

Louis Michel “holidays” in Gaza

Adding insult to injury

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The sound of the bombs falling from the sky is, at the moment, just a chilling echo in Gaza. In the middle of the sordid destruction left by the Israeli army, which left 1,314 people reportedly dead up to date and 5,300 people seriously injured, Palestinians –their dignity intact- are trying to start their shattered lives once again.

By all accounts, Israel, which had to stop the latest massacre before Obama’s becoming brand new US president, failed in its main objective, which was to give a fatal blow to Hamas. They were probably expecting to cause considerable damage to the military backbone of the organisation, while they were expecting for the Palestinian people to turn against Hamas for “leading them” to the disaster (in a similar way that they expected in vain to happen in the 2006 war against the Lebanese people and Hizbullah). Basically, they were expecting to reduce the Palestinian population into submission through brute force. Instead, they created a perfect Platform for Palestinian unity on the grounds of resistance to the occupation, while they undermined, as nothing else could have done, the authority of the well-tamed Fatah party (if you could call authority at all the sham government in Tel Aviv’s pocket which is headed by Abu Mazen and his clique). While damage to the infrastructure and casualties on civilians were horrendous, little damage seems to have been done to Hamas military capacity (to the point that they did not arrive to the negotiating table without any demands). And as thousands of people demonstrated soon after the end of the attacks, it is clear that the base of support of Hamas did not turn against it.

Louis Michel’s holidays in Gaza

So Louis Michel, the European Commissioner for Development and “Humanitarian” Aid, decided that after all the mayhem was over, it was good time for a holiday in Gaza. He stood on the rubble left by the bombings, witnessed the mutilations in the bodies of the Palestinian children and was face to face with a population which is seen as nothing else but Guinea Pigs by the Israeli army, always to keen to try new weapons on them. Yet, his opinions on the conflict only added insult to injury: *“At this time we have to also recall the overwhelming responsibility of Hamas (...) I intentionally say this here – Hamas is a terrorist movement and it has to be denounced as such.”*¹ For those who may believe his liberal pose is sincere, these opinions may be puzzling. But in fact, they only expose the hypocritical double-face of the EU that, on one hand, talks about “human rights” while on the other turns a blind eye to gross human right violators, as long as they are their allies.

Louis Michel’s statement turns the world upside down and makes you wonder if he can be really so cynical or if he lives in some other planet far away from our own galaxy: so now the “overwhelming” responsibility belongs to Hamas? Is it them that bombed Gaza back to the stone-age? Is it them that experimented with chemicals over 1,5 million people? This line of argument sounds just like those bigots who put the blame for rape on women: “C’mon now, we know that you shouldn’t ‘ave worn that sexy skirt that night”... now the victim is responsible for the actions of its victimizer! His logic is offensive to anyone’s intelligence. There was not even a single mention of the brutality of the Israeli onslaught.

His statements are the more extraordinary having seen with his own eyes the impact of the Israeli bombardment and shelling, which cannot be labelled as anything but **STATE TERRORISM**... however, he decides that the terrorist, in this case... is Hamas! Never mind the hundreds of

¹ ca.news.yahoo.com#

dead children (412) and women (100), the UN and Red Cross offices deliberately bombed, the use of white phosphorous and cluster bombs, the bombing of schools and hospitals and the deadly blockade of over a year of Gaza... no, Israel, according to Louis Michel, is not the terrorist. Hamas is the sole and primary responsible for the actions of the Israeli army. Even though he stood upon the evidence of Israelis crimes, so much is his own complicity with the slaughter of Gaza that he fails to acknowledge who's who...

But there's more he said: *"In order for the EU to re launch a political dialogue with a minimal chance of succeeding and a chance of moving forward towards peace, Hamas must accept the two little conditions that were put to it — one, the right of Israel to exist and two that it abandon the armed struggle, the terrorist dimension of its approach."*

Why accept a Sectarian State?

Why should any Palestinian accept the existence of a sectarian State, that excludes them, occupies them, starves them, bombs them, which is highly militarised, which has strong proto-fascist overtones, which is willing to go to any extent in terms of atrocities, which was founded through mass-terrorism and the forced displacement of 750,000 Palestinians? Why accept a State that, while pretending to be a "democracy", bans Arab parties to go into elections² and practices a system that is nothing short of Apartheid?

It is ex-US president Jimmy Carter, and not a radical, who said *"Inside Palestine you've got enclaves of exclusively Israeli people. The Palestinians are excluded. You've got roadblocks so that any movement anywhere in the West Bank is impeded (...) You've got a wall that's been built that goes deep into the West Bank to carve out additional property that belongs to the Palestinians and put it on the Israeli side. They can't get to their own fields. You never had a wall built in South Africa. (...) Palestinians are looked upon as pariahs, as terrorists in their own land"* (Irish Times, 19 June)

This is not just a one off statement by former president Carter. A Zionist activist, Shulamit Aloni, has done similar observations: *"Jewish self-righteousness is taken for granted among ourselves to such an extent that we fail to see what's right in front of our eyes. It's simply inconceivable that the ultimate victims, the Jews, can carry out evil deeds. Nevertheless, the state of Israel practises its own, quite violent, form of Apartheid with the native Palestinian population (...) Indeed Apartheid does exist here. And our army is not "the most moral army in the world" as we are told by its commanders. Sufficient to mention that every town and every village has turned into a detention centre and that every entry and every exit has been closed, cutting it off from arterial traffic. If it were not enough that Palestinians are not allowed to travel on the roads paved 'for Jews only', on their land, the current GOC found it necessary to land an additional blow on the natives in their own land with an "ingenious proposal"."*³

Therefore we ask the same question again... why should any Palestinian (let alone Hamas) accept such a colonialist rogue State? Why is it not possible to imagine a radical re-shaping of the region in one single country, where there's a space for everyone regardless of religion or ethnicity?

² www.haaretz.com

³ www.anarkismo.net

EU hypocrisy and the Palestinian right to resist

He also equates the right of armed struggle of a people with terrorism. This comes as no surprise... reactionaries and imperialists of all types, past and present, want to see States only having full hegemony over “force”. Therefore, the first task of every “pacifying” enterprise is disarming the “irregular” armed bodies and making sure that the exclusive patrimony of force (and therefore, the ultimate decision making power) remains in the hands of the State and their allied forces –let us remember that, as the Latin American experience shows, States are often keen to resort to the use of paramilitary forces themselves in order to fight insurgents. Negotiations **after** disarming the rebel forces have historically ended in failure to meet the conditions agreed in the negotiation table, in the preservation of the status quo and in the systematic slaughter of former rebels.

Without romanticizing Hamas in a simplistic fashion, while they are quite obviously a conservative force in many social areas, it is clear that every single Palestinian faction is entitled to resist the brutal and “illegal” (according to countless UN resolutions) Israeli occupation. If faced to a similar occupation as the one experienced in Gaza at the moment, we would expect any Western Power to respond with resistance at all levels, including armed resistance (as it actually did happen under Nazi occupation of France and other countries). This is the case in every single experience of occupation past and present. Why do we expect Palestinians to be any different?

Good Palestinians according to Louis Michel, are those who accept slavishly any dictate from Tel Aviv and who are willing to accommodate to the meagre crumbs left for the Palestinian Authority. Bad Palestinians, in his jargon, are those who exercise their right to resist by all means necessary.

A couple of years ago, in the immediate aftermath of the Lebanese 2006 war, a Lebanese anarchist produced a very sharp article on the issue of the right to resistance (examining the often troubled relation between conservative or Islamist armed factions and the left) and the hypocritical double standard of the “international community” on Israel. If we only swap “Hezbollah” for “Hamas”, I think we can still draw valid conclusions for the current Palestinian crisis:

“Examining the disarmament of Hezbollah cannot be approached justly without a look at and criticism of Israel’s military power. In the Israel – Hezbollah equation, Hezbollah is the national resistance in the face of foreign and military aggression. It is true that some of their strategies can be criticized and condemned, but that is a different point from their disarmament in the face of continuous Israeli military aggression supported by international silence. The United Nations and the Security Council are not impartial in this conflict, nor do they bear precedence in proactive approach to a solution.

The international double standards in looking at Israeli war and occupation both in Lebanon and Palestine leaves the population to choose between silently receiving Israeli massacres and supporting Hezbollah’s armed resistance; in a time where the death and destruction tolls are high, the choice is obvious.

Under such circumstance, it is war-biased and unacceptable to support any international move towards the disarmament of Hezbollah’s armed resistance, which is clearly directed towards Israel and not internally. This discourse of disarming the resistance further supports Hezbollah’s political agenda as the voice of the oppressed fought against by the imperialist lobby – something progressive groups worldwide

should be aware of and for this should refrain from supporting (...) any (...) move towards the disarmament of the resistance. We all want an arms-free world, but not disarming the weak to give advantage to the aggressor – and definitely not by another aggressor. Disarm the world including Hezbollah, but start by disarming Israel. Stop the reaction by halting the action, not by stripping the people of their, unfortunately, only way of resistance.”⁴

Certainly, the military aspect of the struggle is not the only way to resistance in Palestine, and as the Intifada showed twice, and as the people’s committees are proving today, there’s a wide range of forms in which the Palestinian people resist, including many non-violent forms of mass resistance (which do not prevent them to be met with outrageous brutality from Israel’s armed forces). But we refuse to accept the authority of the EU to demand the disarming of any Palestinian faction while the Israeli occupation persists, while gross violations take place on a daily basis and while Israel keeps a terrifying military might as a Damocles’ sword hanging over the Palestinian people’s heads: including banned chemical weapons and an uncertain number on Nuclear Bombs. Any genuine worry about the peace in the region has to start acknowledging these factors.

Disarming the victim and arming the victimizer

But the hypocrisy of the EU has gone beyond that: while calling for the disarming of Hamas and supporting the blockade of Gaza, they have enthusiastically sold all sorts of deadly military gadgets to Israel⁵. In a recent article, the Jordanian diplomat Hasan Abu Nimah, puts it very clearly:

“Because it is generally accepted by the so-called “international community” that Hamas is a major threat to Israel, and therefore to world peace and security, France has dispatched a frigate to participate in a new blockade of the Gaza Strip. The Sunday Times reported that United States naval ships hunting pirates in the Gulf of Aden have been instructed to track down Iranian arms shipments (25 January). Many other European states offered their navies to assist. Indeed, United Nations Security Council resolution 1860 emphasized the need to prevent illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition.

Unfortunately not one European country offered to send its navy to render humanitarian assistance to the thousands of injured, hungry, cold and homeless people in Gaza rendered so as a result of Israel’s attack. Perhaps helping children dying from

⁴ qursanabox.blogspot.com

⁵ “Palestine is cynically used as an experimentation ground for deadly new technologies which are increasingly specialising in “urban warfare” and in which every arms company is interested: from US and Israeli companies to English, French, German, Italian, and so on. So, in this tortured land where men, women and children, crushed by the wargames of the powerful, seem to have no future, new arms are tested, from cluster bombs to impoverished uranium bullets, the effectiveness of UAVs (pilotless aircraft) – able to launch remote controlled missiles – is studied, Achzarit tanks able to withstand landmines are experimented, Namer armoured vehicles with Continental Motors (US) or MTU (German) engines are tested, as is the efficacy of avant-garde systems such as Italian added protection and remote-controlled turrets mounted on Puma armoured vehicles, and Alenia’s futuristic robotic war systems such as Sky-X, the first system in the world able to refuel pilotless aircraft in flight.” www.anarkismo.net

white phosphorus burns, or just lack of clean water, would be seen as supporting “terrorism.”

(...)the glaring moral and legal question is why the “international community” is mobilizing its navies and political efforts to protect the aggressor, preserve the occupation, and deny the victims any means to defend themselves? If they do not want Palestinians to resist, why do they not themselves confront the aggressor and force an end to the occupation, the siege and dispossession?

In the better past when war broke out in a region the immediate response was often to impose an arms embargo on all sides. But when the defenceless population in Gaza were under attack from the region’s strongest army all calls were to prevent the victims from defending themselves. Meanwhile, endless supplies of sophisticated weaponry were sent to the occupier despite its already massive dominance and indiscriminate and criminal attacks on civilians.

(...)When Palestinians started their first unarmed uprising in 1987, 40 years after their expulsion from their homes and 20 years after the brutal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip began, they had no rockets; they had only stones to confront heavily armed occupation forces. Israel used its guns and deliberate, sadistic bone-breaking against unarmed demonstrators killing almost 1,500 and injuring tens of thousands in its failed efforts to crush that uprising (...) Before any Palestinian fired a single shot at the start of the second uprising, in September 2000, Israel had already gunned down dozens of unarmed demonstrators. Palestinians learned these lessons well: Israel will meet any peaceful challenge with lethal force so one had better be prepared to fight back.”⁶

Cynicism in Louis Michel’s statements does not end here though: he, as a representative of the EU, demands the disarming of Hamas as a pre-requisite for dialogue, while not the same condition is put to the other big Palestinian faction, Fatah. Is it so, because Fatah nowadays only direct their weapons against other Palestinians?⁷ The paramilitary structure of Fatah is daily used to terrorise political opponents, to kidnap them and even to organise “coup d’états” as that attempted in June 2007, that ended up in their defeat and expulsion from Gaza⁸, yet, no such a condition as disarming is put on them. As we may see, the “anti-terrorist” EU’s approach is selective, turns a blind eye to “friendly” terrorism, is farcical and is directed at nothing else than preserving the status quo.

Europe’s hands are bloodied too

To finish, Louis Michel states that the European “*public opinion is fed up to see that we are paying over and over again — be it the (European) commission, the member states or the major donors — for infrastructure that will be systematically destroyed*”. He is right on that one: the public opinion is

⁶ electronicintifada.net

⁷ Check the remarkable article on Fatah thug Mohammed Dahlan’s work as Tel Aviv’s and Washington’s stooge for more information on this electronicintifada.net

⁸ For more information on this events check my previous article “The Palestinian Crisis and the Search for a Road Towards Liberation” www.anarkismo.net

getting increasingly infuriated with the way the Israeli State has been giving systematically the two fingers to the rest of the world and by the way they have dismissed every single humanitarian convention in their dirty war against the Palestinian people. If there's something that Israel achieved with this offensive, was to reinvigorate the capacity of the European public opinion to be outraged in the face of their brutality. And the growing calls for a boycott against Israeli products and for cancellation of trade agreements in place will certainly be an unwanted side effect of this new terrorist action by the Israeli army. The public opinion is fed up with this senseless slaughter.

The public opinion is getting also fed up with the double standards of the likes of Louis Michel: and at this stage it is impossible to deny that, as an international libertarian statement reminded, "Europe's hand is bloodied too"⁹. Will Europeans stand by this time, once again, to witness a slaughter take place with their silent complicity? Seemingly this time, as campaigns and demonstrations flourish all over Europe, the European people have (at last!) said enough is enough.

⁹ www.anarkismo.net

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The following article does not pretend to go into the details of the current Palestinian-Israeli crisis; it only pretends to pur the record straight on the hypocrisy of the EU in the unfolding Palestinian tragedy and the way the rhetoric on “terrorism” is used to justify the horrors of State terrorism perpetrated by Israel.

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