

Ramzy Baroud, *The Second Palestinian Intifada*, Pluto Press, London 2006, p. 216, L 10,99.



The Palestinian struggle towards statehood came to a dead end with Hamas seizing power in the Gaza Strip and Fatah dominating the Westbank. During an ongoing colonial process it is beneficial to the colonizer that the colonized are divided among themselves. Divide et impera works perfectly in Palestine. So far, the Palestinians have in two uprisings, termed Intifada's tried to get rid of Israeli occupation. Both Intifada's failed. The last Intifada particularly, the so-called Al-Aqsa-Intifada, changed the rules of the game, argues Ramzy Baroud, a young Palestinian of the second generation, who lives in the United States of America. He is a prolific journalist and the Editor-in-Chief of „Palestine Chronicle“.

In the second Palestinian uprising both parties paid a very high price. 5,000 Palestinians and 1,000 Israelis died. For the first time, many young Palestinians were voluntarily blowing themselves up as an act of resistance. Israel used this situation to justify the construction of an eight-meter high wall through parts of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and other populated areas, and the rest of Palestine was fenced in. Another, undeclared, reason for these measures was to annex some fertile areas of the Western bank into Israel. In July 2004, the International Court of Justice in The Hague ruled that the construction of the wall was a violation of international law because it deviated from the officially recognized ceasefire line of 1949. Israel, which was not subject to any sanctions, disregarded this judgment and kept on building the fence.

In five chapters the author describes the different phases of the uprising, beginning with the reasons why it broke out. There was wide spread disappointment with the so-called Oslo peace process, that remained a process but brought no justice and no peace. Some argue that the seeds of the second Intifada were sown in May 2000 when the Lebanese Hezbollah drove the Israeli occupation army out of Southern Lebanon, which it occupied for 18 long years. Frustration over the allegedly generous offer made by Ehud Barak at Camp David and the provocative of the Temple Mount by Ariel Sharon, who was accompanied by a thousand policemen, were the final straw. The uprising turned even more violent when the Israeli police shot dead 13 Palestinian protesters from inside Israel.

Baroud highlights the double standard according to which the West deals with this conflict. The US particularly disregards Israeli atrocities: „While the Sharon government was getting away with murder, in other places around the world war crimes were not always overlooked.“ For example, Sharon was commanding the infamous Unit 101, which ransacked Palestinian villages for alleged „terrorists“, but instead they were killing defenseless men, women, and children. Not to speak of Sharon's „shared responsibility“ in the carnage of Sabra and Shatilla in 1982. Sharon was Israel's Prime Minister during the second Intifada and responsible for the dismantlement of the Palestinian Authority and the vandalism committed by the Israeli army in the Palestinian Occupied Territories.

The author also mentions the mismanagement, corruption, and failure of good governance by Palestinian politicians that caused widespread frustrations among the Palestinian people. On the question of resistance against occupation the author is very clear: „Palestinian resistance factions must desist from targeting Israeli civilians, with or without an officially negotiated ceasefire, and regardless of the course of action chosen by Israel and its reckless government in response. This decision is imperative if the Palestinian struggle is to safeguard its historic values and uphold its moral preeminence.“ For Baroud, there is no question that the Palestinians have the „legitimate right to self-defense, and the unequivocal right of ridding themselves of so lengthy and so vile an occupation“. But it is also „imprudent for the occupied - who surely possesses the moral edge - to utilize the unmerited methods of the occupier“. International law makes a clear distinction between the occupying military

forces and civilians. Baroud accordingly warns: „If Palestinians waver from this critical line of reasoning, their historically virtuous struggle risks being diluted with moral corruption.“

The author closes his interesting description of the second Intifada by hinting at essentials, which he insists the Palestinian leadership should uphold. Like the Zionists, the Palestinians must have a clear idea of their final aim, which has then to be transformed not only into a Western, but also into an international priority. The right to return (of Palestinian displaced persons), for which the PLO was founded, must be the cornerstone of the Palestinian struggle. All the other essentials like East Jerusalem, borders, and settlements ought to remain „non-negotiable“. Last but not least, the second Intifada will always be remembered by all people of conscience „as a fight for freedom, human rights, and justice“. For the future, popular resistance will always be an option, writes Baroud.

The book is topped off with an excellent foreword by Kathleen and Bill Christison and an intriguing introduction by Jennifer Loewenstein, a US-American political activist and a faculty associate in the Middle East Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Their texts use the appropriate language to describe the horrors brought upon the Palestinian people by a forty-year-old brutal Israeli occupation. A very convincing book.

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