**An unending tragedy**

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Palestine was never an empty piece of real estate that the Jews eyed as their biblical homeland. The 1948 Arab-Israeli War was a result of Israel declaring the creation of a Jewish state. This led to the massacre and expulsion of 750,000 Palestinians. The exodus came to be known as the Nakba or Catastrophe. Seventy five years on, Palestinians remain brutalized prisoners in their own homeland.

Zionists think that there are circumstances in history that justify ethnic cleansing, forgetting that Israel itself was created with the slogan to “never forget” the holocaust. Elie Wiesel, an Auschwitz survivor, wrote: “Never again is not just a slogan, it is a prayer and a vow to never again glorify vile, ugly and dark violence”. The ferocity of Israel’s vile genocidal violence speaks of someone set out to vindicate the Holocaust. That the people they target had nothing to do with it never seems to rein in their pent up demons.

Israel’s atrocities are of such magnitude that prominent Israeli historian and academic Ilan Pappe was moved to record the same in his book, aptly titled ‘The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine’. In a recent article titled ‘Why I support Palestinians’, Pappe narrates “the horrific reality Israel created in Gaza when it sealed the region, imposing a hermetic siege starting in 2007, accompanied by the relentless killing of children in the occupied West Bank”. He adds: “This violence, not a new phenomenon, has been the permanent face of Zionism since the establishment of Israel”.

The West maliciously indicts Hamas as the mother of all evils. It also justifies the merciless collective punishment in Gaza as a right to self-defense. The reality is that Israel has been killing Palestinians since 1948, thirty-nine years before Hamas was even founded and fifty-eight years before it won the Palestinian legislative election.

Hamas has, over the years, been coerced to lay down arms and recognize Israel. Yasser Arafat shared the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize with Yitzhak Rabin for forging the Oslo Peace Accords. The first Palestinian leader to recognize Israel, he was branded a terrorist and confined to his compound which Israel bombed time and again. Allegedly poisoned, Arafat was eventually airlifted to a Paris hospital where he passed away.

As for Rabin, he was murdered by Yigal Amir, a Jewish extremist and a law student. Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the Oslo Accords. Calling Rabin a Nazi and a traitor, he led a mock funeral protest against him with a coffin and a hangman’s noose. Netanyahu has consistently been against the two-nation theory, usurping and creating Jewish settlements on land granted to the Palestinians under the Oslo Accords. Netanyahu now leads the most fanatically nationalist government in Israel’s history which has recklessly imperiled the life of innocent Israelis too as witnessed in the recent Hamas attack.

Israel’s Washington abetted occupational mindset and genocidal policies are the biggest deterrent for a negotiated settlement. After the recent Hamas attack, Israel ordered a complete blockade of Gaza while giving the residents 24 hours to evacuate. The horrendous use of prohibited munitions on Gaza and ordering an impossible evacuation is a collective punishment of a civilian population. This is a war crime, a crime against humanity and genocide.

The duplicity of the Washington-led West can be well gauged from its reaction to the invasion of Gaza and that of their frothing at the mouth over Russia after its Ukraine invasion. Washington had the ICC implicate President Putin for alleged war crimes and issuing an international arrest warrant for him. All international polities go comatose to Israel’s repeated genocidal atrocities.

The apathy of the Muslim world is, as it has been with Occupied Kashmir and was with occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, writ as large as never before. Israeli planes have used Egyptian air space to bomb Gaza. The Arab League and OIC, toothless as they are, have been reduced to pathetic hand-wringing colloquy.

In a post Hamas-attack interview, Gideon Levy, an internationally acclaimed Haaretz columnist, summed up that the Hamas attack did not occur in a vacuum and how it had shattered the myth of Israel’s impregnability. He said: “Will Israel learn its lesson? No; the threats of flattening Gaza only prove that we haven’t learned a thing. The arrogance is here to stay even though Israel is paying a high price once again”.

Painting a bleak and depressing future for Israel, he asserted that if Israel invaded Gaza, it would be one of the biggest war crimes Israel ever committed. He also warned that if Netanyahu’s threat “to change the Middle East” and defense minister Yoav Gallant’s threat that “Gaza will never go back to what it was” are implemented, “Israel could be on the brink of a wider war”.

Levy minced no words about the atrocities heaped on the Palestinians saying that Israel and its allies are “in their treatment of the Palestinians, they have played with fire for years, if not decades. Netanyahu bears great responsibility for what happened and he must pay the price. We’ll fire at innocent people, take out their eyes, smash their faces, expel, confiscate, rob, grab them from their beds, carry out ethnic cleansing and of course, continue with the unbelievable siege of the Gaza strip and everything will be alright”.

Talking about all the Palestinian people and not just those in Gaza, Levy posed the question: “How is it possible to forget that these are human beings whose ancestors were expelled from their land and placed in refugee camps where they would remain? These were human beings whom Israel dispossessed and expelled and whom it conquered again in their land of refuge and then turned into animals in a cage.” This, in essence, is the unending tragedy of Palestine.

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