



Mazin B. Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine. A History of Hope and Empowerment*, Pluto, London-New York 2011, 290 pp. L 16.

Palestinian resistance against an Israeli “belligerent occupation” is mostly viewed as terrorism and rocket attacks. The brutal violence that was inflicted upon the Palestinian people by the Israeli occupation force is mostly ignored by the West. The most what the Western politicians are doing, is recommending the Palestinian to abstain from using violence, ignoring Israel’s forty-five-year-old occupation and colonization of another people. For them, popular resistance seems immoral or unnecessary.

The late Israeli professor of sociology at the Hebrew University, Baruch Kimmerling, wrote on March 27, 2001 in the Israeli daily “Haaretz”: “Since 1967, millions of Palestinians have been under a military occupation, without any civil rights with, and most lacking even the most basic human rights. The continuing circumstances of occupation and repression give them, by any measure, the right to resist that occupation with any means at their disposal and to rise up in violence against that occupation. This is a moral right inherent to natural law and international law.”

Mazin B. Qumsiyeh teaches at Bethlehem University and Birzeit University and works for a number of civil organizations. He received his Ph. D from Texas Tech University. He did his postdoctoral training at St. Jude Children Research Hospital and the University of Tennessee (included Clinical Fellowship). He published extensively in areas ranging from Zoology to Genetics. He serves as chairman of the board of the Palestinian Center for Rapprochement between People and coordinator of the Popular Committee against the Wall and Settlements in Beit Sahour. Besides this book, his political writing includes “Sharing the Land of Canaan: Human rights and the Israeli/Palestinian Struggle.

Many Western politicians keep recommending the Palestinian people to struggle for a state by nonviolent means. But hardly any of them ever has called on the Israeli government to restrain from its brutal repression of another people. By limiting their message to the undesirability of violence, they gloss over, according to the author, the long history of nonviolent struggle in Palestine. They do not attempt to ensure a colonized people the right of “plurality, justice, and human rights” (12) What the Palestinians want is “freedom and the right of return, not a flog over a canton called a state” (1) And they do not want what was envisaged for them by the former Israeli general and Army Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan: “When we have settled the land, all the Arabs will be able to do about it will be scurry around like drugged cockroaches in a bottle.” (15).

The author writes the history of popular resistance in Palestine beginning with the Ottoman rule, continuing during the Zionist build-up from 1917 to 1935, the great Arab revolt of 1936 to 1939, the devastation to the Nakba (the catastrophe) from 1939 to 1948, from the Nakba to the occupation of the whole of Palestine in 1967, via the period of the so-called peace process to the current Boycotts, Divestments and Sanctions campaign (BDS).

Qumsiyeh writes that by examining the Palestinian situation, everyone will recognize that there are no examples of completely nonviolent struggle for freedom from colonial occupation. “I cannot think fo a single historical precedent where the struggle for rights was waged solely by violent means or solely by nonviolent means. It seems that history of human struggle is a mix of both to varying degrees.” (21) International law recognizes the right to resist an occupation authority. This right is based not only in

Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Convention but also in the guiding lines set for by the International Tribunal in Nuremberg The statutory argument in article 2 of the indictments (concerning transgressions against the laws on conducts of war) at the Nuremberg Tribunal was based upon the Hague International Convention of 1907, writes the Israeli author Hans Lebrecht which Qumsiyeh quotes. (21) Not only thousands of Palestinians civilians have been killed over the past few decades for simply being Palestinians in Palestine but internationals too, like Rachel Corrie who was deliberately run over by a caterpillar bulldozer or Tom Hurndall who was killed by shot on his head.

The Israeli colonization of Palestinian land cannot be permanently maintained without ideological and material support from outside. The U. S. government, pro-Israeli pressure groups and the European Union give billions of dollars and Euros to Israel, used inter alia for building colonies on occupied land or are invested in the military sector. Billions of dollars are earned from Israeli exports, much of it security-related products, armaments and tourism. The BDS campaign, which Qumsiyeh strongly supports, brings these facts to the fore and attempts to induce governments, churches and private investors to restrain from investments in a country that has been occupying, oppressing and colonizing another people for the last 45 years. The author lists quite a few examples of the worldwide BDS campaign. (215-222) The appendix lists eighty out of 200 groups engaging in popular resistance in Palestine.

The author is optimistic that this form of popular resistance will bear fruit in the long run. This book refutes the claims that Palestinians never tried nonviolence. It would make more sense to ask the Israel military to restrain its violence and use nonviolent means to deal with the resistance. Qumsiyeh's history of popular resistance in Palestine should be read by everyone who is opposed to colonialism and foreign domination. That is why it transcends the Palestinian case and can be a template for other resistance movements.

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