

9 February 2020

Blueprint for Palestine

The Palestinians deserve better representatives based on gender equality and the implication of younger generations

By: Dr. Noha Khalaf



Following the declaration of the Trump-Netanyahu “deal of the century”, and despite a number of worthwhile though seemingly repetitive critiques of the deal, with most of them visualizing the deal as though it is some kind of political earthquake, a ‘new shock of civilizations’, a clean break from past policies disrupting an otherwise peaceful flow of Palestinian history, the putrid deal sounds more like a very old story with a new package.

Such an approach which overstates the importance of the deal ends up in a roundabout way justifying the pre-deal Oslo status quo, and therefore falls into the trap of the two “brokers” who aimed to make it sound like a big bang media event in order to shield their own critical political status on one hand and to camouflage the truth of the matter which is that this deal only officializes past Israeli policies against the Palestinian people and their legitimate aspirations for a homeland.

In most of the critiques expressed against the deal, maps have been handed around and shown on TV networks. The Palestinians however, as a live people, are totally absent from these maps as though the Zionist pretention of a ‘land without a people’ still holds.

The maps that come out of the pockets of politicians with magical stunts are faceless. They could have been maps for real estate sales with no political significance. The ordinary Palestinians are absent, and appear as inanimate objects, as silenced items in a big auction sale in a post-modern slave market. Their sufferings, whether they are forgotten in Israeli jails, struck by bullets during their nonviolent marches, drinking poisoned water, rotting in refugee camps is of no concern to the new deal map makers who are all originally either real estate agents or crooked brokers, land robbers and arms merchants. People and humanity are totally absent from their imagination.

The slogan raised everywhere in Palestine and the Arab world in response to the deal “Palestine is not for sale” unfortunately somehow falls into the same real estate logic, forgetting that in order to sell, there must be a seller and a buyer which is far from being the case. Israel is neither buying nor selling, it is expropriating and grabbing land and erasing history, while the other legal parties to the transaction are anonymous, since the Palestinian people, the legitimate owners of the land have already been expropriated and marginalized except for a few political brokers who would have loved the cash, had they been in a position to sell what does not belong to them anymore.

In the case of Palestine, the original representation of all the Palestinian people wherever they are, whether inside or outside Palestine, was through the Palestine National Council, established first in Jerusalem in 1964, and then functioning for two decades as a parliament in exile composed from various grassroots organizations and resistance movements including also independent representatives. Most of the following sessions were then held in Damascus, then mostly in Algiers, the last two mock sessions of this council were held after Oslo, first in Gaza in 1996 and another truncated one in Ramallah where various members from the Palestinian Diaspora could not attend while various political factions refused to adhere.

It is therefore fair to say that this Palestinian representative all inclusive body has been paralyzed since 1991 and has therefore lost its historical significance and popular legitimacy as a legislative body representing all Palestinians, while attempts were made to replace it de-facto with a new Palestinian legislative council an offshoot of the Oslo Accords representing only the Palestinian from the Occupied Territories, excluding all those remaining in the refugee camps and in the diaspora outside Palestine, notwithstanding all Palestinians living in pre-1948 Palestine.

Thus the original aims of the Palestine Liberation organization and its national council were overturned and reversed and that the tide of the Nakba of 1948 was not reversed but seemed to have been strengthened, drowning little by little the Palestinian people in the quick-sands of political impotency.

The question of the fashioning of a Palestinian representation subservient to the Israeli agenda has been the cornerstone of various so called 'peace plans' opening the way for more and more Zionist expansion and aggressiveness, while attempting to incur a radical change in Palestinian History and memory and eliminating what was first referred to as final status negotiations: on the status of Jerusalem, the question of the right of return of refugees, the question of freezing the settlements, while gradually marginalizing the Palestine National Council, the Palestinian parliament in exile, leaving the Palestinian people in disarray with their future in limbo.

The last National Council which was called for in 1986 in Gaza under Clinton's supervision ended two decades of independent Palestinian representation, with some pretensions that the PNC still exists, but mummified along with some of its members, with the hope of waking it up as a ghost to be used when needed and were other options to fail, while stopping the emergence of any real representation and stifling the voice of the oppressed and struggling Palestinians

That is why, it is time to visualize other new legitimate forms of Palestinian representation, which would not only unify Palestinians but also voice the people's genuine aspirations which have never been realized but rather baffled to this day.

While a new representative body could retain its old name (if the majority of the Palestinian people wished that), yet contrarily to previous forms of representation based mainly on quotas from the different old resistance movements, whose different

ideologies and conflicting outlooks and interests have led to a paralysis in Palestinian representation, what is needed today is a more democratic concept of grassroots representation based on an intergenerational approach tilting in favor of a majority from the younger generations, particularly on gender equality, with representatives from each refugee camp, each village, town and city, from across all portions of historical Palestine not only in order to stand in the face of all unjust solutions and plans, but to reverse the downward slope and build a brighter future, worthy of such a steadfast and struggling people.

** Palestinian ex ambassador and researcher in strategic and international affairs. -
khalaf.noha@gmail.com*