

Israel and Palestine, Spanish Cooperation and Peace Building

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I am a member of the Palestinian Peace Coalition, which is partly, attached to the Geneva initiative. That is a model agreement that Palestinians and Israelis tried to propose to the world, to us first, but to the world also and I am Co-chair of the Palestinian and Israeli peace ONG Forum, which includes a number of organizations from both sides who work together for peace, or to make sure that people continue to work together now and after the peace agreement is signed, hopefully.

This will lead me to talk about what exactly we mean when we say *peace building*, or what kind of peace, or the slogans of *two states for two peoples*, *two capitals in Jerusalem*.

Simply, I would like to say that we aim, first of all to have a piece of mind, in Palestine and Israel, if we can help our Israeli friends. Because so far, neither they do have a piece of mind, nor do we. Of course, I agree with Bassem Khoury when he said that we are always on the receiving end, but we are active too. In this past sixty-five or so year, we have been very active, especially when it came to not saying what we want. People always knew what we don't want. However, it took probably I would say the Palestinians people and its movement towards reorganizing, between 48 until 88, when they decided thought to the representative body to say *we want to build a state on the Palestinian historical land, a Palestinian state*. That is what we want. It will so happen next to the state of Israel, fine. We want our state on the Palestinian land. This stokes our Jordanians friends too, because many were thinking, especially on the Israeli side, you have your Palestinian state, go, anywhere, go to the moon, or Jordan is as good. We are happy and proud that Jordan is our

neighbor, but Jordan is not Palestine. There is an historical piece of land that we both peoples disputed. Our Israeli friends call it historical Israel. We call it historical Palestine. The intents to solve this issue between those two peoples during the British mandate, when they attempted to sort it out by deportation, as we all know it was in 1947.

That is where we got stuck, actually both sides. Palestinians decided to deny the existence of the other that was their decision and Israelis too. They declared it in the pillars of Zionism, *land without people*, they have not seen people on this land for a people without land. So, we match each other in this angle business, who is dancing with the same tune. Nobody exist on the other side, it is all mine. However, of course, as I have said, after not only debates, but suffering, too, on the Palestinian side they decided in 1988, to recognize the existence of an international legitimacy by recognizing the two UN Security Council Resolution 242, 338, and to recognize that the whole historical Palestine will not be ours as it was the case before with the PLO Governance, when we said we want a democratic state consisting of: Jews, Muslims, Christians, all over the historical land.

However, we want a Palestinian independent state with Jerusalem that was occupied in 1967, and here specifically, we were saying very clearly; the territory that was occupied in 1967 and I tell you why, why we have succeeded until now, because for the first time the Palestinian people and their representatives decided to go along international legitimacy and acceptance of how the world is run. Actually nobody knew where Palestine was, except in my mind and my mother's mind, of course, and in every probably Palestinian mind. But on the map, there is no Palestine. If you ask the world where is Palestine and they say, Pakistan? It is simple because Palestine has not existed since 1948.

Now when it comes to this position of denial; we said, we denied that they have any right, the Israeli Jews, have no right and they denied our existence, or having any rights on this historical piece of land. The only change that happened, first of course in 1988 when the Palestinians took their decision, resolution of November 15th declared by Yasser Arafat. The second decision that matched, somehow when a courageous Israeli leader was elected to office. His name was Isaac Rabin. He was assassinated, thanks God, not by a Palestinian. When the possibility of progressing from the position of stopping the forces of denial with in each side towards recognition of the other side. This is why truly the only period that Palestine, Israel, have witnessed any peace building in a certain sense, was between the signing of the Oslo Accords, later on the signing of the Cairo Agreement, until the 4th of November 1995. For the Palestinians, they have not changed position. Despise the fact; they continue to be adamant that they want; not to deny that the other, they want to recognize the other, but they also want to be recognized as to have rights on this historical piece of land. And this is where the fight is going actually in all the talks that continue to be.

Unfortunately, for my Israeli interlocutors, or friends, the assassination of Rabin, has set back the whole policies of the Israeli government backward when it was turned around by the decision of the Israeli government to start a process of recognition of the other side they attended back to the process of denial. They added it to the denial of course, once more; they deny that they are afraid of the assassination. I tell my Israeli friends some times, until today they deny that they are all afraid, starting from Shimon Peres, to any political decision maker in Israel, that hovers in the lack of mind and he dares to change policy he or she may be assassinated. I think that is where we are stuck, in the peace building and in the moving towards the peace agreement.

When we say that involvement of the world of course, we know that the Europeans have their hearts, they are more involved, we are the neighbors, we good neighbors, whether we like it or not, they are more a state when it comes to peace and war in this area of the world. Of course, we heard when we talked was about the Arab spring that it can easily spilt out, whatever blanced we have seen around. And the spilling out is usually towards the small pool that we all swing around, the Mediterranean. I mean Spain swims there, Italy swims there, most of the European countries, we too, North Africans, etc. Not Americans of course, they have oceans, they don't even care. We are the all history anyway. But we care about our history, and this is why I think that Europe probably needs to be more involved. I know their hands are tight a little bit. They are happy to be involved in certain aspects, and not to be involved in others. We usually told them that if for example, both sides, the Palestinians and the Israelis on the negotiation table ask for the Europeans to be presented in the talks, they are willing to be there. I think it depends on, the Europeans being invited by Palestinians and Israelis because the host actually is the Americans. So they have to be invited by the Americans. The Americans are happy with them being they only matter in this pot. Probably today, yes as it stands, maybe, there is a serious intention on the part of the Americans, to sort things out. I would usually advice and I still do advise, the Americans that if they really love Israel to save Israel from itself. Ask Israel to take out of this occupation, ask Israel to go back to normalcy. The Palestinians are so far accommodated, to the idea, but no accommodated to the idea, that they will continue to be controlled by any other people, nation, and government. They want to be independent. This is why, what happened in the 80's was an intifada. It was very clear to the Palestinian people at large. They set their goal, freedom and independence. Whenever was made up on the year 2000, or the talks of today as Bassem Khoury said, Tom Friedman going for a third intifada, giving numbers, etc. There was just one intifada in Palestine, in the 80's, with a clear message, with a clear believe, by the Palestinian people and they participated in this intifada. I remember people being surprised when those who were in a leadership position, when they were called, of course, I was one of them, anyway, taken to prison. The leadership of the intifada was part of the people, actually it was the people, and this exactly is part of this game that is being played now by the world, the sort that is covering over our heads, if you don't listen.

The situation today is that people in Palestine are waiting for peace building, they are involved in the peace building process but they need a partner. Peace building is a tango that we have to play. We need a partner for that. We know that the current Israeli government has a very good partner, among the Palestinians. They are happy to have this partner. By the way, they are planning to bust this partner again if you hear very soon about attaching Gaza. If that partner is going down, in Gaza and in Palestine so we can go to another game of war, the engaged and all these support elements will come up again, to both sides of course; the Israeli public also will support poor Israel who is fighting war for existence. Our friends in Gaza, the rulers of today, who are ruling there by force also, not by democracy, would be happy, they are the under dog, the whole world would be also looking at them. I am not here to say anything about the people in Gaza, they need all the support. What the Palestinians don't need is the support of the continue division or the continued take over of certain land by force. By the way, the PLO when they accepted the two for two, in admissibility of acquiring land by force, this applies to also to Hamas in Gaza. As we could be it took the Resolution 242. We will never accept that Hamas can take over the territory of Gaza by force, which is the case.

I am optimistic, not in the sense of the Europeans would want to or the Palestinians representation; PLO, Mr. Abu Abbas, President of the state of Palestine. I am worried on the Israeli side that there is no leadership to match in the position needed for a peace agreement. I want to move away from the idea of peace building. Peace building will continue today and tomorrow and after the piece agreement signed. What we need today is a piece agreement, not like all the piece agreements – and here I am telling my Israeli friends – that you signed with Egypt or with Jordan. Those peace agreements were turning your back region. We Palestinians, we wanted a peace agreement where we turn our faces to each other, to work together, because in the end, despite our acceptance that there is another country in the second part of the historic land, we still considered the historic land. The Holy Land, I don't know. We may consider also the whole area. Not only Palestine – Israel. Jordan makes part of it, Lebanon, Syria; it is all the Holy Land. The way it started the whole idea of the Holy Land it went down to Egypt from Aleppo, probably.

Definitely, Israel and Palestine need to be in their peace agreement facing each other and not telling their backs to each other and that is were it is important to emphasis the, this is the type of agreement that would like the European and the Americans to support and to save us from ourselves again.