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# Beyond Revenge: Support Peace, Tolerance, & Reconciliation

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We are here today to pay respect to members of the families whose lives have been shattered by the untimely and violent and death of their relatives. They are here today, not just to share their grief, but also to share it publicly so other parents will be spared this unspeakable pain.

Their individual and family pain is but one aspect of a conflict that existed beyond the life time of all human beings alive today. Two peoples fighting over land, resources, history, ideas, identity and survival. An occupier and an occupied engaged in an existential conflict that has rarely lent itself to compromise and shows no signs of abatement any time soon.

For both peoples, with few notable exceptions, knowing the history of the other is just another tool in the struggle, and as such, it is to be avoided. Understanding that history might humanize the other, and thus it might diminish the capacity of the young to kill and die for a noble cause, against an inhuman evil enemy. This understanding is a tall order. There is too much to know, and the problem with history, as I said on another occasion, is that it has been around too long. It lends itself to support any argument, or refute it, thus adding an aura of authenticity and validity to it.

The Palestinian history, which has come to be called their narrative, is that of a people who have lived in the land as residue of its residents since time immemorial. Their coveted land was taken over by the Crusaders a thousand years ago and retrieved in two centuries. Jewish immigrants, supported by powerful and advanced Western powers, took over the land, and ultimately inflicted on them the Nakba, catastrophe, in 1948 by establishing the state of Israel on their land. A tale of dispossession, disinheritance, exile, struggle, tenacity, sacrifice, endurance, occupation, resistance, patriotism, betrayal, hopelessness, violence, humiliation and steadfastness, all woven together to define the Palestinian psyche. It is a story of individual success and of communal failure to redress the injustice of the past. At its core is a

yearning of the people to be free of occupation and to have a state of their own, to be able to return from exile.

The Jewish narrative starts out with dispossession and exile thousands of years ago. A story of a people scattered among inhospitable peoples in foreign lands and surviving by their sheer will to survive against all powers aligned to assimilate and integrate them out of their own uniqueness. A story of Diaspora, Pogroms, Ghettos, Holocaust and Return that lead to unending wars and a conflict that defies resolution. A story of abject defeats, and heroic victories; of belligerment and dominance: of individual and communal success after the longest journey of humiliation and weakness. At its core, it is a story of survival, and the will to survive on the land.

These, apparently irreconcilable narratives, have caused these two peoples, and many others, unspeakable grief. It is the task of the survivors to reconcile these narratives, to achieve that which eluded generations before us, and to bequeath the children a legacy of peace.

The wars, the losses and the pain suffered by individuals is often forgotten, or willfully ignored. Political calculations often transcend human cost because it is viewed as a price to pay to achieve noble goals, or ignoble ones mischaracterized and mispackaged.

What we have today is a grim picture of two peoples, conditioned to endure, with no sense of security, and with the conviction that your enemies gain is your loss. A zero sum game.

People should have better lives, and deaths, than this. It is the responsibility of the survivors, to seek real solutions, and not to be content with scoring debating points. Solutions that will entail compromises of both sides, not just on goals, or dreams, or narratives, but on what seems to them to be justice itself. All this suffering and conflict will be for naught if the solutions adopted will not bring a genuine and lasting peace. A peace that puts an end to occupation, provides Palestinians with their freedom and a viable state, and Israel peace and security with borders accepted by its neighbors like other normal nations.

This occasion is too serious for political discussions and for debating issues. It is a sobering moment for reflection on peace. A moment to think of a better future for parents and their children. A moment to live, and not just to speak of, the meaning of compromise.

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