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Israel, Palestine, and Netanyahu's Agenda

Abbas's Choice

by ROBERT FANTINA

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As the United States continues to babble about a negotiated settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Israeli Prime Murderer Benjamin Netanyahu has clarified for the world what the U.S., and any thinking person, has known for years: Israel simply isn't interested. On July 11, as Israel was using U.S.-provided weaponry to massacre Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Mr. Netanyahu said this: "I think the Israeli people understand now what I always say: that there cannot be a situation, under any agreement, in which we relinquish security control of the territory west of the River Jordan."

So, if the Israeli people always understood this, is it likely that that U.S. was somehow confused about it? When Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, hardly a great statesman by any measure, says that Palestine doesn't have a negotiating partner, does the U.S. not understand his point?

Mr. Netanyahu's statement is interesting only in how it again enables him to slap the U.S. in the face. He boldly proclaims that the negotiations, which the U.S. has oh-so-helpfully arranged over the years, are simply a farce, political theatre designed to appease the world, but without any substance whatever.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, a hapless figurehead simply doing Israel's bidding, was unsuccessful in drafting a framework for discussions that was acceptable to Israel. Of course he was. If his 'framework' mentioned even the remote possibility of Israel adhering to international law and ending the occupation of the West Bank, this cannot be acceptable to Israel's leader who will not, under any agreement, 'relinquish security control' over the West Bank.

This is nothing new. Even former President Richard Nixon, who left office in August of 1974, in his memoirs, described Israel thusly: "...[A]n attitude of total intransigence on negotiating any peace agreement that would involve the return of any of the territories they had occupied."

But Mr. Nixon was the anomaly; U.S. presidents have, since Israel's catastrophic establishment, gone out of their way in its service. President George H. W. Bush was very active in the pro-Israeli cause during his four-year administration. Among his 'accomplishments':

- * Blocking the PLO from membership in multiple international organizations;
- * Complete disregard of unspeakable human rights violations committed by Israel against Palestinians living in the occupied territories;
- * A vision of peace based solely on Israel's terms;
- * Opposition to U.N. resolutions addressing Israel's violations of international law in crimes committed against the Palestinians;
- * Support for massive Jewish immigration to the occupied territories, and
- * Increasing financial assistance to Israel, despite that country's pursuit of policies that contradicted U.S. principles.

So what is the U.S. to do today? The Israeli lobby in the U.S. very generously supports candidates who do Israel's bidding. And just what do international law, justice and human rights have to do with election campaigns? So what if Israel spits on the United Nations, which has issued more resolutions condemning it than it has of all other nations combined? So what if international law demands that Israel retreat to its pre-1967 borders? Who cares if over 500 innocent Palestinian children, some as young as infants, were blown to bloody bits by IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) terrorists, with bombs provided by the U.S., just three months ago? What does it matter if press vehicles were bombed by Israel, along with hospitals, U.N. refugee centers, schools and mosques, all in violation of international laws, laws the United States has signed? What difference does it make if Israel prevents desperately needed supplies and building materials from entering the Gaza Strip? Heaven forbid anything be done that might offend AIPAC (American Israel Political Affairs Committee), and cause it to withhold some of its largesse from candidates and elected officials who dance to its bloody tune.

Recent polls in Israel indicate that most Israelis are perfectly fine with the brutal occupation that their nation perpetrates. South Africa, a generation ago, was able to make a fairly peaceful

transition to some semblance of democracy, but its apartheid practices didn't have the overwhelming support that Israel's apartheid practices appear to have today.

So, what can be done? The U.S. knows, and has long known, that Israel isn't serious about negotiations, but its hands are tied by AIPAC's purse strings. The United Nations has proved itself ineffectual in this (and many other) human rights tragedies, so no real help can be found there.

Sadly, the Palestinian people must look to their own weak, corrupt leader, President Abbas. He took the brave step three years ago when Palestine applied for 'Non-Member Observer State' status within the U.N., a move that was passed overwhelmingly. However, he has done little since then, other than assisting Israel in oppressing peaceful protest in the West Bank. Despite the unspeakable crimes Israel committed in July of this year, he has yet to petition the International Criminal Court for redress. Nor has he submitted applications to join the countless other United Nations agencies of which Palestine is now eligible (when Palestine joined UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the U.S. and Israel stopped paying dues, thus losing voting rights in that organization).

Certainly, there are risks. Israel collects taxes that Palestine needs to pay workers, and when Palestine displeases its cruel master, that revenue is withheld. Home demolitions, the cost of which Palestinians are actually charged for, increase when the mood to do so strikes Israel. Surely, Palestine's membership on the International Criminal Court would trigger a huge increase in home demolitions and settlement building, both of which are illegal. But Palestinians have been suffering for decades under a cruel occupation; it must be stopped, and Mr. Abbas is perhaps the only one who can stop it. Yes, Palestinians will have to endure more suffering during the process, because the international community, led by the United States, will continue to support Israel's criminal, unspeakable violations of the human rights of the Palestinians, but they have proven their resiliency time and again; they will get through this, too.

Mr. Abbas is the leader of Palestine, albeit a weak, corrupt one. If he wishes history to see him differently, he must make difficult choices on behalf of his people.