

Palestinian Non-Violence Resistance and its Potential Impact on Israeli Society:
Striving for a Sustainable Two-State Solution
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I. INTRODUCTION

The following paper advocates for a massive and united non-violent strategy for Palestinian resistance against the Israeli presence in the Palestinian territories. There are three key elements implied in the title of this paper that will be emphasized. First is the power of non-violence, relative to armed struggle, to influence change for the weaker party. Secondly, the potential impact on Israeli society can shatter predispositions of Palestinians and clarify goals that are distorted by armed resistance. This increases the likelihood of a positive response by Israelis. Thirdly, a non-violent strategy can create an environment that will allow an eventual resolution to sustain itself alongside a Jewish state of Israel.

As a preemptive apology, we would like to acknowledge that neither of us speak or read Arabic. We are Israelis advocating a strategy for the “Other” party. Some may criticize us for being outsiders without a moral justification to do this. However, given the effectiveness of non-violence in other contexts in history, the failure of current strategies to attain a Palestinian state, and our familiarity with Israeli culture and perceptions we believe a non-violent strategy will best resonate with the Israeli public in favor of a Palestinian state.

Additionally, more recent polling on the public attitudes towards non-violence resistance would bolster this argument. We have used the latest polling sponsored by the Search for Common ground from 2002. Although it has been eight years since it was released, it was conducted during the violent second intifada and therefore is a useful indicator for both Israelis and Palestinians. For Israelis, it demonstrates a potential

alternative to violent resistance. For Palestinians, it sheds light on their perception on the extent of effectiveness of violence to advance their cause.

The paper will analyze the shortcomings of previous and current attempts at non-violence resistance. With the assumption that a two-state solution is the preferred outcome, we believe that a non-violent strategy has the greatest potential to actualize the Palestinian state while simultaneously establishing a foundation for a sustainable resolution.

A Non-violent Revolution in the Holy Land

According to U.S. Envoy to the Middle East, George Mitchell, a two-state solution is the “only solution” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Kershner). Yet, the current climate raises serious questions of that sole scenario being realized. The Israeli incursion into Gaza during “Operation Cast Lead” and the Qassam rocket launches into Southern Israel have further segregated the Palestinians and Israelis. Moreover, the hard-line Likud government coupled with an uncompromising Hamas leadership serves as a major impediment to productive negotiations. This has translated into extreme pessimism amongst the public, as nearly three-quarters do not believe the negotiations will lead to an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. Furthermore, Palestinians contend that even if one is signed, they doubt it will resolve the historic conflict with Israel¹.

A new strategy needs to be implemented in order to quell the cynicism. The violent tactics of Palestinian leadership, specifically Hamas’ rocket fire can no longer be tolerated. Hamas may appear powerful to Palestinians on a superficial level; however, Hamas leaders cannot justify to Palestinians how the Qassam rocket shelling improves their lives and advances their ultimate cause of statehood (Saab, 9). An original method

¹ Peace Index – Tel Aviv University Poll – March 2008 Prof. Ephraim Yaar and Prof. Tamar Hermann

of a massive and united non-violence resistance needs to be applied to tilt the culture of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in favor of proponents of peace.

In order to reach a resolution, it will require a complete transformation in the approach to resolving the conflict. Dr. Marc Gopin indicates, ‘non-cooperation can bring a revolution to the Holy Land (Gopin).’ Non-violence resistance has the potential to raise awareness of the Palestinian struggle, clarify intentions, and discredit the spoilers on both sides. Although it suspected that it will be negatively received initially by Israeli society, a solitary Palestinian resistance movement committed to non-violence will alter the Israeli psyche and shatter predispositions. Thus, building confidence between the two societies and leading to a sustainable two-state solution.

Why Non-violence now?

Skeptics argue that the Palestinians have already tried non-violence before, with partial success, during the first Intifada of 1988. If it didn’t work then, what’s the point in trying it again? While non-violent methods were utilized during this intifada, it was not a uniform movement and it did not have support from influential Palestinian political leaders.

The resistance during the first intifada was not altogether non-violent. Some protestors participated in tax boycotts and strikes, whereas others used rocks and Molotov cocktails against Israeli soldiers. Even though the Palestinians were still overmatched by the Israeli military and their tanks, the Israeli perception of the Palestinian resistance was still violent. Also, the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Yassir Arafat, was insistent on maintaining control over the movement. Consequently, the breadth of support from staunch non-violent Palestinian advocates like Faisal Husseini and Mubarak

Awad diminished (Karny, 32). These two critical elements of a non-violent resistance movement, uniformity and support from the top-down were absent in the first intifada.

Yet, there were still positive outcomes from the first intifada. The Palestinian struggle gained international recognition and therefore, added pressure on the Israelis to respond to Palestinian demands. Moreover, the first intifada marked the beginning of what would soon be a flabbergasted Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in reacting to non-violent protests.

In addition, a criticism of non-violence is that it is naïve and ineffective given the “positive” results from violent tactics on both sides. After all, Palestinians believe that in Gaza it was their use of force against Israeli civilians that coerced Israel to disengage from the Gaza Strip in 2005. It is the Israeli siege on the Gaza Strip and the security fence that prevents Palestinian terrorists from infiltrating Israeli society. Both sides believe that the use of violence has actually been effective (Hence the Middle Eastern expression, “the Arabs only understand power as well as the reverse “the Israelis only understand power.”

However, these methods only provide short-term benefits, if any. The status quo provokes more violence and retaliation. The current policies of the Israeli and Palestinian leadership do not account for the long term solutions of a comprehensive peace. Retaliatory actions incite more violence and therefore exacerbate the situation. Dr. Marc Gopin, Director of the Center for World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University asserts, “It is time for a mass movement of nonviolent non-cooperation and resistance amongst Palestinians-because everything else has failed.”

There is tremendous urgency in the region to modify approaches to the conflict. There is a new generation of Israelis that recognize injustices in the Palestinian territories. An increasing amount of Israelis refuse to serve in the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and there is an Israeli peace group, *Yesh Gvul* (There is a Limit), supporting them². In addition, according to a United Nations Development Program (UNDP) study, nearly 70 percent of Palestinian young adults believe the use of violence is not helpful and only 8 percent believe violence is an important tool. Furthermore, the study shows that 80 percent of Palestinian youth are depressed; 39 percent in the West Bank and 55 percent in the Gaza Strip saying they were 39 percent were “extremely” depressed³. The dual expressions of non-violent action among the young adult population in both Israeli and Palestinian society is encouraging. This is the time, therefore, to capitalize on the consensus of dissent of violent tactics and utilize the power of non-violence resistance the public is demanding.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF PALESTINIAN NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

Before the first intifada, non-violence was absent from the official mission in the Palestinian charter. Moreover, it encouraged an armed resistance. The first intifada included some non-violent tactics but was not uniform and still demonstrated limited violence. During the Oslo period, Fatah moderated its position whereas the newly formed Hamas served as a spoiler in negotiations and represented the uncompromising segment of the Palestinian population. The failure of the peace process following Oslo and Camp David II led to a resort to violence in the second intifada. Hamas extremists felt empowered as they gained popularity culminating in their electoral victory in 2006. The

² Mohammed Abu Nimer, *Bridging the Divide*, Non violent action in Israel and Palestine, p. 157.

³ Ha'aretz, “UN: 70% of Palestinian youth oppose violence to conflict with Israel” 1/4/2009.
<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1075465.html>

West condemned the Hamas victory and attempted to bolster the more moderate Fatah party led by Mahmoud Abbas (Abu-Mazen). Abbas is committed to dialogue and negotiations. Although he downplays the role of armed resistance, he falls short of a determined strategy of non-violence resistance.

a. PLO Pre-Intifada

Fatah, an Arabic acronym for “Palestinian Liberation Movement”, was founded in the 1950’s by Yasser Arafat (BBC). A secular movement, Fatah was the largest faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Its purpose, documented in the Palestinian National Charter (1968), is an armed struggle against Israel to liberate all of Palestine. Numerous articles in the charter indicate the impossibility of a two-state solution with Israel. Article 1 emphasizes Palestine as an “*indivisible* part of the Arab homeland.” Furthermore, Article 15 discusses the objective of “eliminating Zionism from Palestine” (Article 15). These statements explicitly do not recognize the establishment of Israel and even claim the international document of the UN Partition Plan of 1947 as illegal (The Palestinian National Charter). These extreme declarations left little room for compromise in negotiations.

b. First Intifada

The use of non-violence as a strategy among Palestinian society gained some momentum during the first intifada in 1987. Palestinians gathered in seemingly unorganized protests across the Palestinian territories blocking roads and Israeli army movements. Demonstrators threw stones at the Israeli soldiers despite the tear gas and rubber-coated bullets (King, 6). Massive funeral processions also demonstrated non-

violent resistance to Israeli occupation as thirty-five thousand Palestinians mourned in Khan Yunis.

Mubarak Awad delves into the non-violent methods utilized by Palestinians during the first intifada; demonstrations, obstruction, non-cooperation, harassments, boycotts, strikes, alternative institutions, and civil disobedience. One of the more effective demonstrations Awad mentions was the clean up campaign the youth of al-Bireh and Ramallah organized protesting the dismissal of the mayors and closures of municipalities. Another example of defying the Israeli army in Ramallah occurred when Palestinians blew whistles and car horns protesting the closure of Bir Zeit University (Awad, 28).

Acts of non-cooperation can be particularly effective, such as refusal to work in the military government, refusal to pay taxes, refusal to sign official forms, refusal to work on building Israeli settlements and any other forms of 'Judaization'. Harassment of Israeli soldiers is more of a psychological tactic to remind them of the role they play in the injustice. It is important not to resort to any curses or unnecessary humiliations so as not to detract from the primary goal. Boycotts, too, can be an effective tool to draw attention although, this was not proven to be an organized effort during the intifada. Awad declares that today, with a limited boycott it can be more focused and even demonstrate an ability to be independent from the occupier if they can simultaneously work on finding a substitute for the good (Awad, 32). Obstruction, however, is more risky. Acts of throwing bodies in front of bulldozers and throwing rocks at soldiers can be dangerous. These acts are not all together non-violent and therefore, are likely to provoke more retaliation from Israeli soldiers.

c. Second Intifada – Intifada Al-Aqsa

Following the first intifada, Fatah moderated its positions in order to enter negotiations with Israel in the Oslo peace process. However, the failure of the Oslo Peace Accords to produce results left Palestinians frustrated and many turned to violence as a tactic in the second intifada (Al-Aqsa Intifada).

Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, was founded in 1988 by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin in Gaza as a Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood (Shlaim, 459). Its violent tactics escalated in 1994 with the launching of suicide bombings in Israel. Hamas members targeted crowded civilian areas by detonating themselves in buses and markets, thereby terrorizing Israeli society. Their militant and Islamist nature led to its listing as a terrorist organization by the United States, European Union, and Israel.

Their extremist actions are no surprise given their uncompromising Hamas Charter (1988). They are committed to the destruction of the State of Israel by striving to establish an Islamic state in all of what it considered Palestine, including post-1948 Israel, the West Bank and Gaza (BBC). Furthermore, Article 13 asserts that the “the so-called peaceful solutions, and the international conferences to resolve the Palestinian problem, are all contrary to the beliefs of the Islamic Resistance Movement.” (Hamas Covenant 1988) Hamas is a brutal contrast to the moderating Fatah faction.

Hamas exploited Palestinians desire for revenge against Israeli retaliations. As average Palestinians felt more confined by increased Israeli checkpoints, curfews and a security barrier around the West Bank, Islamist groups like Hamas gained popularity for their use of violence. Public support for the Islamists increased 17 percent in mid-2000 just before the second intifada to 35 percent in mid-2004. On the other hand, support for

Yasser Arafat's nationalist Fatah party, dropped from 37 percent to 28 percent (Shikaki 46).

d. Mahmoud Abbas period

The Hamas-Fatah conflict has been more pronounced since the violent takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas. Israel, the United States and Fatah do not recognize Hamas as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians. President Abbas, unlike Hamas, is open to negotiations with Israel.

In August of 2009, President Abbas organized a landmark Fatah conference of mainstream Palestinians from the Fatah party. It was a three-day gathering, the first in 20 years and the first ever on Palestinian soil (Kershner b)⁴. The conference last summer served an opportunity for Abbas to clarify goals and mobilize Palestinians. However, President Abbas's rhetoric remained ambiguous and sent mixed messages to his Palestinian supporters and Israelis. On the one hand, he argued for a "new start" and lauded popular protests like the weekly demonstrations against Israel's security barrier in Bilin and other villages. On the other hand, President Abbas "reminisced about the early years of armed struggle against Israel" as he was speaking behind a large poster displaying a young Palestinian with a gun (Kershner, b). Although delegates proposed revising the Fatah charter, they kept a sentence vowing to "liquidate the Zionist entity" (McGirck)

These contradictory messages fail to unite the Palestinians in a confident and assertive manner. It demonstrates unclear goals and a divided party. It also shows the obstacles President Abbas faces within his own party, in addition to trying to reconcile

⁴ Isabel Kershner, Abbas Urges 'New Start' at Fatah Conference, NY Times, 8/5/2009.
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/05/world/middleeast/05fatah.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=kershner%20abbas%202009%20august%20conference&st=cse

with Hamas. Although it is believed that Abbas was just appealing to multiple factions of Fatah, it fell short of uniting Fatah due to the hypocritical statements.

The use of non-violent tactics is still spreading. Recently, Fatah officials have warned of a ‘third intifada.’ However, they add, this one will “not endorse an armed struggle or the use of firearms” (Khoury). In the most explicit statement yet coming from President Abbas’s support for non-violence, according to the report, the Fatah chief agreed to the resolution in principle on the condition that it is not violent. Fatah officials emphasized a desire to replicate the weekly demonstrations in Na’alin and Bil’in (Khoury). This represents a positive shift in strategy that coincides with one we are advocating. To elicit concrete results, it needs to become a larger and united resistance movement that is wholly non-violent.

NGO’s

Since the first intifada, various Palestinian non-governmental organizations have started to keep the momentum of non-violence alive. The Palestinian Center for Rapprochement Between People (PCR) was founded early during the first intifada in Beit Sahour to lead the Palestinian community in non-violence resistance against the occupation and for human and national rights. PCR was responsible for underground schools, the notorious Tax Revolt, and dialogue groups. During the second intifada, Al-Aqsa, PCR led a march to the military base of Shedma along with hundreds of Palestinians, Israelis, and internationals protesting the killing of two mothers and one man and the damage of 200 homes. PCR efforts were hampered during the Al-Aqsa Intifada as mistrust between Israelis and Palestinians grew. Yet, they still welcome Israelis to their movement and organize actions Bethlehem (south) Ramallah (middle)

and Salfit (north) showing that non-violent resistance appeals to Palestinians from various regions. (Stohlman 63-64)

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) founded in the summer of 2001 is another NGO led by Palestinians to raise awareness of the injustices of occupation by exposing internationals to it. The participation of internationals at their protests is critical because they notice a shift in Israeli responses when more internationals are present. Israeli soldiers are more cautious in reacting with rubber bullets and live ammunition when more international media is interested in the event (Stohlman 67). In two years, over a thousand international volunteers participated in protests with ISM and later return to their home countries to spread the word of what they witnessed (Kaufman 151).

The Middle East Nonviolence and Democracy (MEND) NGO, set up in 1998 in East Jerusalem, focuses on education and empowerment. MEND has been training activists for non-violence and published training manuals in Arabic. An original idea of MEND was a radio soap opera to encourage nonviolence among Palestinian youth (Kaufman, 154).

III. ISRAELI PERCEPTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Israeli Perceptions of Palestinian Non-violence

The Israeli perception of the degree of Palestinian non-violence has obscured the reality on the ground. As a result, the Palestinian non-violence efforts have not reached Israeli society as is shown in the following series of interviews with academics and journalists

A survey of Israeli academics from the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem gauges some level of the Israeli perception

[ACADEMIC FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS]. Most of the academics viewed non-violence resistance as minimal and agreed that Israelis view Palestinians as generally violent⁵. One participant contends that Israelis would doubt the sincerity of non-violence declarations, interpreting non-violence as just an alternative to achieving the same goal. In other words, even if non-violence occurs, Israelis do not believe that Palestinians actually oppose violence and are skeptical of the Palestinians long-term goals. For instance, does “Freeing Palestine” include Israel proper? Would a resolution entailing the withdrawal from the West Bank suffice as a final status agreement, or is it merely a phase in larger picture in attaining more concessions and territory?

A group of Israeli journalists add to the Israeli perception of Palestinian goals. Journalists and broadcasters from Galei Tzahal, Ma’ariv, Ynet, Channel 2, and Channel 10 shared their skepticism of the Palestinian overarching intent in using non-violence. One journalist asks, "The question is how Israelis are supposed to speak with those who support non violence, are they sincere? Or is their goal to dismantle Israeli unity by non violent declarations?" Another journalist adds, "Palestinians use violence instrumentally. They are now talking of secession of violence in the media, but there is an ethos of violence there, the use of the word *Shahid* has become trivial. When they want to they turn the ‘violence switch’ on and now Abu Mazen is turning the (violence) switch off...It isn't authentic.” Mistrust between Israelis and Palestinians is plagued by the Israeli perception of the insincerity of the Palestinian purpose.

This is understandable given the electoral victory of Hamas in 2004 which does not recognize Israel. The increase in rocket fire following the disengagement from the Gaza Strip has further left Israelis questioning the motives of Palestinians. They are

⁵ [ACADEMIC FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS – needs citation – don’t have year].

committed to the destruction of the State of Israel by striving to establish an Islamic state in all of what it considered Palestine, including post-1948 Israel, the West Bank and Gaza (BBC). Furthermore, Article 13 of the Hamas Covenant asserts that the “the so-called peaceful solutions, and the international conferences to resolve the Palestinian problem, are all contrary to the beliefs of the Islamic Resistance Movement.” (Hamas Covenant 1988).

The increasing popularity of Islamist groups like Hamas remains particularly troubling to Israelis. Public support for the Islamists increased 17 percent in mid-2000 just before the second intifada to 35 percent in mid-2004. On the other hand, support for Yasser Arafat's nationalist Fatah party, dropped from 37 percent to 28 percent (Shikaki 46). Additionally, the Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005 bolstered Hamas's status for “forcing” the Israelis out. Regardless of the real reason PM Ariel Sharon disengaged, the Hamas movement gained momentum as Palestinians viewed their new leadership attaining results. Meanwhile, Israeli doubt over the Palestinians willingness to accept Israel deepened.

Israeli Misconceptions

The NGOs and examples of non-violence mentioned earlier amid a series of violence from other factions of Palestinian society and aggressive retaliation from the Israeli army is encouraging and discredits some of the Israeli perceptions of Palestinian motives. A Search for Common Ground (SFCG) poll shows the surprising potential for non-violence for Palestinians. Two years into the Al-Aqsa Intifada in 2002, the survey reveals that 80% of Palestinians would support a large-scale non-violent protest movement and 56% would participate in it. Similarly, 78% of Israeli Jews believe that the

Palestinians have a legitimate right to seek a Palestinian state, provided that they use non-violent means. A study by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) complements the SFCG survey indicating that nearly 70% of Palestinian young adults believe the use of violence to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not very helpful⁶. Hopefully, these results can clarify each party's intent and direction for the future. John Marks, President of SFCG, states "We believe these findings reflect the real, but unrealized, potential that non-violence can play in ending the vicious cycle of bloodshed."

Another survey conducted through The Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) in Ramallah and the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem polled Palestinian and Israeli public opinion between September 7 and 21, 2005⁷. Even during tense times the polls indicate a mutual recognition of identity. According to the poll, 66% of the Israelis and 63% of the Palestinians support a mutual recognition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people and Palestine as the state of the Palestinian people. Even more remarkable is the majority support for this step among Israeli Arabs: 63% support and 34% oppose it. This result indicates that despite their frustration and marginalization as citizens, they are willing to accept the definition of Israel as the state of the Jewish people, concurrently with the recognition of a Palestinian identity and a Palestinian state.

Context for Israeli Perception of Palestinians

Israeli parents dream of the day where their children will no longer be required to serve in the military. Unfortunately, this dream has yet to become a reality. Every

⁶ Haaretz article -<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1075465.html>

⁷ Poll was planned and supervised by Dr. Yaacov Shamir, professor of Communication and Journalism at the Hebrew University, and Dr. Khalil Shikaki, professor of Political Science and director of P

generation of Israelis has dealt with at least one war or crisis. From the moment the State of Israel was established in 1948, its legitimacy was threatened by neighbors opposed to its right to exist. These existential threats are still alive today and are integral to the Jewish collective memory.

The cycle of wars, perceived by Israelis often as existential threats, contributes heavily to the Israeli perception of Palestinians. Two recent crises, the Second Lebanon War in 2006 and Operation Cast Lead help in explaining the Israeli mentality in approaching Palestinians.

Second Lebanon War – July 2006: The Second Lebanon War ignited after Hezbollah fighters crossed into Israel Proper, attacking an Israeli patrol unit resulting in three deaths, two injuries and two kidnapped, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. Another front opened in the South when Hamas militants captured another Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, outside the Gaza Strip border. The unprovoked kidnappings on indisputable Israeli territory given the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 and from the Gaza Strip in 2005 left Israeli society irate over Palestinian motives and seriously questioned their long term goals. Israel eventually removed forces from Lebanon following international pressure over disproportionate responses.

Operation Cast Lead/Gaza incursion – January 2009: Following a ten month truce between Israel and Hamas, efforts to extend the truce were hampered by accusation over who broke the truce first. Hamas accused Israel for not lifting the blockade on Gaza and Israel accused Hamas for continued rocket fire on Israeli towns. Israel subsequently responded to the intolerable rocket fire by bombarding Hamas infrastructure and an

eventual ground invasion. The operation ended with much significant loss of civilian life and no clear winner.

Hamas has indicated a willingness of a temporary 10 year truce, or *hudnah*, with Israel. However, this manipulative proposition is satirically conveyed in a recent op-ed column in the Washington Post (Krauthammer),

"Apart from the time restriction (a truce that lapses after 10 years) and the refusal to accept Israel's existence, Mr. Meshal's terms approximate the Arab League peace plan..."

-- Hamas peace plan, as explained by the New York Times

"Apart from that, Mrs. Lincoln, how did you enjoy the play?"

-- Tom Lehrer, satirist

In Krauthammer's article, "The Hamas 'Peace' Gambit", he demonstrates that it would be suicidal for Israel to accept such an offer. Hamas would re-arm during this time while maintaining their mission of a Greater Palestine, with no Israel. Again, Hamas has shown no signal of acceding to the fundamental demand from the international community; to recognize Israel's right to exist (IISS). Unfortunately, Hamas still has clout over the Palestinians and is therefore a relevant actor. Bilal Saab, research analyst at the Saban Center for Middle East Peace at the Brookings Institution, says "only the Palestinians can tame Hamas and convince the Islamist organization to moderate its maximalist ambitions (Saab 10)." The next transition in Palestinian politics is contingent on the internal changes of Palestinian society. Reform has not proven to be effective when imposed externally from Israeli or American pressure. Ultimately, the Palestinians not only need to demand change, but act.

IV. ISRAELI RESPONSES TO PALESTINIAN NONVIOLENCE

During the first intifada, the hard-line Israeli government led by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir insisted on the “iron fist” strategy. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin stated the government’s formal policy on January 19th 1988, “The first priority is to prevent violent demonstrations with force, power, and blows (King, 7).” In an effort to “tone down” the IDF’s shooting responses to Palestinian demonstrators, the army distributed wooden and metal clubs to soldiers, with the authorization to break limbs. The army apparently took the command literally as a Ha’aretz article revealed that 197 Palestinians had been treated for fractured limbs within three days of Rabin’s statement (King, 8).

The Israeli Army was not trained to respond to acts of non-violence. Soldiers realized that while they were equipped to fight and psychologically prepared for external threats, fighting an enemy internally proved too difficult of a transition. A retired brigadier general, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, notes that Israel was facing a popular uprising and that suppression would be ineffective against a generation without hope and fear (King 7).

Unfortunately, even today, the IDF is not adequately prepared to confront non-violence. A soldier recounts⁸,

“I remember when I was a new recruit in the IDF, I was serving in Nebata, a group of Palestinians started walking towards us holding each others hands, it made me face a huge dilemma, they were not violent...”

⁸ Journalist analysis

"Soldiers don't know how to react when there is no threat on their life... The IDF does not know how to deal with non violent behavior..."

The soldiers continue to emphasize the need to transcend the Israeli Defense System. "...The Israeli security system calls the shots in this conflict, if the security system acknowledges there is a change towards nonviolence; the violence (on Israel's behalf) will stop... Non violence will have an influence and will be acknowledged in Israeli society if it convinces and passes the barricade of the Security system."

The inadequate training to confront non-violence in the IDF is represented by the violent retaliation soldiers utilize even today. Non-violence continues in villages of the West Bank despite the lack of media coverage. Unfortunately, the protests often result with fatalities.

In the West Bank village of Naalin, it was reported by Ynet News that eleven demonstrators were injured during an anti-fence demonstration. According to the Palestinians, most of the protestors were wounded by rubber bullets, while a Swedish national was beaten and her leg was broken⁹. Another incident in Naalin occurred less than a year ago. An American, Tristan Anderson, was hurt in a similar anti-fence protest when IDF soldiers responded with tear gas canisters. Unfortunately, Anderson was hit in the forehead and was seriously injured. The IDF asserts that protestors were hurling stones in this protest and other similar ones, provoking more aggressive responses¹⁰.

In April of 2009, another anti-fence demonstration in Bilin by Palestinians, Israelis and internationals ended fatally. Bassem Ibrahim Abu-Rahma was hit in the chest by a tear gas canister and died from wounds shortly after reaching the hospital. The IDF

⁹ Ali Waked – 8/14/2008 - <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3582634,00.html>

¹⁰ Ynet Reporters – 3/19/2009 - <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3685953,00.html>

claims the protests were violent¹¹. A few weeks later, in a similar Palestinian protest of the separation fence, Yusuf Srour was been killed by Israeli forces that shot him in the chest with a live bullet. Again, the IDF announced that they were responding to a “heavy barrage of rocks¹²”.

It is imperative for Palestinians to restrain themselves during these protests and commit to non-violence resistance. The IDF has demonstrated that they can and will respond aggressively to these protests. These demonstrations are by no means a new phenomenon. Anti-fence demonstrations have been occurring for years with similar aggressive responses by the IDF but no change in dealing with the protestors has occurred. In Bethlehem in 2007, Sami Awad accounts the record breaking turnout over 200 Palestinian, Israeli and international activists. He mentioned that as soon as they began the protest, tens of armed Israeli troops came and attempted to prevent it. However, the demonstrators broke into the army wall that was created and continued their procession to the land near the main road where the Israeli soldiers used violence again to try to suppress the action (several were injured including journalists). Several people gave talks denouncing the building of the wall and called for a real and just peace between Palestinians and Israelis. On the return back to the location where we began the action, the Israeli soldiers again pushed and yelled. The real confrontations occurred after the protest. Awad notes, “the level of frustration by the Israeli army to the success of the nonviolent activity was not witnessed on the site; the retaliation took place on our way to our homes. Israeli army check points were erected on the entry ways to all locations where the participants came from and cars that were at the sight of the action were

¹¹ Ali Waked and Anat SHalev – 4/17/2009 - <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3702569,00.html>

¹² Avi Issacharoff and Anshel Pfeffer and Reuters – 5/6/2009 - <http://haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1090697.html>

stopped, participants were insulted, some were forcefully removed from the cars and then cars and individuals were searched for almost an hour. Of course the Israeli army knew there was nothing to search for, but that seemed to be the only response they can think of to “punish” the participants for engaging in this action¹³.”

Awad commended the protestors’ commitment to non-violence resistance despite the more aggressive responses by the IDF. Such responses are to be expected even, especially in the beginning. However, clearly such demonstrations have been occurring for years and the IDF has not realized that these protestors are the allies and not the obstacles to reaching peace.

Case Study: Gaza Disengagement

The continued aggressive military response to Palestinian protests by the IDF is worrisome. It warrants the question, is the IDF completely inept to deal with non-violent resistance?

The disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005 serves as an example of the IDF’s ability to follow orders while not reacting aggressively to non-violent. Much tension existed within Israel leading up to the disengagement. Yet, despite all the hardships, emotions, and complexity, the disengagement process was far less violent than anticipated. The IDF was reported as acting with “sensitivity and steadfastness” and prevented the situation from escalating.

During the disengagement, soldiers restrained themselves from responding to harsh comments from settlers in the Gaza Strip. When settlers poured acid from the rooftops, the security forces did not respond with greater force, even though they were

¹³ Sami Awad – 4/27/2007 - <http://samiawad.wordpress.com/2007/04/27/nonviolent-activism-gathers-more-steam-in-southern-bethlehem/>

more than capable of doing so. Rather, they crane lifted soldiers and police up to the rooftops to evacuate them. This exemplifies the possibility of avoiding an escalation of violence.

Granted, this scenario involves “IDF vs. other Jews” rather than “IDF vs. Palestinians” with in the Palestinian territories. Nevertheless, the Gaza disengagement demonstrates the capability of the IDF to respond appropriately to non-violence resistance. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), for example, approached Shatil with a request to develop a model of constructive struggle to reduce escalation and violence at checkpoints, a model which ACRI can apply in its work with the Border Police¹⁴.

V. GLOBAL CONTEXT OF NON-VIOLENCE RESISTANCE

- EAST TIMOR
- CHECHNYA
- Gaza Flotilla? – MV Mavi Marmara vs. MV Rachel Corrie

VI. LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

One of the foremost leading experts on non-violence struggle, Gene Sharp, provides valuable insight on successful strategies for non-violent resistance. These points are critical for effective non-violence and will yield concrete results. The following ideas posed by Sharp were absent from the first intifada and are still lacking in Palestinian non-violent protests.

¹⁴ Tammy Rubel (Shatil), Haim Omer, and Nachi Alon (Tel Aviv University) - Strategic Thinking and Non-Violence in Israel’s Disengagement from Gaza

Focusing on the long run goals

Sharp defines success as achieving the goals of the struggle. A defiant attitude where a willingness to die supersedes the goal of the struggle does not change the fact that the struggle has failed by not reaching its goals. For the Palestinians, non-violence resistance means more than just not shooting rockets or refraining from conducting suicide attacks. Abstention from violence is not sufficient. Throwing rocks at soldiers may be gratifying for an individual but it does not advance the goals for Palestinians and only provokes Israeli aggression. Sharp acknowledges that such retaliatory acts to the opponents have no strategic purpose and will likely undermine the resistance (Sharp, 488). Success does not require non-violent opponents, world support, or aid of the media. It requires a pro-active movement focused on reaching its ultimate goal of statehood. For this reason it is imperative for the Palestinians to unite on a single model of non-violence to avoid spoilers from derailing the process and losing sight of the long term goals.

Additionally, Sharp emphasizes that violent responses by the opponents should be expected. There is a misconception that when opponents respond violently to non-violent resistance, that something is wrong. Sharp declares this as inaccurate. The opponent group relies on violence to uphold its status. Non-violence resistance resulting in violent repression by the opponents signifies that the resistance is working and threatening the status quo (Sharp, 436). The status quo is exactly what can no longer be tolerated in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. When Palestinian non-violence resistance encounters violence from Israeli soldiers, it is a positive sign that change is in order.

Strategic Planning and Implementation

Sharp notes five essential elements for successful non-violent struggle; 1) a willingness to act 2) strength of the struggle group 3) knowledge of non-violent struggle 4) adoption of wise strategic plans and 5) skillful, disciplined implementation of the adopted strategic plans. The first three elements have been shown in the Palestinian struggle; however, the last two which are most significant have been severely lacking (Sharp, 440).

Planning for success is of paramount importance. Success should never be left to chance. People overestimate the significance of asserting goals, remaining loyal to ideals, and persistence. Although they are admirable qualities, they are all inadequate. Repetitions of actions that have failed in the past do not work in progressing goals. Strategic planning is critical in maintaining momentum for the movement, revising methods of resistance to maximize effectiveness, and to uphold a unified voice. This element was, and still is, absent from the Palestinian non-violence movement.

Wise strategic planning bolsters unity and assures preparedness. During the first intifada, while there were advocates for non-violence like Mubarak Awad, some factions desired to abandon the non-violent strategy. Palestinian Liberation Organization Chairman Yassir Arafat compounded the confusion by referring to the Palestinian youth as “generals”, a term with a clear militant connotation (King, 6). The Palestinians did not speak with one voice and neither are they now as there is a rift between the Hamas and Fatah factions. Unity comes from clear strategic planning which would prevent such miscommunication from distorting the real message of non-violent methods.

In addition, without wise planning, the movement can easily collapse. It is imperative to have a direction when the resistance makes gains as well as when the

resistance faces cruelty (Sharp, 442). The resistance movement in Iran from last year's controversial presidential elections is a good example. There is a widespread movement, organized, united, and has support from the top and bottom. Presidential candidate Moussavi is leading them and has aides from the Guardian Council. Yet, the future of their cause is dependent on the planning by the leadership. If contingency plans for future steps are not deliberated, the momentum will quickly fade and the public will be left clueless as to what direction to go in. Likewise, it is important for Palestinian leaders to maintain communication with their non-violent protestors and to devise plans for multiple scenarios and expect the unexpected.

Self-reliance

Another essential component that Sharp emphasizes is self-reliance. It is important that in the planning of non-violence resistance movements to ensure that success is possible with reliance on yourself alone. The Palestinians need to be accountable for their own actions (Sharp, 472). Gone are the days of blaming others and waiting for help from others. Palestinians cannot depend on Iranian resources or other Arab countries to come to their aid. The energy of the movement needs to be internal and show urgency. Taking accountability indicates maturity, restraint, and consequently readiness to govern an independent state.

VII. CONCLUSION

Imagine a widespread Palestinian resistance movement committed to non-violence. Dr. Marc Gopin depicts such a day in the following account,

"I am going to sit down at this checkpoint, in this airport, because I am

waiting for you to treat me with dignity and equality. I know you can as a child of Abraham, as a survivor of injustice and cruelty yourself, as a scion of a noble civilisation. I know your laws demand that you follow orders, that you point your weapons at my children and terrify them, that you force me to strip naked and violate my body. But your laws are unjust, and you can break them and join us... I know that you put up your wall for security and I too want your children to be safe. But you cannot use it as an excuse to steal more of my land, as an excuse to avoid apologising to me for the harm you have done to me for sixty years. Join me and we will fight for peace and justice together, we will negotiate, but I will not allow you anymore to corrupt me, buy me, divide me, or humiliate me. Shoot me if you want to follow orders, or join me if you want to rediscover your Jewish beliefs and values. I will be generous as the prophet Mohammed was; I will be just as he was; I will welcome you to my home, as he did, but it is time for you to see me as equal, as a brother, and then everything else will work out. You can have your Israel and we can have our Palestine, and God will show us the way to do this in peace and justice¹⁵."

This message is truly tremendous wake up call to Israelis. It entails a pure non-violent resistance, with no rock throwing. Moreover, this message strikes Israelis at their core, their Jewish collective memory. It acknowledges Israelis past experiences with the cruelty mentioned, alluding to the Holocaust. This is critical in gaining the attention of Israelis and showing a level of respect. This respect factor allows the Israelis to overcome

¹⁵ Dr. Marc Gopin - the Common Ground News Service (CGNews).

their predispositions that were prevalent in the Israeli academic and journalist focus groups. There is also an invitation to join the Palestinian in the struggle. There is a realization here that the Palestinian cause is also in Israel's interest for security. The message is also blunt in the impact Israeli occupation has had on Palestinians, forcing Israelis to reflect on their conduct. Finally, it concludes by correlating Jewish beliefs with the values of justice and equality to remind us all that it is possible to have two states living in peace side by side. Suddenly, the possibility of a two-state solution appears to be a reality.

In order to actualize this dream, non-violence is recommended as the best route. Violent retaliatory acts towards the Israelis have left Palestinians farther than ever from an independent state. The Palestinian society is split and Israeli settlement building has increased at a rate of 38 times more than before the Annapolis meeting¹⁶. A non-violence resistance movement will unite the Palestinian people, demonstrate to the Israelis that Palestinians respect their right to exist too, and show a readiness to participate in the world stage. With reforms to the current non-violence movement in the Palestinian territories, the Israeli psyche will be shocked. Although it may be met with aggression initially, the status quo will shatter and a two state solution can finally come to fruition.

¹⁶ NPR - Palestinian Lawmaker Pushes Nonviolence In Gaza. December 31, 2008
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