

OPINION

Intifada in Palestinian political thought needed

by Hisham H. Ahmed

What has been happening in the occupied territories for nearly four years obliges all those concerned to re-examine the nature of the fundamental contradictions between Palestinians and Zionists on the one hand and Palestinians and the United States on the other. This re-examination will help us translate the goals and achievements of the uprising into concrete results. The sacrifices and steadfastness of the Palestinian people, in spite of the occupation's brutalities, especially in the past three-and-a-half years, have proven without doubt that their will and revolutionary spirit are stronger than the highly-developed Israeli military machinery. The people's determination to go to the streets all over the West Bank and Gaza Strip to resist the occupation, in spite of their realization that they will incur heavy material and human losses, is a vivid illustration of the extent of the people's willingness to struggle, even if they are armed with nothing but their will.

The uprising of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories has defied the belief that the complex Israeli military structure is irresistible, especially given the modest capabilities at the disposal of the people under occupation. Furthermore, the uprising has constituted a clear, frank response of the people to the defeatist, compromising tendency in the Palestinian and Arab arenas.

The dominant belief in occupied Palestine, especially among those who continuously participate in the process of resistance, is that the political steps taken by the official Palestinian leadership are not conducive to practical results, in so far as the implementation of the legitimate objectives of the Palestinian people and the exercise of their national rights

in all of Palestine are concerned.

The primary objective of the Zionist regime is the subjugation and humiliation of the Palestinian people. This objective is being made clearer every day through its policies of beating, the firing on unarmed civilian demonstrators, the besieging of camps, villages and cities and the starving of their inhabitants, the closure of educational institutions, the continued attacks on hospitals and the imprisonment of thousands in Israeli prisons without trial or due process of law. Zionist leaders make no secret of this objective. Rather, they express it on every available occasion. The policy of subjugation is not the reflection of a sudden, emerging circumstance linked to the current right-wing Israeli leadership. Rather, it is a natural organic extension of the Zionist idea of colonizing Palestine, initiated at the beginning of this century.

In so far as American policy-makers are concerned, their purpose is to provide the political and diplomatic cover as well as the moral, economic and military support to the Zionist regime to enable it to implement its colonial and expansionist projects.

From the beginning of the Palestinian uprising nearly four years ago, American policy-makers have worked untiringly to provide their civil society with justifications for Israeli soldiers' brutalities against unarmed Palestinian civilians. The United States opening of a dialogue with the PLO in late 1988 after the latter had provided one compromise after another was meant to absorb Palestinian frustration, primarily in the occupied territories. Therefore, it should have come as no surprise that the level and modalities of the dialogue have been determined by the United States through its ambassador in Tunis. The Palestinian side was handicapped, and actually chained,



by conditions and agendas imposed upon it by its American interlocutor. The failure of the PLO dialogue with the United States was inevitable, given the intentions of the United States.

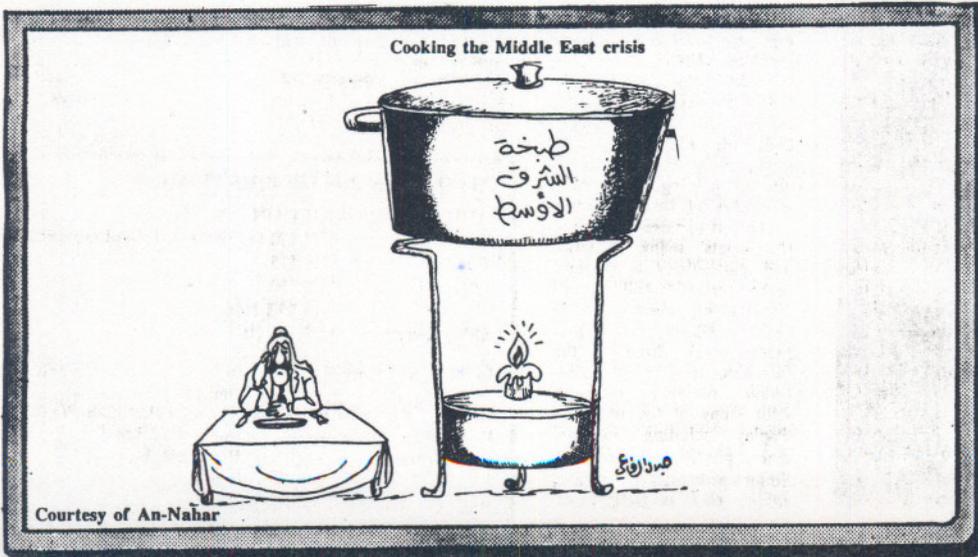
Such facts are abundantly clear to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. It is their clear understanding of the political equation which led them to launch their uprising in the first place and to pursue it over the past three-and-a-half years. In effect, the Palestinian masses have expressed their dissatisfaction with what the official Palestinian political establishment has been advocating. The continuation of the Palestinian uprising, in a manner unprecedented in history, represents a clear reassertion that the Palestinian people under occupation are determined to

achieve concrete results through resistance on the ground and not to indulge in wishful thinking and day-dreaming, which have crippled some Palestinian thinkers in exile. The people under occupation believe in concrete resistance. They do not see the acceptance of U.N. Resolution 242, the recognition of the Zionist entity's right to exist or the diminution of the significance of the armed struggle as moves supportive of their resistance to the occupation. The people under occupation do not see that an international conference, which some on the outside dream of, would be an effective means for resolving the Palestinian question.

As long as the Palestinian side speaks from a position of weakness and compromise and as long as the United States plays the major role in determining the direction and nature of official Palestinian policy, no success can be hoped for. The compromises given by the official Palestinian side are the very same conditions specified by the United States over the years. As long as the United States perceives that the official Palestinian side is willing to make compromises, even if the process were to take some time, it will continue to ask for more compromises.

The ineffective policy-making process on the official Palestinian level at this stage could tremendously disrupt and actually harm the Palestinian people's resistance to the occupation. Therefore, what is imperative at this stage is to formulate a strategy conducive to and compatible with that employed for the last three-and-a-half years by the people under occupation. The uprising should be considered a concrete lesson in solidarity and struggle.

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