



The Last Word

For the Record

So, our elections were cancelled, and I will not hide my disappointment, my dismay, or my anger.

Even prior to the expected decision, Palestinian social media was on fire with posts vehemently opposing the move and warning of the ramifications of such an action. Those against canceling the elections (I'm using the word *canceling* because I have no faith in the word *postponed*, which was used) were outspoken and bold, while those who accepted the decision were shy, almost ashamed of the decision. One example of a feeble attempt to defend the cancellation was a post implying that such a decision was not unprecedented. It pointed out England's announcement in March 2020 that local and mayoral elections would be postponed for a year due to the COVID-19 virus! Seriously? I honestly see no meaningful defense for backtracking from the elections.

By no means underestimating the consequences and implications of Israel's refusal to allow Palestinian elections to take place in Jerusalem, I still believe that holding the elections is more important than making the statement that Jerusalem is Palestinian. On the practical level, there were many creative suggestions for ways to allow Palestinian Jerusalemites to cast their votes. However, a lot of people saw that the main reason given for canceling the elections – Israel's refusal to allow Jerusalem to be included in the electoral process – was simply a pretext to conceal the real reason for the cancellation which, rumor has it, was Fatah's fear of losing.

No one seriously thinks that the elections are a magic wand that will miraculously solve all our problems, but voting remains a right of the people that has been denied for almost 15 years. Elections are a means for people to express how they feel about the current state of affairs and a litmus test for democracy. Equally as important, holding elections is a message to the world signaling that when Palestine is free, it will be a democratic society that has a history of democratic process even under the harshest of conditions, with military occupation as the cherry on top.

Finally, assuming (and even giving the benefit of the doubt to the higher-echelon decision-makers) that the decision to cancel the elections was totally genuine and based on principle, I believe that the assessment and hence the decision was outright wrong. The damage that will result from this verdict will by far outweigh its benefit.

Long Live Palestine!

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Publisher

