The next Nakba

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| `HE said flat out, don`t talk to me about history,` Aaron David Miller says of Jared Kushner, the US president`s son-in-law and the architect of the `deal of the century` unveiled last week by Donald Trump.  `He said, I told the Israelis and the Palestinians not to talk to me about history too,` recalls Miller, a former `peace negotiator` who was among the people Kushner consulted in formulating a plan that conforms with Benjamin Netanyahu`s wildest dreams.  Its announcement was apparently timed to bolster Netanyahu`s chances of securing a majority in next month`s Israeli elections, the third within a year after two inconclusive contests. It is also supposed to help Trump maintain his ascendancy with the Christian evangelicals devoted to Israel as a conduit for the end times, when they expect to be raptured away on the stairway to paradise while the rest of us roast in hell.  The irrepressible Haaretz columnist Gideon Levy has a somewhat different take on the matter. `In a flimsy hospital gown, injured, barefoot and confused, without food or water, with a catheter attached and wearing a diaper, Gaza resident Omar Abu Jeriban was tossed on the side of the road on June 13, 2008 and lef t to die,` he wrote last week in the Israeli newspaper, adding: `The other day, the entire Palestinian people became Abu Jeriban.  He goes on to argue in the same article that the announcement in Washington is tantamount to the third Israeli Nakba, or catastrophe: `After losing most of their land, property and dignity in the first [1948] and their liberty in the second [1967], now comes the third to crush whatever is lef t of their hope.  The complexities of the past can readily be discounted, of course, if you ignore history, as Kushner was determined to do.  His plan, obviously devoid of any Palestinian input, envisages the incorporation of all Jewish settlements, illegal under international law, into Israel, plus the annexation of 30pc of the West Bank. In return, if the Palestinians play nice, they will get a bunch of non-contiguous municipalities, linked by bridges or tunnels, with Israel controlling the `security` aspects of the ghettoes and almost everything else.  Furthermore, some of the Palestinians who are now Israeli citizens will be stripped of that dubious privilege and allocated to the proposed `state`. A capital on the least developed periphery of Jerusalem is a possibility, and they can call it Al Quds if they so desire.  Not surprisingly, Mahmoud Abbas, the lame duck presiding over the so-called Palestinian Authority (PA), has rejected the plan as well as any communications with the Trump White House. He doesn`t want Trumpto be able to claim that Abbas has been `consulted`, and he has been quoted as saying that he doesn`t want to go down in history as the man who sold out Jerusalem.  Let us not forget, though, that Israel and its perennial allies deemed Abbas an appropriate replacement for Yasser Arafat precisely because he was deemed readily malleable, and throughout his tenure the PA has collaborated with Israeli security agencies.  It hardly matters any more that Arab League foreign ministers have endorsed Abbas`s view of the unfolding fiasco, given that the League has for years been amplifying its irrelevance. The US and Israel know that some of the richest Arab states are effectively on their side. The UAE, Bahrain and Oman even sent their ambassadors to the distinctly Zionist celebration in the White House. The Saudis stayed away, perhaps only because its crown prince has lately been restrained by his f ather.  Perhaps the only implementable aspect of Kushner`s plan is the annexation part, and there were indications that Netanyahuwould proceed almost immediately to achieve that goal, but he appears to have been held back by admonitions from the White House, with even the president`s men wary of a hasty step without any guid pro quo.  Broadly speaking,though, global outrage at this travesty has been conspicuous by its absence. That may in part be a measure of how seriously the rest of the world takes the initiative -which is to suggest it has been disregarded on account of its transparent absurdity. The indifference could also be a measure, though,0fhowlittleempathythePalestinian cause attracts, from the Arab and Muslim worlds to Europe.  Of late, France equates anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, and Germany has outlawed the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement that sets out the kind of approach that proved so effective against South African apartheid.  Let`s not forget, though, that for a long time the most powerful western states smiled on the racists in charge of South Africa and looked upon Nelson Mandela as a terrorist, shifting gear only when public pressure piled up. As Kushner is aware, though, it`s useful to ignore the past and there is no telling when, or whether, the tide might turn. m mahir.dawn@gmail.com |