

Palestinian Nationalism Is Here to Stay

It's as if the bottle of champagne was shaken vigorously before it popped open! During the last round of assaults on Gaza, people around the world simply could not tolerate the scenes of excessive force that, among other losses, led to the killing of over sixty children. It was not a natural disaster; the children had been in their humble homes, literally scared to death when they were killed by the bombs of fighter jets, each worth the cost of a whole neighborhood in Gaza. It is estimated that there were approximately 750 Israeli air raids on Gaza (not counting land and sea artillery bombardment) during a span of ten days. Upon seeing horrific images, millions around the globe spilled onto the streets to support the Palestinians and to demand an end to the Israeli occupation.

We have previously seen images of pro-Palestinian demonstrations, but the scope of these is unprecedented. From Yemen to Washington, D.C., people poured into the streets enthusiastically chanting, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." The massive outburst was impulsive and honest. France stood out by denying the demonstrators the right to express their feelings, citing lame excuses. As in the Eurovision song contest, *Un point pour la France!*

Something happened that not only motivated people to take to the streets after seemingly decades of bottled-up sentiments but that also changed public opinion. Social media, particularly Facebook, Instagram, and Tik Tok, were inundated with posts in support of Palestine, mostly by young people, to a point that triggered heavy censorship from Facebook and Instagram. That in turn led to a campaign to lower their ratings, which resulted in a big loss of their market-share prices! The shock came when the *New York Times* and *Haaretz* newspapers had front-page photos of over sixty Palestinian children who had been killed. A few days ago, I read a report that #freepalestine had over two billion views on Tik Tok, while #standwithisrael had 28.9 million views.

The reasons for all this are undoubtedly important, but not as important as the impact. Experts believe that the global reach of social media and the relatively easy access to content has caused this tectonic change, as one article termed it, particularly among the young generation. More importantly, the show of support and the sway in public opinion has certainly empowered local Palestinians. People have hope again and have shed their fears. As repressive as the Israeli authorities have been during this entire period, defiance has been clearly displayed on people's faces, young and old. They have smelled freedom and tasted independence. Nothing will turn them back now. Palestinian nationalism is here to stay.

We all know that it's not over yet. It might take a decade, two, maybe even three, but we Palestinians already know the results of the endgame. The tide is turning.

Long Live Palestine!

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Photo by Shareef Sarhan.