

Dialogue with a Syrian Anarchist on Gaza, the Middle East and the Libertarians...

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February 26, 2009

1. As an anarchist from the Middle East, what's your view on the recent conflict in Gaza and the fragile truce achieved in the wake of Obama's inauguration as president?

The recent Israeli assault on Gaza was extremely bloody, but it was not the first of its type though. This war was a continuation of the 2006 summer Israeli attack on Lebanon. That time, the US Secretary of State described the assault as the beginning of a new Middle East, supposedly, one that abides fully to the will of the US super-imperialism. In both cases there was truce in the end, which is mostly a halt till circumstances become a bit more appropriate; the shelling stopped only because Obama's administration ordered Israeli generals to provide calm conditions during the inauguration of the coming president of the White House. The worst about both the fighting and the subsequent truce, is that the masses, the people, are those who suffered the most and whose will and interests are ignored fully by the ruling elites.

2. What do you think are the real Israeli motivations for this latest assault?

To impose the Israeli and, at the same time, the American will and grip on the Palestinian and the Arab masses.

3. What has been the reaction in the Arab world against this new Israeli aggression?

There was a lot of anger in the Arab streets. The ex-Stalinist and ex-nationalist intellectuals and the political elites were divided on this issue: Some supported the pro-American Arab regimes, that they described as "modern" and "moderate" because of their repression of Islamist fundamentalists... that's the new "measure" of modernity in the Middle East, according to the War on Terror. Others took the side of Hamas, describing it as an anti-Israeli fight, as nationalist resistance. The pro-American and pro-Israeli media couldn't gain any credibility during the conflict among Arab masses, so these masses were left largely to the influence of fundamentalists.

4. Has there been any anarchist activity of support to Gaza in the Arab countries?

The answer to this question should reflect the present situation of the Arab Anarchists. We still consist, as a movement, of very small groups, deprived of real influence among the people; although our ideas are respected among the intellectual elite, this has never been our real objective, which remains to create strong social grassroots movement based on the values of liberty, equality and solidarity. In fact, in some places we were nothing but a small minority in the street protests against the war. Everywhere we face oppressive measures and public prejudices. But

the depth of the overall crisis means that the masses need our ideas as a base for real democratic struggle against the oppressive and exploitative elites .

5. What is your understanding of the impact of the results of recent Israeli elections in the the Palestinian conflict?

The Israeli elections have not so much of an impact, if they have any, on the fate of the conflict. The Israeli people, poisoned by the Zionist propaganda, still trust their ruling elite. This is another example that real change cannot be achieved through such elections. The case of Israeli-Jews is a terrible example of the imperialist, colonial, policies of capitalism. After using the Jews for centuries as scapegoats for the internal tensions, and after the massacre of millions of them, they are using them, again, to help with their interests. Jews now are fighting and killing Palestinians for the sake of Western capitalists, their historic oppressors, and for their domination in this oil-rich area.

6. How do you think the Palestinian question affects the whole of the Middle East region?

The Palestinian cause had, and will still have, great influence in the region. After 1948, what's called now Al-Nakba in the Palestinian history (ed. disaster), the region went through times of discontent and unrest, resulting in the raise of "nationalist" regimes in Cairo , Baghdad and Damascus; those military and oppressive dictatorships used the conflict against the Israeli aggression as an excuse for their domination, as an "opiate for our nations". Now it is the turn of Islamic fundamentalists who are trying to use it to "prove" the anti-western nature of the conflict and consequently as a base for their domination over the masses . As a result of the colonial nature of capitalism, the Palestinian cause will be always source of unrest and anger against this unjust exploitative system.

7. How do you think the anarchist movement can support the Palestinian people? There are calls for a boycott against Israel, do you think that this is the right tactic?

The solidarity of the international anarchist movement is so much needed and very important . And yes, the call for boycott is also important. According to the experience of the fight against Apartheid, such actions are quite effective in weakening the aggressor and the positions of its international supporters. We, in contrast to nationalists and islamists, do not see the conflict as a local one. In fact , it is part of all of humanity's struggle against the unjust international system dominated by international corporations and big capitalist powers. For the Arab masses, the voice of solidarity that is coming from the West, and even from inside Israel, is a clear proof that the conflict is not just a clash between religions or civilianizations.

8. There's a widespread feeling among Palestinians that they have been forgotten by the rest of the world... do you think this is the right time to revive the international solidarity movement? How should this movement look like?

I agree wholeheartedly with this. The effects of the activities of "Anarchist Against The Wall" against the racist separation wall, is a very good example. The main problem here is the small scale of these activities and that they are located in very specific places only, mainly in the West Bank. I think Gaza should become an important target for solidarity actions. The people's sufferings there are horrible, and thus the masses, that they are in need of everything in order to survive, have to choose between Hamas or Fatah, which supply these goods on one condition only: that the masses will follow and support them in their conflict to control Gaza.

9. How do you think it is possible to achieve a lasting peace in war-torn Palestine?

We have argued that there can be no lasting State solution to this problem. The local elites, or the international ones, cannot solve the conflict. In fact, they all benefit from it. Only the free masses can do so. That means that we have to establish ties with Israeli anarchists, anarchists from all the countries of the region, not only between anarchists or activists, but also between the peoples; in their combined way to understand the real nature of the conflict and fighting all those who use it to maintain their domination over us.

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Retrieved on 22nd December 2021 from www.anarkismo.net
The following is an interview on the Gaza onslaught, its impact over the region and the role of
anarchists in the ongoing struggle against imperialism and capitalism, conducted with Mazen
Kamalmaz, Syrian anarchist and editor of an Arab libertarian analysis/opinion website
www.ahewar.org

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