**The Palestinians need another Arafat**

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We have in recent times seen the deadly consequences of Israel-Palestinian conflict, extending over 11 days, where 13 casualties on Israel side were answered by nearly 300 casualties on Palestinian side. Then came cease fire which prevented further damage. Prior to that in the conflict of December 2008, 13 casualties on Israel side were answered by more than 1300 casualties of Palestinians. Numerically Palestinians suffered 100 times more damage than the Israelis. In other words, Jews are 100 times stronger and richer and more educated and more inventive than Muslims, and this fact Hamas is not ready to concede, even if it is proven by the verdict of history. Going by the history, and assuming that there would be no ceasefire, the likely result would be that this tiny population of Palestinians would be decimated. Hamas by its own admission is a militant organisation (and in the eyes of Israel, a terrorist outfit) is hell-bent to destroy Israel. There is no room in their manifesto for any negotiations. And if things have to be decided by the sheer muscular strength of the contenders, then the chances of victory for Hamas are 1: 100.

Is there no solution to this human tragedy? Only the statesmen and visionaries can make the best out of the worst situations to protect their people and their honour. The strength of Palestinians is outweighed by one hundred times against their present rival, and in such a situation application of force by the weaker side would prove to be suicidal.

From the way the situation in Palestine is swiftly going in favour of Israel— the late Yasser Arafat stands vindicated in both his position and polices. Thus another statesman of his calibre is needed to lead his nation towards the path of peace and honour

Ironically, there is no living statesman in the entire Arab world, like Abraham Lincoln, Nelson Mandela, Lee Kuan Yew, Martin Luther King or Mohammad Ali Jinnah; or one from their own breed like Jamal Abdul Nasir, Yassir Arafat, or King Abdul Aziz Ibn-e-Saud. The entire Muslim world is disunited, riven with their internal dissensions. Amongst the above Arab statesmen, Yasser Arafat comes closest to the Palestinian’s cause being their first leader as well. He was Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) from 1969 to 2004 and President of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) from 1994 to 2004. He was a staunch Arab nationalist, and founding member of the Fatah political party, which he led from 1959 until his death in 2004. Arafat was the first leader who began to shift his approach from open conflict with the Israelis to negotiation. In 1988, he acknowledged Israel’s right to exist and sought a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. In 1994 he settled in Gaza City and promoted self-governance for the Palestinian territories. He engaged his party in a series of negotiations with the Israeli government to end the conflict between Palestinians and Israel. These series of negotiations led to the Madrid Conference of 1991, the Oslo Accords of 1993 and Camp David Summit of 2000. In 1994, Arafat received the Nobel Peace Prize, together with Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, for his efforts for peace. Later with the growth of militants of Hamas in his party, which is hell-bent to destroy Israel, all the progress achieved in these negotiations for peace fell to the ground. The Palestinians got divided into two factions, one led by Mahmoud Abbas who believed in peaceful negotiations (the line followed by Yasser Arafat) and the other by Hamas, the militant faction who did not believe in the existence of Israel. This split in his party shocked Arafat greatly due to which he remained in poor health, and later died in 2004 under mysterious circumstances.

Arafat, despite his many sacrifices to secure peace for his nation, remains a controversial figure. But most Palestinians generally view him as a martyr who symbolised the national aspirations of his people. Israelis regarded him as a terrorist. Several PLO leftists, frequently denounced him for being too lenient in his concessions to the Israeli government. But the fact remains that he was a realist, and a visionary. He had keenly realised that after 6-Day war of 1967, the balance of power in the Middle East had gravely tilted in favour of Israel, who being victorious had physically occupied a major chunk of Palestinian land, it was nearly impossible to retrieve the conquered land from Israel particularly when Muslim world was disunited and the entire Western block including the U.S were giving Israel full military and moral support. The Arabs on the other hand were wallowing in their past glory, while they were completely bereft of modern knowledge particularly science and technology. In such a background instead of choosing diplomacy, Hamas adopted policies based on belligerent jingoism, due to which thousands of Palestinians lost their lives and honour. This pugnacious stance of Hamas is dangerously pushing the Palestinians to the brink of disaster.

From the way the situation in Palestine is swiftly going in favour of Israel and against the plight of Palestinians, the stand and policies of Yasser Arafat stand vindicated. Thus another statesman is needed to lead his nation on the path of peace and honour.

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