

COMMENT

A Palestine that Israelis can't see

By SAM BAHOUR

THE status quo in Palestine and Israel is unsustainable. Anyone involved in the reality on the ground in this part of the world knows this for a fact. As such, one can view the current Palestinian bid to the UN General Assembly for non-member state status as a last-ditch effort by the secular Palestinian leadership to save whatever may be remaining of the two-state paradigm as the basis to ending Israel's 45 years of military occupation.

A significant driver of the current political paralysis is the stereotype, designed and propagated by Israelis, that Palestinians living on the other side of the separation barrier are violent and not deserving of freedom or independence. As such, most Israeli Jews do not see Palestinians as equal human beings, and thus any violent action against them becomes justified, no matter how cruel, illegal or in contradiction of Jewish values.

Nearly all Palestinians on the receiving end of this stereotype miraculously wake up every morning and beyond doing their utmost to sustain a livelihood under miserable conditions and somehow remain focused on working towards realising a future free of military occupation.

This stereotype, spread by Israeli authorities to foreign audiences and, sadly, inculcated through Israel's state education system, is that any substantial relief or complete removal of the 45 years of military occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza, would result in a security risk. A similar fear-mongering strategy is used to dismiss the inalienable right of Palestinian refugees to return to Israel. In the meantime, Israel makes matters worse on the ground by, for example, continuing to build illegal, Jewish-only settlements.

The dominant narrative, especially in the US, that any change in the status quo would put Israel in existential danger is one that Israel has sustained for decades, spending hefty amounts on professional public relation firms and masters of spin to disseminate this message. Enter reality.

Israel's 10-metre high separation barrier and the country's decades of indoctrination have allowed Israelis to simply stop seeing real live Palestinians decidedly alive, even if not well, and determined to live normal lives.

They can't see an army of telecommunication engineers and call centre operators struggling to create a commercially viable network with a full suite of services even though the needed, imported equipment is routinely delayed at times for years at Israeli ports.

They can't see an army of youth pocketing the latest 3G-enabled smartphones that are useless because the electromagnetic spectrum required to operate a 3G network is controlled by Israel.

They can't see the dozen or so business incubators that host innovative entrepreneurs, many of them women, who routinely pitch their ideas to investors and enter their business plans in competition, only to be vulnerable to failure because of the innumerable structural impediments imposed by the Israeli occupation.

They can't see the 18 banks and half-dozen or so equity capital funds that seek viable businesses to invest in, only to end up with more funds than this militarily occupied market can absorb. They can't see the enthusiastic young men and women at the Hereditary Research Lab at Bethlehem University exploring the genetics of hearing loss and breast cancer.

They can't see hundreds of mothers and fathers holding their children's hands as they lead them to watch the performances of the Palestinian Circus School or Al Kamandji music school.

They were blind to the excitement and grass roots campaigning across cities and villages in the occupied Palestinian territory as West Bank residents recently went to the polls, again, for municipal elections. Most important, they also can't see something much more serious than any of this that the Israeli status quo, built on a cruel collective indifference and the false glow of a rigged prosperity in which the Israeli public is basking can lead to only one outcome: collapse.

Israelis may be living in utter denial of the peculiar and unsustainable reality they have created by the sheer might of force but this is no excuse for the rest of the world, especially the US, not to wake up and realise that ending the occupation has the potential to release a tremendous amount of positive energy in the Palestinian community, a necessary energy for a party to negotiate in good faith as it rebuilds its society from the ruins of decades of destitution.

Your Views ...

Why are people still in

Sir,

THIS is a response to "Alarming Facts" (GDN, November 16), and the interesting observations on the obvious increase of health issues due to electromagnetic field radiation from modern technologies.

The World Health Organisation is not the only entity confirming that health effects do exist from electromagnetic fields (EMFs). Before then, the Bio-Initiative Report was conducted by a group of researchers documenting 2,000 studies of biological effects of low frequency and radio frequency radiation, and calling for more realistic human exposure guidelines.

Dr Zory Glaser who worked in the US Navy, cited similar proof when asked to review literature on harmful EMF effects. The Naval Medical Research Institute made sure to keep his paper in the dark since 1972, until it was recently demanded to become transparent. Why were his papers hidden? Money. His proof would have stopped industries from helping economic growth. Hiding alarming facts while gambling over health was the better option.

It is clear. So why are people still in denial? One group is convinced that industries are making money out of our stupidity. Another group calls that extremist thinking citing from a majority of scientific studies. It seems that opposing sides of the EMF

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radiation debate has been playing ping-pong for quite a while without knowing the rules.

The fact is that the majority of studies that claim no biological effects from EMF radiation are funded by industries,



■ Every time you light up think of what it will do to you

especially cellphone industries. (Henry Lai, University of Washington). Apparently, money can buy facts and beliefs.

I suggest you visit Dr Magda Havas's website (www.magda-havas.com), who has been doing research on the biological effects of EMF pollution since the 1990s.

Dr Havas works with diabetics,

people who have multiple sclerosis, tinnitus, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia and has also done studies on buildings polluted with electromagnetic radiation, especially schools. She wrote an article, titled "Cherry Picking & Black Swans", that pinpoints why many people's denial over the effects of EMF radiation on health continues because scientific proof is being

Star Letter

TODAY in history

TODAY is Wednesday, November 21, the 326th day of 2012. There are 40 days left in the year. Highlights in history on this date:

1620 – The ship Mayflower, carrying the first European settlers to New England, lands in what is now Provincetown, Massachusetts.

1759 – Prussian army of Friedrich von Finck capitulates at Maxen, Germany.

1783 – The first manned untethered balloon flight sails over Paris for 25 minutes.

1806 – Napoleon Bonaparte of France issues Berlin Decrees, declaring blockade of Britain.

1877 – Thomas A Edison announces invention of the phonograph in United States.

1938 – Western border areas of Czechoslovakia are forcibly incorporated in German Reich.

1958 – A Soviet-East German commission meets in East Berlin to discuss the transfer to East German control of Soviet functions and end to the occupation status in Berlin.

1962 – China agrees to ceasefire on India-China border.

1963 – Roman Catholic Vatican Council authorises use of vernacular instead of Latin in the Sacraments.

1976 – Syrian army completes its final phase of occupation of Lebanon.

1977 – Estimated 3,000 people are believed to have perished in cyclone that strikes southeastern India, and entire villages are submerged by tidal waves.

1980 – A fire at the MGM Grand Hotel-Casino in Las Vegas kills 87 people.

1985 – Former US Navy intelligence analyst Jonathan Jay Pollard is arrested and accused of spying for Israel. He pleads guilty and is sentenced to life in prison.

1987 – Riot police stand guard to prevent violence by rival supporters as presidential candidates in South Korea trade

charges of corruption and cruelty.

1991 – The U.N. Security Council chooses Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt to be the new secretary-general.

1992 – US Senator Bob Packwood, issues an apology but refuses to discuss allegations that he made unwelcome sexual advances to 10 women over the years.

1993 – Three former Panamanian soldiers are found guilty of involvement in the previously unsolved 1971 murder of Hector Gallego, a Colombian Roman Catholic priest.

1994 – NATO retaliates for repeated Serb attacks on a UN safe haven by bombing an airfield in a Serb-controlled section of Croatia.

1995 – Former Nazi SS Capt Erich Priebke is extradited from Argentina to Italy to face charges in the massacre of 335 Italian civilians in Nazi-occupied Rome.

1996 – A gas explosion at a shoe store in San Juan, Puerto Rico, kills 19 people and injures about 80.

1997 – UN weapons inspectors return to Iraq after being gone for a month because Iraq refused to let the teams include American members.

1998 – Italian officials release Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Ocalan, the head of the Kurdistan Workers' Party, the main Kurdish rebel group.

1999 – China successfully completes an unmanned spacecraft test, a breakthrough that could make it the third country to put humans in space. The Unit-

Thought for today

"I practise gratitude for the hidden and exposed blessings of my life"

Kelly Armatage Counsellor, Coach & CBT Therapist ● www.kellyarmatage.com

ed States and the former Soviet Union are the other two.

2000 – Research published in a British medical journal shows children who use mobile phones risk suffering memory loss, sleeping disorders and headaches. Those younger than 18 were more vulnerable to cell phone radiation because their immune systems were less robust.

2001 – Maoist rebel leaders in Nepal withdraw from their four-month-old cease-fire with the government, and launch their worst-ever attacks, killing more than 200 people.

2002 – More than 50 people are stabbed, bludgeoned or burned to death during violent demonstrations in Kaduna, Nigeria, triggered by a newspaper article suggesting Islam's founding prophet might have chosen a wife from among contestants in the Miss World beauty pageant in Nigeria.

2003 – The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says an outbreak of hepatitis A that killed three people and left 605 sick in Monaca, Pennsylvania was caused by tainted scallions imported from Mexico.

2004 – A strong earthquake rocks the Caribbean islands of Dominica and Guadeloupe, killing at least one person and destroying numerous homes.

2005 – Secretary-General Kofi Annan warns that Sudan's volatile Darfur region faces an increasing threat of complete lawlessness and anarchy, and says it is

crucial that the government and rebels conclude a peace agreement by the end of the year.

2006 – Pierre Gemayel, an anti-Syrian politician and scion of Lebanon's most prominent Christian family, is gunned down in a carefully orchestrated assassination that heightens tensions between the US-backed government and the militant Hezbollah.

2007 – Costa Rican President Oscar Arias signs into law a free trade agreement with the country's Central American neighbors, the United States and the Dominican Republic.

2008 – Somali pirates release a hijacked Greek-owned tanker MV Genius with all 19 crew members safe and the oil cargo intact after payment of a ransom.

2009 – After offering a home in his church to disaffected Anglicans, Pope Benedict XVI assures the archbishop of Canterbury that he is still committed to seeking closer relations between Roman Catholics and Anglicans.

2010 – The Obama administration's troubled attempt to revive Mideast peace talks takes another blow when the Palestinian president rejects the latest US plan to get the sides talking again.

2011 – Thwarted internationally, the Obama administration cobbles together a new set of best-available sanctions against Iran that underline its limited capacity to force Tehran to halt its suspected nuclear weapons program. The US action was coordinated with Britain and Canada.

WHAT THEY SAID

MODESTY is the only sure bait when you angle for praise – The fourth Earl of Chesterfield, English author (1694-1773).