**[‘Zero plus zero is zero’](https://www.dawn.com/news/1625166/zero-plus-zero-is-zero)**

[Abbas Nasir](https://www.dawn.com/authors/112/abbas-nasir)Published May 23, 2021 - Updated 2 days ago

The writer is a former editor of Dawn.

THE Muslim ummah is transparent about its inability to do anything to stop Israel’s brutality and state terrorism against the Palestinians living under an ever-shrinking occupied land. Progressively, Palestinian territory has been/is being annexed by the Zionist state.

There seems little interest in Muslim world capitals to move anything apart from the lips. As an OIC meeting was decrying the Gaza raids, flights of airlines belonging to the UAE and Turkey were flying to Israel as scheduled. Diplomatic relations remained normal.

Turkey’s foreign minister flew to Pakistan on a special aircraft and then returned home with his Pakistani counterpart on board for parleys on the continuing [mass murder of Palestinians](https://www.dawn.com/news/1623960) — some 250 including 66 children at last count. (Some 12 Israelis were killed with most Hamas rockets unable to penetrate Israel’s missile defence shield.)

But I have not read anything to suggest that Turkey halted its annual trade totalling $6 billion (approximately $4.5bn in exports and $1.5bn in imports) with the Zionist state, or recalled its ambassador or reduced the number of diplomats serving at the two Israeli missions in Ankara and Istanbul.

Palestinians will continue to take to the social media to shake the world’s conscience.

Equally, none from among the other Muslim countries has made any tall claims, unlike Pakistan whose foreign minister’s interview with *CNN* was celebrated by his senior cabinet colleagues and supporters as a big win. God knows if the win was over Israel or the media or something else.

The foreign minister was accused of making anti-Semitic remarks by the *CNN* host as he talked of how the Israeli state gets favourable treatment in the Western media because of “its connections … and deep pockets”.

The foreign minister’s chosen words also divided opinion among the educated Pakistanis over whether it was the host’s bias that led to the accusation or whether there was merit in the argument that he should have been more judicious in his choice of words. While these two camps argued with each other, what was missed were the woods for the trees.

**Read:** [*'Anti-Semitic' remark or Western media's hypocrisy? — FM Qureshi's CNN interview sparks debate*](https://www.dawn.com/news/1624889)

To me, the *CNN* interview was a lost opportunity. Instead of getting bogged down in the media’s role and motives, the focus should have remained sharply on Israeli brutality and the massacre of innocent civilian Palestinians in Gaza as the minister addressed a global audience.

The apartheid state’s actions were not in isolation and came after months, in fact years, of settlement construction activity at a mass scale that has further shrunk the Palestinian areas of Gaza and the West Bank. Each expansion is preceded by forced expulsions and the burning of crops, including laden olive trees belonging to the Palestinians.

The current round of Israeli atrocities were unleashed after protests and Hamas’s reaction to a series of incidents in occupied East Jerusalem where Israeli Arabs were not just forced out of their ancestral homes by settlers backed by police but faced lynching attempts too.

The naked injustice of attacks on Arabs in East Jerusalem, their businesses and expulsion from their ancestral homes (in some cases going back nearly five centuries) brought the simmering Arab anger to a boil. Hamas never lets such an opportunity go by to solidify support, and fired largely ineffectual rockets.

This was enough for Israel to unleash its enormous war machine that rained death and destruction on Gaza’s civilian population to exact a heavy death toll. Since homes were also flattened, among those killed was tragically a large number of women and children ie non-combatants by any definition.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu’s motivations were clear in, first, letting the East Jerusalem madness continue to provoke a Palestinian reaction and then to call the murderous rampage of his own forces an exercise in the ‘right to self-defence’.

After the 2020 elections left him 24 seats short of the 61 required to form a majority, Netanyahu presided over a shaky coalition. Fresh elections were called for March this year in which his [party’s position weakened further](https://www.dawn.com/news/1621903) as he lost another seven seats.

The opposition wanted to form a coalition with Israeli Arab parliamentarians so the prime minister was keen to drive a wedge between the Jewish parties and members representing the Arabs whose Ra’am (United Arab List) candidates have done well this time.

Of course, solid evidence is hard to pinpoint but he is the main beneficiary of East Jerusalem’s forced home expulsions and the reaction. One can ask why the prime minister is so keen to remain in office even at the cost of the blood of innocent women and children being spilled.

Well, he is facing three cases involving bribery, fraud and breach of trust and the trial is underway. A *Reuters* report explained that “Under Israeli law, a prime minister is under no obligation to stand down unless convicted. No other minister is protected in this way, so there are legal and political reasons why Netanyahu wants to stay at the top”.

Perhaps, the violence of the past couple of weeks may have converted to his side some parliamentarians who were opposing him. More significantly, it would be difficult for any of his opponents now to sit with the Arab List members of the Knesset.

Possibly having achieved his political goals, he agreed to an Egyptian-brokered [‘ceasefire’](https://www.dawn.com/news/1624786). The most recent nightmare of the Palestinians in Gaza has come to an end and the destruction of their homes, office blocks, schools, trauma and burns units, libraries, bookstores and water and power plants has been halted.

Any longer-term relief or the restoration of their land would hinge on a new generation of media-savvy Palestinians who will continue to take to the social media to shake the world’s conscience with words and images showing Israel’s war crimes and drive a change in thinking.

Even if not dramatic, open divisions among the Democrats in the US are an encouraging sign. What other hope do the Palestinians have? As for the ummah, the words of Egyptian nationalist Saad Zaghloul about Arab unity ring true: Zero plus zero is equal to zero.

*The writer is a former editor of Dawn.*

[**abbas.nasir@hotmail.com**](http://mailto:abbas.nasir@hotmail.com)

*Published in Dawn, May 23rd, 2021*