

JERUSALEM

International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People
Keynote Presentation on Jerusalem
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by
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I

Control of Jerusalem has been a source of conflict between the West and Islam ever since 638 A.D. when Muslim Arabs, captured Jerusalem from Byzantine Christianity.

Except for the 100-year Crusader interlude in the 12th century, and until its capture by Britain from the Ottomans in 1917, Jerusalem remained under Muslim sovereign rule for some 1,200 years. This is longer than Britain has been Norman, and more than twice the length of time since Columbus discovered America. It is longer than Jerusalem was under Jewish sovereign rule in biblical times.

Historically, there never was a conflict between Islam and Judaism over Jerusalem. On the contrary, under the protection of Islam Jews returned to Jerusalem after having been expelled from it, first by the Byzantine Christians and later by the Latin Crusaders. The Byzantine Christians had turned the Herodian Jewish Temple into a garbage dump.

A conflict between Judaism and Islam over Jerusalem developed with the advent of political Zionism. This was a mostly Russian Jewish nationalist movement which, towards the end of the 19th century, long before the Holocaust, aimed at the establishment, through massive immigration and colonization, of a Jewish state in a country, Palestine, 95% of whose population was then Arab both Muslim and Christian.

With massive British help after WWI, and even more massive and continuing American help since WWII, Israel is what it is today. Because of this Western sponsorship, Israel's drive for exclusive control and super-privileged status in both West and East Jerusalem, and its determination since its crushing military victory in 1967 to turn the two halves of the city into what it calls its "reunited" "united" and "eternal" Jewish capital, are seen by Islam as the latest phase in a historical conflict and a latter-day Western crusade by proxy.

Such perceptions were exacerbated by the resurgence of irredentist religious passions among Jews and evangelical Christians triggered by the Israeli conquest in 1967 of the Muslim Holy places in East Jerusalem. For the first time since the Roman Emperor Hadrian destroyed the Herodian Temple in 137 A.D. Israeli soldiers swaggered on what they believed to be the Temple Mount. This activated the deep messianism embedded in Zionism behind a facade of secular socialism, stirring the hopes of Christian millenarians while confirming the worst fears of Muslims.

It is approaching midnight in Jerusalem. Some believe it is past the hour. What should be manifest is the extreme urgency and volatility of the situation in this intoxicating city.

II

A prevailing Western notion - the crux of the Clash of Civilization's theory - is that Islam lies outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. This is nonsense, because Islam's major premise is that it is integral to, and indeed the culmination of, the Judeo-Christian scriptural tradition. Central to Islam's concept of God's purposes is that He has revealed Himself to humankind since creation through a succession of prophets and scriptures. Foremost among these scriptures are the Hebrew Torah and the Christian Gospels.

Eighteen Hebrew patriarchs and kings are reverentially mentioned in the Koran. Islam gives David and Solomon higher status than Judaism does. According to Judaism they are sinful monarchs; according to Islam they are sinless prophets. According to the Koran Abraham, is a Muslim and the builder of the Ka'bah, Islam's most sacred shrine in Mecca.

Islam believes that because of God's love for Christ, He raised him up to heaven just before the crucifixion. Christ is thus alive today in heaven and will return to earth to usher the millenium. According to Islam, Christ was born of Mary, a virgin, by the direct creative act of God. According to the Koran, Jesus spoke in his cradle, healed the sick, and raised the dead-miracles it does not accord to Muhammad.

Mary, is mentioned reverentially more often in the Koran than in the New Testament.

Neither Judaism nor Christianity look the same way towards Islam. Judaism does not share Islam's reverence for Jesus and Mary. You might want to ask your scholarly colleagues how Judaism looks upon Jesus and Mary and where it considers Jesus is today. Indeed, of the three faiths, Islam is the most ecumenical in its stance towards the other two.

III

Because of Islam's perception of its kinship with Judaism and Christianity, much that is holy to Judaism and Christianity is holy to Islam as well. And much of that is centered in Jerusalem.

Thus, for Islam, Jerusalem is thrice holy: because of its Judaic, because of its Christian, and because of its Muslim dimensions.

For Muslims, Jerusalem was the first direction of prayer (*qibla*) before Mecca became their qibla. Its holiness was further consecrated in a Koranic verse that describes a miraculous nocturnal journey (*isra*) by the Prophet from Mecca to Jerusalem. According to tradition, it was from Jerusalem that Muhammad ascended to Heaven, to within "two bow lengths" of the presence of God. This ascension is known as the *miraj*.

The Prophet's *isra* to, and *miraj* from, Jerusalem became the source of inspiration of a vast corpus of devotional literature concerning life beyond the grave. This literature is in circulation to this day in the languages of more than one billion Muslims: Arabic, Turkic, Farsi, Urdu, Hindi, Malay and Javanese.

A very special link exists between Jerusalem and one of the five "pillars" of Islam--the five daily prayers (*salat*). According to tradition, it was during the Prophet's *miraj* that, after conversations in Heaven with Moses, the five daily prayers became canonical.

To commemorate the *isra* and the *miraj*, the Umayyad dynasty based in Damascus graced Jerusalem towards the end of the seventh century with two architectural gems: The mosque of the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque which form with their compounds and walls the Noble Sanctuary--al Haram al Sherif. The former is the earliest surviving Muslim building while the inscriptions inside the Dome are our earliest dated fragments of the Koran.

Down the centuries, succeeding dynasties ruling from Baghdad, Cairo, and Constantinople embellished Jerusalem with mosques, theological colleges, Sufi convents, abodes for holy men, orphanages, suqs, hospitals, hospices, fountains, baths, inns, soup kitchens, places for ritual ablution, mausoleums, and shrines. These buildings were maintained through a system of endowments. The revenues of entire villages in Palestine, Syria, or Egypt

were dedicated to these endowments. The donors were caliphs and sultans, military commanders and scholars, merchants and ladies of rank.

IV

In 1947, the UNGA resolved to partition Palestine into a Jewish state, and an Arab state, with a *corpus separatum* for Jerusalem under UN trusteeship.”

The Arabs rejected the UN partition resolution in 1947. Why? Because it dismembered Palestine and gave the Jewish minority of 30%, 57% of the country when this minority owned less than 7% of the land.

The Zionist leadership “accepted” partition, but this acceptance was only verbal. At the same time they prepared a master plan, called Plan Dalet, for the military conquest of the country including the corpus separatum of Jerusalem.

It is because Israel’s control of West Jerusalem is based on the military conquest of 1947-1948 in defiance of the UN partition resolution, that the international community has not accorded formal recognition of Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem to this day.

V

Within less than a week of the conquest of East Jerusalem in 1967, the Mughrabi Quarter adjacent to the Wailing Wall had vanished, together with its Abu Midyan mosque. The quarter had been consecrated as a Muslim trust by al-Afdal, son of Saladin, for the benefit of pilgrims from North Africa. The Wailing Wall is known in Islam as Al Buraq after the wondrous mount which carried Muhammad ^{the} on the night of the Isra. In a predawn raid Israeli

bulldozers surrounded the quarter and gave its inhabitants, three hours to vacate their homes. That is how the plaza fronting the Al Buraq was created.

The regime governing the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish holy places in Jerusalem had been traditionally known as the Status Quo. This was the accumulation of practices, privileges and constraints arrived at consensually over time. Unilateral action backed by military might to change the religious Status Quo in Jerusalem not only lacks sensitivity and prudence but is courting disaster.

Before the end of June 1967, the borders of municipal East Jerusalem were unilaterally extended from 6 square kilometers to 73 square kilometers of occupied West Bank territory. Jewish land ownership within this area before 1948 was less than 1%. This annexation was in deliberate and calculated violation of the Geneva Convention. On 29 June 1967, the elected mayor of East Jerusalem and his councillors were read a curt order of dismissal in Hebrew by an army officer.

Since then under the rubrics of the "unification" and "reunification" of Jewish Jerusalem the Palestinian inhabitants of East Jerusalem have been subjected to a menu of siege, harassment, intimidation, isolation, discrimination, displacement, infiltration, fragmentation, expropriation, demolition, deArabization and Judaization, designed to demoralize and overwhelm and hopefully induce departure fulfilling a long cherished Zionist dream of an Arab-free Jerusalem.

All this has been meticulously and commendably documented by your ~~ambassadors in the Middle East and in Jerusalem as well as by the representatives in the EU of the European Union and many NGOs.~~

Annexed East Jerusalem mushroomed into annexed Greater Jerusalem which mushroomed into Metropolitan Jerusalem. Metropolitan Jerusalem now includes 634 sq km or more than 10% of the West Bank.

of the Palestinian People under the able leadership of Ambassador Badji, as well as by the EU

In 1967 the Jewish population in East Jerusalem was zero. Today there are about 300,000 Jews on West Bank soil within Metropolitan Jerusalem. If this is natural growth, Israeli geneticists have discovered a remarkable drug.

Meanwhile, even as we meet the Separation Wall snakes into, around, and between the Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem relentlessly, mercilessly separating thousands of Palestinian residents from home, school, hospital, relatives, playground, garden, shoppingplace and office.

Manifestly the target here is the heartland of Palestine and its future Palestinian capital East Jerusalem. Israeli colonization in and around East Jerusalem aims at geostrategic control, demographic domination, psychological browbeating, economic and social disruption, doctrinal affirmation, religious fulfillment, and territorial expansion. Above all it aims at the preemption of a viable two-state solution and the crippling of any newborn Palestinian state.

Meanwhile Jewish fundamentalists abetted mostly by American evangelists not only dream of rebuilding the biblical Jewish Temple on Al Haram al Sharif but have also been plotting to do so. Plot after plot to blow up the Mosque of the Dome of the Rock and the al Aqsa Mosque have been uncovered by the Israeli authorities.

The most infamous of these plots caused the roof of the Al Aqsa to collapse in 1969 through arson. This atrocity triggered the establishment of the Islamic Summit Conference, which today includes 57 countries many of whose representatives honour us with their presence in this hall. At least 20% of Israel's Jewish population favors destroying the Muslim shrines and rebuilding the Jewish Temple in their place.

VI

To their credit the UN and the international community in general never bought Israel's "unification" and "reunification" ploy. A continual stream of UN resolutions calls upon Israel to cease and desist, and to comply with and abide by international law and the Geneva Convention and the wishes of the international community. We applaud your persistent efforts in this regard.

But Israel pays no attention, Why? Because the only country Israel takes notice of is the US.

From my perspective of observation over the decades, three deeply disturbing phenomena stand out in American decision making on the M.E. **First:** The increasingly influential role of the Congress in the actual formulation of ME policy and the continuing acquiescence of the Executive to this process. Legislatures are too tuned to parochial priorities to conduct the foreign policies of global powers. **Second:** The steady retreat of successive administrations from earlier principled positions on Jerusalem, and on the applicability of international law and the Geneva Convention to Israel as the Occupying power of the West Bank and the Golan and **Third:** The continuing disconnect between developments on the ground in the ME and the diagnosis of cause and effect by the American foreign policy elite both in & out of office.

Perhaps the most outrageous initiative by The Congress on Jerusalem has been its endorsement in 1995 of the transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to a specifically "united" and "reunited" Jerusalem as the sole Jewish capital of Israel. This endorsement is already a public law of this land, thanks to the failure of President Clinton to veto it.

VII

L&G

Triumphalist Z has been increasingly in the ascendant in Israel and the Jewish Diaspora since the crushing military victories of 1948 & 1967.

This triumphalism is anchored in Israel's nuclear monopoly and in the American guarantee of Israel's military superiority against any combination of neighboring states.

Israel has received a tremendous infusion of human reinforcement from the recent US-sponsored mass immigration of a million ex Soviet Jews. Thanks to this infusion it can send colonists in the thousands into East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan.

Israel derives vitality from the unstinting support of right-wing American evangelism.

Its self-confidence is fed by automatic US Congressional circumvention of any undesirable initiative by the US administration and by the automatic veto by this administration of any undesirable resolution in your Security Council.

The American Jewish community though not monolithic on the peace process in general, is virtually unanimously hardline on Jerusalem.

Inside Israel the principal leaders are engaged in a continuous outbidding competition with one another. Too often the arena for this competition is Al Harm al Sharif

Bibi's disastrous authorization in 1996 of excavations beneath the western Wall of Al Haram al Sharif was an exercise in outbidding Peres and Barak on his left and Sharon on his right. Sharon's catastrophic invasion of Al Haram al Sharif in 2000 which triggered the second intifada was an exercise in outbidding Barak on his left and Bibi on his right.

The asymmetry in the overall balance of power between Israel and the Arab World is compounded by intra Palestinian disarray and the absence of an Arab center of gravity.

Soaring expectations were raised in the Arab and Muslim worlds by the new American administration. Presidents whose middle name is Hussein do not grow in plenty in American orchards.

But the swift transition by Sec. Clinton from her categorical NO to settlement, NO to "natural growth," to her gushing depiction as "unprecedented" of Bibi's moratorium which excludes East Jerusalem, is not only a farce, but an unpropitious augur of the future.

With regard to Israel the US is not an umpire or referee. It is not a broker or passive observer. Jewish settlement in Jerusalem, the WB and the Golan is financed by unaudited official US capital and tax-exempt private donations. It is defended by US supplied arms, sustained by the US mass media, shielded by US diplomacy, and often manned by armed US born colonists. The US is a major part of the problem and the major actor in the solution.

Time, time, time, is the crucial commodity here. The Israeli exploitation of time is stunning as any visitor to the OT can verify. Bibi knows America as well as he knows his face. A 10-month moratorium will take him to the doorstep of the US half-term elections next year.

Mitchell is a superb diplomat but the Irish conundrum is not analogous. Neither side in Ireland exploits negotiation time to revolutionize the demographic and physical landscape of the other.

Robust sustained, strong-willed presidential intervention in the peace process is not an act of charity. It is in the supreme national interest of the US itself and a giant contribution to global concord.

Clearly the current incumbent of the Oval Office does not lack good intentions, but does he have the time amidst his other momentous priorities? And does he really have the leverage over a plus royaliste que le roi Congress?

VIII

L & G

Is an honourable and peaceful solution for Jerusalem conceivable?

Such a solution must rest on the following four pillars:

ONE: The demystification and deconstruction of the Israeli and American concept of the “unification” and “reunification” of Jewish Jerusalem.

TWO: No monopoly of sovereignty over both halves of the city by either Israel or Palestine.

THREE: No aristocracy of religious rights conferring preeminent status to any one of the three Abrahamic faiths.

FOURTH: Acknowledgment of the equality of the religious and non religious dimensions of Jerusalem for both the Israelis on the one hand and Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims on the other.

This concept of Jerusalem is based on inclusion not exclusion, on sharing not monopoly, on parity not hegemony, on balance not the usurpation of rights, on separate but joint governance.

The unity that currently exists in Jerusalem is the unity of an Anschluss. If partition applies to the whole country, a fortiori it applies to its metropolis.

The Israeli and US Congressional concept of Jerusalem is a guaranteed recipe for indefinite conflict not only in Palestine but far beyond.

Our concept for Jerusalem could well become a paradigm for a historic reconciliation between Israel and its Western sponsors on the one hand, and the universe of Islam on the other.