

The campaign that should never stop

By Eyad Sarraj,
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I lay in a quiet hospital bed in a Tel Aviv hospital receiving treatment for a blood problem when the news from [Beit Hanoun](#) [1] pierced the silence with its images and sounds of extraordinary pain on the faces of the dead and the living alike.

My own concerns paled into insignificance. Why was the mother who lost her child screaming so? It struck me that this mother was not yet in mourning, but in the grip of an overwhelming state of fear. She knew too well how vulnerable and exposed they were and that there was no escape. She knew well that when "they" decide, they kill. The frightening ghost of death and destruction was and is still looming in our skies, threatening more [loss](#) [2] of life and loss of hope.

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Also by Eyad Sarraj in openDemocracy:

["Dear Tony Blair, justice please](#) [4]" (14 March 2003)

This article was first published in the independent website [BitterLemons](#) [5]

"BitterLemons.org is a website that presents Israeli and Palestinian viewpoints on prominent issues of concern. It focuses on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and peace process. It is produced, edited and partially written by Ghassan Khatib, a Palestinian, and Yossi Alpher, an Israeli. Its goal is to contribute to mutual understanding through the open exchange of ideas. Bitterlemons.org aspires to impact the way Palestinians, Israelis and others worldwide think about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."

The political scene in Palestine and Israel offers no solace. In Palestine, the usual old populist rhetoric was wheeled out, with people calling for earthquake-like revenge, while mediocre politicians got busy trying to score public relations points over other mediocrities. They reminded me of student speakers at London's Hyde Park Corner. The exception was [President Mahmoud Abbas](#) [6] who seemed in genuine pain and was genuinely angry. He was always committed to peace.

The Israeli scene is even worse. The signs are ominous when people like [Avigdor Lieberman](#) [7] are welcomed into the cabinet while the once promising [Amir Peretz](#) [8] appears to have been thoroughly chewed and digested by the military establishment.

This should not be the time for mediocrity, politicking or revenge. We have wasted too much time and too many lives. This is a time to think only of how to make peace. Peace is freedom. Peace is life. Peace is dignity.

It is now more urgent than ever for all those who still truly believe in peace - Palestinians, Israelis and friends and allies all over the world - to unite their efforts in order to give reconciliation and peace a chance.

Now that warmongers like Donald Rumsfeld [9] are out, the rest should be pursued wherever they are, and particularly in Palestine and Israel. I don't need to contemplate their paranoid question: do the people want to make peace? The answer, on behalf of all people, is an unequivocal "yes".

But we have to expose the foes of peace and freedom. We know how powerful the Pentagon and the Israeli war machine [10] are. This war machine, with its hegemony over Israeli politics, is bigger than Israel itself, and must be stopped. It is a tool of death and destruction.

The Israeli political community, public and leadership alike, must know it is captive [11] to this powerful establishment. Israelis should know that their security will only be found through strategic peace with Palestinians, and not through the power to kill, subservience to the powerful military machine or dependence on the American administration.

Responsible Palestinian leaders must make every effort to restore the Israeli public's confidence in Palestinians, lost after six years of horror and lies. They should make the effort to convince their own constituencies of the merits of peace and help to shape a new culture. This should be done systematically and on all fronts. Imagine if Hamas came out today [12], after all this pain, and declared a complete ban on all forms of violence.

Israel must be told, by Hamas and others, that it is a country in the middle east. And so is Palestine. These two countries must live together or die together. Between them they have all the ingredients for prosperity, and together they can help the region and the world.

The world must be offered the chance to see the good Palestinian, the good Arab and the good Muslim. We must be offered the chance to see the good Jew and the well-intentioned west. It is all in our grasp, but we need to take that important leap [13] by acting now with courage and wisdom.

A unified [14] vision and strategy on the Palestinian side must lead us toward peace. Hamas is an essential part of the political map and should declare its readiness to rise to the responsibility of not only making internal reforms but, more importantly, making peace with Israel.

Also on the latest phase of conflict in Israel-Palestine:

Khaled Hroub, "Hamas's path to reinvention [15]"
(10 October 2006)

David Grossman, "Israel's paralysis [16]"
(7 November 2006)

Hamas's rise to power [17] was well deserved and democratic. It is tragic that Hamas was not ready for this dramatic chance, and it is tragic Hamas was never given a fair chance to govern. After months of pressure and conspiracy, Hamas is yielding to the calls of the community. Hamas should be encouraged and be engaged on all levels, and all conspiracies must stop. A truly democratic culture based on the rule of law is one of the keys to peace.

Fatah [18] and Hamas need to stand behind the leadership of Abbas, who can help the nation and the region because of his unique stature, position and the worldwide respect for his leadership, which is based on his strategic vision of peacemaking.

It is time for action. Therefore I call upon all peace activists to grasp whatever is left of the scattered hopes for peace. Human life is precious and it is our divine duty to protect it. Returning to Gaza and "normal" life, I am determined to devote the rest of my life [19] to the cause of peace. Peace is freedom. Peace is dignity. Peace is life.

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[7] <http://www.aljazeera.info/Opinion%20editorials/2006%20Opinion%20Editorials/November/6%20o/Avigdor%20Lieberman%20Lovable%20Man%20By%20Uri%20Avnery.htm>

[8] <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/780060.html>

[9] <http://www.tehrantimes.com/Description.asp?Da=11/12/2006&Cat=2&Num=003>

[10] <http://www.bitterlemons.org/issue/pal1.php>

[11] http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-middle_east_politics/israel_palestine_4069.jsp

[12] <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=2648009>

[13] <http://www.agenceglobal.com/Article.asp?Id=1098>

[14] <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/C9901541-6BD9-4DDB-B419-4BFA6F3789A5.htm>

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[17] http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-middle_east_politics/hamas_3982.jsp

[18] <http://in.today.reuters.com/news/>

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[19] <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/843D6B3C-65D2-428C-86B8-30A31478F405.htm>



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