

American Middle East Policy in Arab Eyes

It is inconceivable that we stand against America and the fundamental values embedded in its constitution, but we do cherish the right to be opposed to the policy of the U.S. Administration, as does in fact a large segment of the American population, as certain polls have revealed.

American foreign policy in our region has ended with dismal failure as it veered away from the very values enshrined in the American constitution, pursuing a course alien to reason and justice. The Administration seems to have steered a course after the September 11 atrocity (which we strongly condemned) eschewing those values and espousing a policy of coercion.

The vanquished people of Palestine are aware of their rights, interests, and obligations. It would be utterly counterproductive to subject them to any kind of oppression or coercion, which they stand ready to resist regardless of the sacrifices that this might entail. The Americans' blessed forefathers set a magnificent example in that regard as they revolted against oppression and injustice and wrested their freedom. As they did they were hailed as heroes, whereas the Palestinians nowadays, struggling as they are for their freedom, dignity, and, right to self-determination, are condemned as terrorists.

How bizarre!

The American Administration's policy contributed to the spawning of what it now terms terrorist activity, as it supported the Taliban in their struggle against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Osama Ben Laden was among

them. The American Administration also endorsed Saddam Hussein in his war against Iran. America is now supporting Israel in its flagrant aggression against the Palestinians, providing it with weapons, funds, and blanket political and diplomatic cover.

The toll of the Palestinian Intifada has been, since its outbreak three years ago, around 800 Israeli victims and over 2500 Palestinian victims. Why are the ones who killed 800 Israelis labeled as terrorists, while those who killed 2500 Palestinians are not?

The American Administration justified the Israeli raid against a locality inside Syria, considering it an act of self-defense. Why does the American Administration recognize Israel's alleged right to self-defense and does not acknowledge the Palestinians' or the Lebanese's right to self-defense, hence calling Palestinian resistance, and formerly Lebanese resistance, to Israeli aggression occupation and terrorism.

Israel practices the most awesome forms of terrorism in our region. Yet America lavishes unqualified support on Israel. Does not that implicate the American Administration as an accomplice in Israel's aggression and terrorism? Is this appropriate for a super power that preaches freedom, democracy and human rights?

Our understanding of democracy is that it is identifiable with the majority rule and respect for others' views. We are baffled by the American stance in regard to the barrier being constructed by Israel, grabbing vast areas of the West Bank. The Administration voiced its denunciation of the Israeli act, and subsequently vetoed a U.N Security Council resolution condemning that act. What a paradox!

The Administration insists on tagging all resistance movements in Palestine, and formerly in Lebanon, as terrorist organizations. We perceive resistance to occupation as legitimate freedom fighting. By what democratic logic does the Administration insist on imposing its views on our sovereign states? Dissent is condoned within the U.S but denied abroad. What a paradox!

America is leading a world campaign against any of the smaller nations acquiring weapons of mass destruction. America invaded Iraq, occupying Arab territory, under that pretext, only to find out that none of those weapons existed there. We find it appalling that the American administration turns a blind eye to the established fact that all kinds of weapons of mass destruction are found aplenty in Israel's arsenal. Does not that smack of a double standards policy?

The American Administration has acceded to a Syria Accountability Act, which prescribes punishment of Syria for standing up to Israeli aggression against the Arabs and challenging unfair American policies in the region. By what logic does a super power call to account a smaller, yet sovereign, state which is a member of the United Nations? In the event that the American Administration had any complaint or misgiving about Syrian policy or practices, would it not have been more fitting for the U.S.A to refer the case to the United Nations? Does not international legitimacy figure in the American policy perspective? The irony is that America, being a super power, is in a position to hold any country in the world accountable, but there is no power in the world that can call America to account. We sense in this paradox a manifestation of the arrogance of power.

There is a motion in Congress, which would require the resettlement of all Palestinian refugees where they are now. The refugees were forcibly uprooted from their land and homes in Palestine. It is their inalienable right to return to their country. U.N. Resolution 194 asserts unequivocally their right to return and to compensation. Ignoring that right would be no solution, and would leave the Palestinian issue simmering and potentially explosive. Furthermore, Lebanon cannot afford to accept their resettlement on Lebanese soil. That would be a major breach of the 1989 Taef Reconciliation Accord that terminated 15 years of civil strife.

We wish the U.S Administration would reconsider its policies in the Middle East, reverting to the very human and cultural values it ostensibly preaches, heeding the call of peoples afflicted by Israeli aggression and

terrorism, and honoring the imperatives of justice and human rights in the region. That would presuppose halting the Administration's blatant bias to Israel in its continuing aggression and terrorism against the Arabs. Only then will America find all Arabs on its side, exhibiting an alacrity to deal with the U.S with all due empathy, respect and openness. Only then would the U.S recover its effective role in pursuit of a just and permanent peace in the Middle East.

[Former Prime Minister]