution condemned, in the strongest terms, the extensive, systematic violations in a glaring defiance of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, at the hands of the Israeli military machine. The resolution also called for an immediate stop of the aggression and demanded that Israel ends, in all forms, its illegal blockade on the Gaza Strip which, in itself, constitutes a mass-punishment perpetrated against the Palestinian citizens – The Council's resolution also called for the launch of an international investigation into the violations perpetrated by Israel and which led to the death of hundreds of Palestinian citizens and the displacement of thousands more, along with the destruction of the infrastructure, the fields and dwellings. The International Human Rights Council had already decided on July 23rd, 2014 to dispatch an independent international investigation task-force, to promptly investigate all the violations of international law and the human rights laws in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Eastern Al-Quds/Eastern Jerusalem, and more particularly in the Gaza Strip. The committee has already been set up and is awaiting authorization from Israel to start its mission.

The Security Council:

The OIC General Secretariat also mobilized efforts, through its Member States, for the adoption of a clear and firm international stand at the UN Security Council's level, to put an end to the Israeli aggression. These efforts led to the convening of open-ended international sessions on the 10th, 20th, and 22nd of July 2014 to this affect. However, the opposition raised by certain influential states stood against the achievement of a resolution to condemn the aggression and put an end to it.



Violation of Combat ethics:

The International Independent Human Rights Commission of the OIC, expressed its stand against the Israeli aggression through two declarations issued respectively on the 15th July and 11th August, 2014.

The Commission held Israel as fully and solely accountable, as the occupying force, for its appalling actions, killing innocent Palestinians in such cold blood. The Commission called on the UN Security Council to put an end to these indiscriminate killings and to adopt appropriate measures to bring to court those responsible for the unleashing and the execution of these criminal acts.

Also, the OIC reiterated its stand, rejecting and denouncing the aggression which did not even spare mosques. The OIC Secretary General, Mr. Iyad Ameen Madani, issued a statement on August 3rd, 2014 in which he denounced the Israeli aggression on Gaza extending even to the destruction of mosques with no remorse or regard to international laws and combat ethics.

Second Meeting in Two Months:

The OIC expanded extraordinary meeting of the Executive Committee at the ministerial level, called for the convening of a donor-conference for the reconstruction of what had been destroyed by the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, and expressed its deep concern over the deteriorated situation in Gaza and the grave humanitarian crisis there as a result of the Israeli aggression and blockade.

The meeting was held at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah on Tuesday 12th August, 2014 under the chairmanship of Prince Saud Al-Faisal, the Saudi Foreign Minister, and with the attendance of the Palestinian Prime Minister, Rami Alhamadallah, the OIC Secretary General, Iyad Ameen Madani and a number of Member States' Foreign Ministers. The meeting called, in its final declaration, for the adoption of the necessary measures to stop the Israeli aggres-



sion. It also called for the OIC Ministerial Contact Group, set up for the purpose, to promptly start contacting and reaching out to the influential international players and acting with them for an end to the Israeli aggressions.

In his statement to the meeting, Prince Al-Faisal announced that the Saudi Development Fund was continuing to allocate Saudi Arabia's financial commitment for the benefit of the reconstruction of what had been destroyed by the Israeli aggression, to the tune of half a million US Dollars.

In turn, Mr. Madani said that the prolonged humanitarian tragedy endured by the Palestinian people in Gaza places on the shoulders of the OIC Member States a responsibility which is both individual and collective, to take the necessary steps to face up to this challenge, pointing out that the key challenges were the need to ensure the reopening of the crossings, to allow the Palestinian citizens to live in a society where stability may prevail, to deploy every effort to relaunch the peace process, to protect the Palestinian people against the recurrence of the Israeli aggressions and massacres and to consolidate the national consensus government that rallies all the different Palestinian factions.

In practical terms, the Secretary General laid stress on the need to achieve a number of requisites for an effective and sustained action for the fulfillment of the objectives set out by the OIC, through the allocation of the necessary budgets for a juridical procedure with the International Criminal Court, as well as action at the level of international fora to have Israel recognized as an Apartheid State, and the adoption of a budget for the elaboration of two studies, one economic and the other financial, for the rehabilitation and reopening of Gaza Airport and the construction of a seaport in the Strip.

On his part, Al Hamadallah said that one of Israel's objectives behind the recent aggression was to undermine the Palestinian national cohesion and consensus government, to isolate Gaza from the Palestinian bloc and to inflict damage to the PLO representation, while reaffirming at the same time that the Palestinian people, despite the incurred deaths, sufferings and longtime ordeal, shall remain united.



Appreciation and Prompt Humanitarian Action:

As soon as the Israeli aggression on Gaza came to a halt through a standing cease-fire on 27 August last, the OIC Secretary General expressed his satisfaction with this development and called for the cease-fire to form a stepping-stone towards evolving a radical solution to the issue of the Israeli blockade on the Palestinian people in Gaza, through the reopening of all crossings, facilitating access for humanitarian assistance and commodities such as to facilitate the start of the process for reconstructing of what has been destroyed by the Israeli aggression, in addition to providing the necessary means to enable the Palestinians to live in dignity.

Immediately after the war ended, a multiparty humanitarian mission headed for the Gaza Strip on 29th August. The mission was comprised of representatives from the OIC General Secretariat. The Islamic Development Bank, the Islamic Solidarity Fund, and the permanent mission of the Palestinian State to the OIC, in pursuance of the urgent appeal launched by the OIC on 17th July last to the Member States and their relief organizations to extend all forms of assistance and support to the Palestinian people, particularly in terms of urgent medical assistance for the Gaza Strip.

An OIC delegation undertook a field visit to the Gaza Strip on 1 – 4 September to take stock of the realities on the ground and assess the damages caused by the aggression. The delegation, which was led by Amb. Hesham Youssef, OIC Assistant Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, toured different zones in Gaza and witnessed the immense damages caused by the Israeli shelling and air-raids against the civilian infrastructures and residential districts.

The delegation held intense meetings with the concerned parties and the medical officials and listened to a detailed account from the relevant quarters on the aggressions which were meted on women, children and civilians. It also met with the inhabitants of the targeted areas and recorded eye-witness accounts of the aggression.

The four-day visit aimed at identifying the damages, documenting the aggression and submitting a report thereon



to the OIC General Secretariat in order for it to complete its efforts and commitments as to the implementation of the provisions set out in the two final communiqués of the Executive Committee's ministerial-level extraordinary meetings.

Urgent Requirements to Contain the Fallout of the Aggression:

This crisis places the OIC Member States before a standing commitment to provide the necessary urgent humanitarian assistance and relief to the Palestinian citizens in the Gaza Strip, to press for a sustained cease-fire between the two parties and to support the Palestinian humanitarian requests.

There is also a need to press for the Israeli siege to be lifted, to contribute to the rebuilding efforts in the Gaza Strip through the convening of a donor conference, and to provide support for the national consensus government and consolidate the Palestinian internal reconciliation.

At the political level, there is a need for action at the Security Council to press for the reactivation of the peace process, in accordance with a well-defined time-line, to end the Israeli occupation, in addition to legal action through the establishment of an international consultative commission to pursue Israel to bring it to account and to end the occupation.

and the tragedy continues...



Special report on the War on Gaza – issued by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation – Information Department

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