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## One-state solution

Media Mention of Hussein Ibish in Arab News - November 5, 2009 - 12:00am

<http://www.arabnews.com/?page=9&section=0&article=128120&d=5&m=11&y=2009> [1]

This first critical study of the “one-state” agenda comes at a time when Palestine has witnessed no real progress on the ground and an atmosphere of hopelessness and pessimism is spreading in the region. Hussein Ibish looks back on the legacy of the December 2008 Israeli war against Gaza in which more than 1,400 Palestinians were killed, over 5,000 injured and 21,000 homes and business destroyed and declares that both Israel and Palestine cannot achieve their aims through force: “The actual choice facing the Israelis and the Palestinians is between a hellish future of continued conflict or a decent future of coexistence and diplomatic relations between two independent states. It is, simply, a choice between war and peace.”

Proponents of the one-state agenda are completely opposed to these beliefs. The one-state perspective — which is only accepted by a minority among Palestinian and pro-Palestinian activists in the West — reflects for the most part the ambitions of the Palestinian diaspora and has, so far, gained little support from Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The one-state agenda suggests that all Israelis and Palestinians should live together in a democratic state. This notion which gained currency during the second intifada in September 2000 is also attracting a growing number of thinkers and activists frustrated by the repeated failure of negotiations. One of the most influential spokesman for the one-state agenda was the late Professor Edward Said who wrote in 1999, “Real peace can come only with a bi-national Israeli-Palestinian state.” More recently, John Whitbeck who has advised the Palestinian negotiating team in talks with Israel, also says that a decent “two-state solution” has become impossible because of “the ever-receding ‘political horizon’, which on the ground becomes less practical with each passing year of expanding settlements, by-pass roads and walls, is weighed down by a multitude of excruciatingly difficult ‘final status’ issues that Israeli governments have consistently refused to discuss seriously, preferring to postpone them to the end of a road that is never reached, and which, almost certainly, is intended never to be reached.”

Hussein Ibish examines one by one, a series of nine arguments in favor of the one-state agenda. One of the most interesting arguments demands democracy and, equal rights for all, in a state which has in fact existed for the past 42 years. The author (who does not hide his support for the two-state solution) acknowledges that Jewish Israelis and Palestinians possess mutually exclusive and perhaps irreconcilable national narratives, understandings of

the nature of present realities, and visions of the future.

“As long as both Israelis and Palestinians continue to cherish nationalist sentiments, an agreement based on two nation-states is the only practicable way to square the circle, rather than attempting in vain to make these contradictory projects and narratives coexist as if the other is not there or does not matter.”

The author reiterates his views in favor of the two-state solution, when he analyses a series of problems caused by the one-state agenda. He warns us once again that the real alternative is not between one state and two states, but between war and peace. He criticizes the proponents of the one-state solution for backing an idea that can only become reality in the future and consequently consigning the Palestinians, living under occupation to continue suffering under those conditions, and everyone else to continued conflict.

Ibish finally highlights the need for everyone and not just one-state advocates to realize that this conflict is inherently unmanageable and that it is moving towards a dangerous new phase of religious warfare. Salim Nazzal, a Palestinian-Norwegian historian of the Middle East, believes that” the failure of American plans will sooner or later push the region towards a comprehensive war, the logical result of aggressive Zionist policy. It is difficult to tell whether we are heading towards an eighth Arab Israeli war. What is certain is that the absence of serious pressure on Israel is creating an atmosphere of despair and militancy.”

The author acknowledges the gloomy reality surrounding the peace process but on the other hand, he strongly believes that to oppose a negotiated two-state agreement is not only to accept continued warfare and confrontation but also to politically abandon the people living under occupation. This in-depth critical study of the one-state solution highlights the difficulties plaguing the peace process. And it also underlines the complex political problems dividing the Palestinians into groups among themselves.

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