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Palestine: Between Balfour Declaration & Abbas's Declaration

Dr. Said Elhaj

Some politicians resort to addressing the world public opinion at significant political or historical stations through publishing articles in worldwide newspapers. This is exactly what Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas did on the centennial of the Balfour Declaration, when he published an article in The Guardian, a British daily newspaper.

The significance of Abbas's article lies in: (a) that it was published by The Guardian, and (b) that it came within the framework of a campaign demanding the British government to apologize to the Palestinian people for the Balfour Declaration and its ongoing consequences at various levels, especially in light of British Prime Minister Theresa May's insistence on conducting traditional "celebrations" marking the declaration that laid the foundation of the Zionist entity on the land of Palestine.

I do not need to elaborate on the catastrophic effects of the declaration and its consequences, which the Palestinians have experienced for decades. Also, Abbas mentioned some of the suffering of Palestinians in his article in an attempt to hold the British government responsible for what happened, calling the United Kingdom to apologize and "correct its historical error".

Regardless of the debate on whether the call for apology is right or wrong, and the benefit of such a demand, I find it very paradoxical that Abbas - who demands in his article that the British government should apologize and correct its historical error - is required to review, evaluate, apologize and correct the catastrophic historical errors that were a major part of consequences of Oslo Accords which he had orchestrated.

Yes, the British government's pledge on Nov. 2, 1917 – allowing establishment of a national homeland for the Jews on our (Palestinian) land – by Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour, was a first step in the usurpation of the Palestinian right. But what has the Oslo Accords and its track done so far to the Palestinian cause, especially that Mahmoud Abbas was the "architect of the accords, and is still insisting on and defending them?



According to the Oslo Accords, which were marketed in 1993 as the first step to achieve the goals of the Palestinian people, Abbas and his colleagues provided a 'free' recognition of the Zionist enemy. They renounced 78% of the historic land of Palestine and engaged in negotiations with "Israel" on the remaining percentage (22%). Moreover, the Oslo Accords improved the enemy's image and allowed it to access countries in Asia, Africa, and the whole world. The accords also encouraged some Arab countries to deal with Israel, provided a cover for the settlement project and Judaization of Jerusalem, undermined the possibility of building an independent Palestinian economy by directly linking it to the occupation's economy, impeded the Palestinian resistance through security cooperation and coordination with "Israel" – which has been the most severe blow to the Palestinian national project and the unity of the Palestinian people and its active forces. The security cooperation with "Israel" by the Palestinian Authority is behind the current state of "division" among Palestinians.

Is it not enough for Abbas and those involved in Oslo Accords after 24 years to make a veritable pause for conducting reviews, assessment and correction, especially after the Palestinian cause reached a closed road because of the "Israeli" intransigence? (The occupation even denied the two-state solution.)

Isn't everyone aware of the plans to liquidate the Palestinian cause: by the Zionists through the armed force, Judaization, and displacement; by the United States through the ideas of Donald Trump and Jared Kushner; and by the Arabs through the normalization project?

In light of our awareness of what is going on amid the regional and international conditions that are completely disrupted in favor of the Zionist enemy, aren't we able to gather and cooperate on the most common issues among Palestinians to confront the Zionist project and get Arab, Islamic and, international support?

When we compare a promise (Balfour Declaration) made by a colonial state a century ago, and a "Palestinian" path monopolized by an executive political group with influential interests, recognizing the occupying Zionist entity and giving up 78% of the land in the name of the Palestinian people – we objectively say that the latter is much



more dangerous than the former. Perhaps, one of the prominent mistakes in Abbas's article is his claim that the "Palestinian people" gave up the land, which is pure claims and lies. The Palestinian people have not been consulted regarding the Oslo process, or the text of the accords that were reached. In fact, no one in the Palestinian Authority (PA) or the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) is interested in the Palestinian people's opinion, which I am quite sure they (Palestinians) would not accept any concession or bargaining concerning their rights.

This is not a controversial talk or a political incitement. The current Palestinian situation is ambiguous and the optimism of some people is not based on solid ground. This is a sincere and serious call for all Palestinians, especially Fatah cadres and leaders, to take a responsible and historic stance towards this path, which was more damaging to the Palestinian cause than the disastrous Balfour Declaration. Perhaps, the current circumstances, especially after the Cairo meetings, provide a climate for less tense and quiet talk about what can be done regarding the Palestinian issue today, albeit at the minimum possible level.⁽¹⁾

(1) The views expressed in this article are entirely those of the author's and do not necessarily reflect the views of EIPSS