

"If this is not an uprising, what is it?"

Interview with Dr. Fadi Elhousseini



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Could it be a full-scale war? On what conditions could the situation de-escalate?

I don't think it will be a full-scale war. I don't believe any party wishes any further pain and sorrow. However, one might argue that the scale of the ongoing violence was set clearly since day one. The more the occupation continues killing innocent civilians and targets residential buildings in Gaza, the more Israeli cities will be targeted by the resistance and the cycle goes on and on. Another factor would be Israel's resumption of assassination policy because this development might deteriorate the situation even more. In brief, this equation means that the only way to de-escalate tension is to end attacks on Gaza and to halt Israeli illegal acts in Jerusalem – which triggered the current cycle of violence in the first place.

What are the differences and the similarities between the 2014 situation and the ongoing events?

The major difference is the source of tension - Jerusalem: Jerusalem is a red line; no Palestinian can tolerate seeing Jerusalemites (Palestinians in Jerusalem), holy places and the city attacked and remain silent. The inclusion of Palestinians 1948 is another difference. They were dragged into this situation by the acts of the Israeli government who provoked their feelings.

What remains the same is Israel's insistence to deny the Palestinians from their basic rights. Their basic right might vary (freedom to participate in the elections, freedom of worship, human rights...etc.), yet the concept remains the same. This attitude of denial and arrogance haven't changed, leading to another cycle of violence. Another similarity is Israel's failure to acknowledge the unity of the Palestinian people. What happens in Jerusalem echoes in Gaza; what happens in Gaza echoes in Ramallah...and so on.

What caused the tensions and their transformation into violence and shooting each other?

Jerusalem is Palestine's eternal Capital and recognized as an occupied city by the UN and International Community. Several UN resolutions emphasized this fact and considered any attempts by the occupying power – Israel – to change facts on the ground as illegal. The occupying power has never stopped its efforts to change facts on the ground and impose supremacy by force. Things have escalated recently when Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) raided Al-Aqsa Mosque, surrounded and indiscriminately fired at defenseless worshippers and bystanders, injuring hundreds. As I said earlier: Jerusalem is a red line. The Palestinian resistance gave the Israeli government time limit to stop its aggression and attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque and unarmed worshippers. When the Israeli forces continued its brutal acts, the resistance sent warning rockets that loomed around Jerusalem. You might be able to expect what came next; Israel attacked the Gaza Strip killing dozens of unarmed civilians – 13 children were killed so far– hundreds were injured and several residential buildings were destroyed.

I have to assume here what would be the Israeli response to this question: Hamas launched rockets and attacked Israeli cities ///and/// that Israel left Gaza and Hamas keeps attacking Israel from time to time. As per the first part, Israel tends to establish specific point in history as a starting point, and of course blaming the Palestinian side. For example, the starting point for the ongoing tragic events started – according to Israel – when the rockets were fired from Gaza, disregarding what preceded (Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa Mosque, Sheikh Jarrah, and Sepulcher Church). “Perhaps the reader can exercise and try explore how things started in 2014!” As per the second part, it is true that Israel left Gaza, yet the Palestinians are one people. You can't imagine that an aggression targets one city in your country and the other cities remain quite because simply they weren't attacked!

The evictions, or the cancellations of the Palestinian election, maybe else: what is the root problem of the recent clashes?

The root of all the problems is occupation and the lack of a serious international will to end it. What you mentioned in your question is just details. Denying the right of Jerusalemites to participate in the Palestinian national elections (in accordance with signed agreements) was disappointing to all the Palestinians and led to the delay of the elections. The continuous illegal practices and provocations were another frustrating factor. Brutally attacking unarmed civilians on baseless grounds added up. For example, on May 1st Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) attacked peaceful Christian worshipers and denied them their basic right to celebrate the Holy Fire ceremony, at the Sepulcher Church in Jerusalem. One week ago, and until now, IOF assaulted residents and solidarity protesters who rejected occupation's plans to evict Palestinian families from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood.

What went wrong at al-Aqsa on 9 May? (that day seems like a turning point)

Again, it is the arrogance of the occupier who assumes that he can dictate discriminatory policies by force, including targeting unarmed worshippers and trying to evacuate them from Al-Aqsa mosque on the holiest night of Ramadan. It was a turning point and reminds me of the eruption of the second Intifada when Ariel Sharon assaulted all the Palestinians when he broke into the mosque with the protection of hundreds of soldiers.

Israeli Arabs have held violent protests in many Israeli towns. Is it already an uprising?

It is a fact that 1948 Palestinians (almost 20% of the population in Israel) have been suffering from discrimination within the Israeli society. However, over the course of the past two months, multiple killing incidents that targeted 1948 Palestinians raised the feelings of dismay and disappointment. With Israel's ruthless assaults and crackdown on worshipers in Al-Aqsa mosque, such feelings of frustration turned into anger and rejection. One might say that the Israeli government didn't foresee the consequences of its illegal acts and the cost of the crimes committed by the settlers in the occupied city Jerusalem. As I mentioned earlier, these acts provoked and angered every Palestinian in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Gaza, Hebron, Nablus, diaspora and refugee camps, in Negev, Haifa, Acre, and Nazareth. If this isn't an uprising, what would it be?

What is the purpose of Hamas with the rocket attacks?

Disregarding the fact that the Palestinian people are one people is a huge mistake. Attacking Jerusalem means attacking Gaza or Ramallah. Hamas and the other resistance groups in Gaza launched warning (home-made) rockets to caution Israel on the gravity of crossing the red line: Jerusalem. Here the arrogance of the occupying power prevailed and insisted to flex her muscles. As a result, in the first airstrike Israeli killed over 20 civilian Palestinians, nine of them were children. After that, Israel fully destroyed a 13-story building causing the displacement of several families. Such blatant attacks led to a response from Hamas and the other resistance groups.

What could be a solution for the Jerusalem issue?

The magical recipe for the issue of Jerusalem and the other issues is: Ending Occupation and Making Peace. A just and lasting peace is indeed achievable through the two-state solution and the realization of an independent state of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living in peace and security with all its neighbors. In fact, ending Israel's occupation to Palestine and making peace will not only solve the issue of Jerusalem, but will also end all cycles of violence, put an end to illegal settlements, lift the illegal siege on the Gaza Strip, with its multifaceted humanitarian repercussions, and eventually remove embarrassment from governments who support Israel's illegal practices. Peace and the realization of an independent state of Palestine will usher a new era of stability and prosperity for the whole region. Unfortunately, the current Israeli leadership is seeking temporary and personal political gains rather than making a lasting peace that would pour in favor of future generations.

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