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Negotiations drained of any meaningful value by Israel

OPINION: When Israelis withdrew from Gaza in 2005, they left the room to surround the house, writes HIKMAT AJJURI

Israel, since its foundation has constantly played the same insidious game to sustain a victim mentality among its Jewish citizens and uses the religion of the Holocaust to preserve an impression of victimhood with the Western media. Israel's leaders deliberately create conditions for violence whenever acts of violence against it subside, thus propagating the myth that it is a peace-seeking victim which has no partner for peace.

This devious ploy has been used year-in year-out as a tool to serve the hidden fact that Israeli leaders have no intention of concluding a just and peaceful settlement with the Palestinians. Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was possibly the only partner with whom the Palestinians could have concluded the Oslo Agreement. He was assassinated by a member of the Jewish right wing.

The agreement, which was opposed in 1993 by prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and never endorsed by Rabin's chief of staff Ehud Barak, offered Israelis and Palestinians the capital to invest in the culture of peace. Under Rabin, the agreement would have allowed the dream of a two-state solution to materialise in May 1999. It was not to be because Netanyahu was elected in 1996 on a manifesto to destroy the agreement.

In June 2009, Netanyahu delivered a speech that categorically ruled out the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state. Reality can be so easily stood on its head when it comes to Israel because the misreading of Israeli declarations is a long-established practice with the media. That is what allowed Netanyahu to be congratulated for endorsing a Palestinian state even though the kind of entity he said Palestinians might possibly be allowed to have would be nothing of the kind.

I unreservedly condemn the threat by the Iranian president to wipe the Israeli state from the map. This threat was meaningless and delivered to distract and pacify an angry audience of university students. However, it came as an enormous cost-free bonus to the Israeli propaganda machine and a boost to the Israeli victim mentality (Iran's threat makes any Israeli concessions fraught with risk, opinion and analysis, February 21st). But unlike Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Israeli leaders prefer deeds of war and aggression to words. Thus, Israel in 1981 pulverised a potential Iraqi nuclear plant and bombed an installation in Syria in 2007. Israel, with its immoral colonial-hegemonic philosophy, continues to seek Western support in a pre-emptive strike against Iranian nuclear plants, which have never been proven to be of military significance.

Israel, an occupying power which possesses the fourth-strongest army in the world, has two adversaries only. Firstly the Palestinians, because Israel stole their lands and property, and secondly Israeli society which lives in the shadow of state-sponsored paranoia.

During many meetings with Israelis, I cautioned that suicide bombers are the children who were mentally tortured at the hands of Israeli soldiers during the first Palestinian uprising in 1987-1988. Innocent civilians were killed in front of their families; fathers were humiliated and tortured by teenage Israeli soldiers in front of their eyes.

My experience of the repercussions of the occupation are akin to the worst form of terrorism, daily state-sponsored terrorism. In the words of Gideon Levy, the Israeli political analyst who was in Dublin last week, in referring to Israel's genocide in Gaza, said: A state that takes such steps is no longer distinguishable from a terror organisation.

When Israelis refer to their withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, they are repeating a deception. They left the room to surround the house. Under international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, Gaza is occupied territory, an open-air prison where the innocent civilian population is punished.

Hamas missiles, the use of which I condemn, killed 20 Israelis over eight years. In one retaliatory invasion, the Israelis pounded Gaza, an area half the size of a small Irish county which is inhabited by 1.5 million people, with two million kilogrammes of explosives over a 22-day period killing 1,500 inhabitants.

The Israelis with their intransigence have drained negotiations of any meaningful value. In this context, I appeal to the international community, including the United States to protect Israel from itself by pressuring it to abide by the norms of international law.

It is appalling to see that US citizens have turned their backs on the values and principles of their forefathers. President Woodrow Wilson, at Versailles after the First World War, upheld the principles of self-determination and human rights for small nations. Former US secretary of state Dean Acheson wrote the US constitution is a condensed version of the UN Charter.

All Palestinians ask for is the recognition of our inalienable right to self-determination on the remaining 22 per cent of historic Palestine. Surely, the establishment of a viable, contiguous, sovereign Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel is a most worthy investment in world peace and security?

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