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UN and AU's Response: Working Towards the Palestine-Israel Conflict

Written by: Muhammed Haron, former Professor of Religious Studies, University of Botswana & Associate Researcher, Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Global Context

Soon after World War II, 50 of the world's nations gathered to draft the United Nations' (UN est. 1945) Charter which set them on a fresh path to avoid future wars. The founding UN members desired not only to maintain peace among all but to ensure that the expanding global environment was secure for everyone. Despite the UN's noble and idealistic intentions and generous efforts, it was unable to stop these quarrels from mounting and intensifying; one of the well-known cases is that of the State of Israel which was formed in 1948.

Its eventual establishment, which the Zionists under Austro-Hungarian Theodor Herzl (d.1904) had planned, crafted, and spearheaded, was eventually supported by the League of Nations (the UN's forerunner). The Palestinians (that is, Muslims, Christians, and Jews [bearing in mind not all subscribed to the Zionist project]), however, felt highly betrayed by the League and its political leaders' debatable decisions when they approved the Zionists' idea of laying the State of Israel's foundations; this implied that the Palestinians, as a nation, were gradually forced out of their territories to either become refugees in their own land or exiles abroad; the process followed one of marginalization and another by colonization along with 'ethnic cleansing'.

Despite these painful socio-political developments, the Palestinians remained resilient seeking various legal methods of having their sordid situation solved; sadly, years – nay, decades - went by and nothing substantial had been agreed upon. Even though different attempts such as the respective Oslo Accords (that is, OA I during 1993 and OA II during 1995) were signed, nothing appeared on the distant horizon.

By and large, the Palestinians were totally dissatisfied with the OAs as well as other negotiation cum reconciliation efforts; besides being psychologically and physically traumatized, they had doubts about the manner in which the UN dealt with their sensitive concerns. Instead of making the correct political decisions with

the necessary communal safeguards and socio-legal protection in place as expected within a so-called transformed democratic environment globally, their desperate pleas and voices were not only ignored but also muzzled. The Palestinians' urgent request for justice in the international system was, in fact, not only denied but deliberately ignored.

AU and Palestine-Israel conflict

The political scenario changed slightly towards the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. During these periods more organizations including the Islamic Organization of Cooperation (IOC), the Arab League (AL), and the African Union (AU) got involved. The AU, which experienced various types of conflicts continentally, has been familiar with these. However, for some reason, the AU members were sympathetic to the Palestinian plight. And, of late, its leadership seemed to have tilted towards the State of Israel. Up until today, they remained under Israel's spell signing and approving several multilateral and bilateral agreements without considering the consequences within the socio-political and commercial sectors.

Anyhow, while quite a few of them favor Israel, their ties with the Palestinians weakened. They were, in fact, not fully accommodated in the AU nation-states' foreign policies. Though most North African states have generally included the Palestinians in their international relations' policies, there are those (such as the Moroccans and Egyptians) that recognized the Palestinians' rights but, at the same time, opened their doors to cement and strengthen their bilateral ties with the State of Israel. In the past two decades, their relations deepened and developed with Israel despite the latter's oppressive policies towards the Palestinians; they slackened and weakened for numerous reasons not elaborated on here. Both the Moroccans and Egyptians have, however, demonstrated their hardened relations with the Palestinians since the latter feel that both these nation-states have not demonstrated their interests in the plight and position.

The frosty relationship may be attributed to the fact that the Palestinians, who held onto the view that their occupied land was illegally and illegitimately taken, from them by Israel's founding fathers use historical sources and other documents, arguing that the land of Palestine was and remains rightfully theirs. The issue continued to be debated and has been unresolved over the decades. The UN - and to a lesser degree the AU - seemed to have had its hands literally and figuratively tied; this is because the USA, along with its allies, have dictated the international rules in favor of Israel and has given all its support to this nation-state by investing billions of dollars. Its investments caused the western world to ostracize the Palestinians and cause them a great deal of hardship and pain.

7/10 and Current Affairs

The dispute escalated and has continued to the current period. In fact, since the fateful 7th of October 2023 and Israel's heavy-handedness against the Palestinians, the UN has been embroiled in it. According to the affected Palestinians and the developing Arab nation-states, the outcome was that it remained so until this very period. One of the reasons for the ongoing dispute was that the African Union (AU est. 2001) which replaced its predecessor the Organization of African Unity (OAU est.1963) – has had to grapple with the question of Palestine. The latter has, since the UN's formation, faced escalating clashes and conflict between themselves and Israel. When Israel was established in 1948, it coincided with the formation of the UN. As a result, the UN could not ignore these socio-political developments and when the AU came into existence more than a decade thereafter, it had to do the same.

Fast track to the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the world observed certain outcomes that changed the geo-political landscape in what has been coined by the orientalist as the Middle East. Considering the fact that the Palestine – Israel conflict could not be solved, these international bodies were unable to find solutions to bring an end to this matter. Palestinians, in fact, felt betrayed by the international bodies since they backed Israel rather than seeing them as the oppressed and occupied society that has suffered and continued to suffer for over 75 years. Unfortunately, the world communities wish to remain deaf, dumb, and blind except for the handful of very brave nation-states; ones that were willing to draw thick lines between the ongoing injustices and the lack-if not absence- of socio-economic and political justice.

Since then, the Palestinians have strongly lobbied to firmly counter Israel's increasing expansion and influence; but their efforts seem to be in vain. The reason for this may be attributed to the fact that Israel has been unconditionally supported by Western Europe and North American nation states; their collective assistance and backing have given Israel the powers to act defiantly as is the case at present in Palestine's Gaza; a carpet-bombed place where scores of women and children have been killed or rather an ugly despicable event that cannot go unnoticed and unrecorded.

Interesting to observe is the fact that even though it is painfully awful and very sad to listen and watch the disastrous outcomes in that area with spill-over effects not only into neighboring countries but across the globe, the world witnessed the outbursts of violence and destruction in Gaza. Jewish students, and academics at universities in the US, UK, Canada, France, and elsewhere played a role in condemning and speaking out against the rightwing government of Israel. Their actions made it quite clear that the atrocious outcome that happened there should not

have been undertaken in their name. Theirs was but a humble request as they peacefully protested.

SA and ICJ

Leaving aside what is happening outside the continent and turning to South Africa, we have observed regular protests and marches in selected cities and towns. In South Africa, political parties and universities' staff cum students inspired by their erstwhile leader Nelson Mandela, who boldly stated that 'we shall not be free until Palestine is unoccupied and free.' But while South Africa was pro-active in support of the Palestinian struggle for true freedom by taking Israel's government to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). However, there were African nations that did not agree with the results and abstained from reprimanding and calling out the Israeli regime for its actions. Among them was Uganda whose ICJ judge abstained from finding Israel guilty of committing acts of genocide and war crimes.

It may be argued that most African countries, which have official bilateral bonds with Israel, have hesitated to condemn the series of Israeli atrocities. They have been unwilling to raise their critical voices against the tragic developments in the occupied territories. Perhaps it should be recalled that Israel was granted observer status at the AU for a short period. However, this was withdrawn when South Africa's Dr. Naledi Pandor, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation intervened and questioned its legitimacy at the AU. This was no easy task considering some African countries' dependence on Israel for technical and other related skills.

Global Village and the Future

The questions that confront us all are: to what extent have African governments given their support to the Palestinian cause since 1948? What are the reasons for the lack of assistance across Africa with a few exceptions of course? Why have these African countries become so dependent on the West especially Israel without thinking carefully about the plight of the beleaguered Palestinians? Can they not see the extensive damage done to the Gazan environment? Are they unable to distinguish right acts from the wrong ones in our global village where they are continuously being committed? When will they be prepared to come out and ensure that just and fair practices are promoted?

Though answers can be formulated and proposed for these and several other questions, one will leave these for the readers to reflect upon as the world community still struggles with how to deal with the Palestine-Israel affair. It is an issue that has caused the global village difficulties such as not being able to distinguish between the truth and lies or the fake news from the factual reports. As one faces the current situation, the question of the future - where AI already plays a crucial role - remains

a concern if not a challenge. The world witnessed to what extent meanings of key words such as 'ethics' and 'morality' have been twisted and deliberately changed to suit the interests of dominant powerful nations; those that have been conveniently aided by the neoliberal media, new technologies, and AI instruments.

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