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Sixty Years of Dishonesty is Long Enough

“The modus operandi selected by Olmert to conduct state affairs is drawn from the world of entertainment and anchored in the dominant media culture: He simulates reality and paints virtual solutions to real problems. The country is a reality game. The real problems are not solved, they are “treated”: They are being worked on, they are being talked about, a dialogue is created around them. This way the government creates a false image of activity that gives the impression that it is seriously working to further the state’s affairs. In practice it only produces ‘processes’ that are deceptive and distorted.”

Uzi Benzami for Ha’aretz Newspaper 23/04/08

Each morning I check the news on the internet to try to keep abreast of what is going on in the world since we tend to get a bit isolated in our “world view” here. I also check the Israeli paper, Ha’aretz, to see what they are reporting. In all the local Israeli media there is much talk of the “celebrations” that will be happening on and around May 14th, which marks the 60th anniversary of Israel creating an independent state. May 15th the Palestinians will hold a commemoration of a different kind. They will mark 60 years since “Al-Nakba” or the Catastrophe, when they lost their homes, their land, and their independence.

I recall ten years ago when Israel was celebrating its 50th anniversary sitting in my apartment in Bethlehem waiting for the vice president of the United States, Al Gore, to get up on the podium with Israel’s Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, to see what Gore had to say. That day I had already lived here for several years and had experienced the oppression of the Palestinian people, both inside Israel and the occupied West Bank. My apartment in



Bethlehem was located near Rachel’s Tomb where the conflicts between the Israeli soldiers and the local “shabab”, Palestinian boys, took place on a daily basis, guns and tear gas against sling shots. Many nights I was not able to go home after a long day at work because the tear gas would be too thick in my apartment. Many times I had run out of water as the supply trucks were not permitted to enter Bethlehem and the water lines (controlled by the Israeli government) were shut off for weeks at a time. I had spent long hours paying condolences to families who had lost someone to the conflict; a daughter shot while coming home from school, a son stolen from his bed and imprisoned and tortured to death to force his father into becoming a collaborator, the holocaust that occurred in Jenin Refugee camp.

As I waited for Gore to appear on the stage I hoped beyond hope that he would acknowledge the reality, the truth. I hoped that he would at the very least acknowledge the Palestinians and the loss that they suffered as a result of the creation of Israel. Or that he would at least mention their existence! I was disappointed. No, I was infuriated by his comments. He said, "I speak for all Americans..." in showing our love and support for Israel. I almost threw my coffee cup at the television. How dare he speak for me!

Israel is a reality. It was recognized by Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian officials on the White House lawn when he shook hands with Rabin. There is no dispute there. There has never been, however, recognition by the Israeli government of the rights of the Palestinian people and what happened to them in 1948. There has never been a recognition that Israel created a refugee problem that still exists 60 years later. There has never been a discussion that Jerusalem should be an open city for all religions because the Israeli government will never "give it up".



Photo courtesy of PCHRGZA

As the media splashes headlines about the visit of President Bush we continue to hear the lamentations of the families in Gaza whose children have been killed, we continue to hear the crunch of collapsing concrete as more homes are demolished, we continue to hear the drone of the bulldozers as they clear the land for even more new settlements. The reality continues to be submerged while the "spin machine" keeps churning. To make matters worse, we hear threats like "we will annihilate them" from potential leaders of our government. How will we ever achieve any kind of peace among the peoples of the world when our "leaders" spew such hate and venom rather than words of recognition, acknowledgement or acceptance?

As we prepare to live through another Independence/Al-Nakba day my mind keeps returning to a very famous saying, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." When will people finally put aside their cosmetic fixes, their masks of concern, their "false image of activity" and acknowledge the truth, have the courage to speak the truth to power, have the fortitude to shun hypocrisy and be *honest* brokers for peace?

Let's face it, we are manipulated in what we are allowed to hear, read, learn. Even Wikipedia, where so many people get their information, is slowly being taken over by CAMERA, the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, so that their bias will appear as truth. When will we quit trying to one-up each other and acknowledge the holiness of ALL people?

Sixty years is long enough. It is time to give sight to the blind, those who have believed the rhetoric and the falsehoods and the “virtual reality”. It is time for the release of the captives; it is time to let the oppressed go free.

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