

## **Vague vision in Gaza!**

Bessan Shehada, project coordinator of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) in Gaza interviewed Mr. Akram Attallah, a political analyst and writer. He writes regularly for Al-Ayyam newspaper on the political situation in Gaza.



### **We would like you to give us a brief analysis of the current situation. How do you view it?**

The current situation in Gaza is the result of 10 years of siege. Siege always creates catastrophic outcomes; not only politically, it is most dangerous to society. People's psychology, identifies and their character. People are no longer as decent as they used to be. Bearing in mind historical examples - the Mongols, for instance used to separate themselves in the mountains. And they were monstrous - which illustrates that people, when living in isolation are more defensive and hostile. When

that happens, people's vision of society, other people and politics becomes harsher (this can be seen in social media). People have become even more hostile at the domestic or household level. That's how more violence is created. Add to that the lack of financial stability due to the collapse of economy. Not to forget the high rates of divorce, early marriage, and inability to get married.

This has created some serious effects at the very core of society; the household. We are talking about a breakdown in everything over 10 years.

**This is a general question, but if I ask about what is happening now - people now are waiting for relief that has been promised (according to Hamas and Dahlan) and also they're hearing about a war on Gaza that is being prepared by Israel. Which is going to happen?**

Well, there are two scenarios. Something big is being prepared within the region, and it can't be denied. It has to do with the nature of the Palestinian case and Hamas's place in the equation. Also the Riyadh summit is another issue.

Israel's talks about war are serious, and it seems everyone in the public realm is talking about a coming war. When dialogues about war are frequent, we conclude that the purpose is to introduce the idea to Israeli public, to desensitize them. The published intention is always about dismantling Gaza's weaponry.

How is this related to Hamas's and Dahlan's agreement? Will it be possible that the Riyadh summit classifies Hamas as a terrorist organization? These are big questions that need answers. A war might be an option, and after that a breakthrough might result. The two scenarios are not that far from happening together because the world has realized that a siege cannot continue for more than 10 years. Common sense holds that there is an international move to end the crisis in the region. How? We cannot tell. There are no solid leads.

**Where is Hamas in this case?**

Hamas is a significant player in this game, but it is definitely not the party to take any decisions. Hamas is simply the big rock that everyone wants to move where they need it to be. Hamas doesn't have a move to make; they're being lead instead. They don't have any choices. Recently, the PA has been pressuring Hamas. As a result, Hamas faced two choices; the first is to surrender, which has serious

consequences for Hamas (it means that they would essentially have admitted to their failure to control Gaza), and the other is go to war. Add to that, the recent siege on Qatar (Hamas's major supporter) which led to a full siege on Hamas.

While turning to Iran for refuge, Egypt took the chance (through with coordination with Dahlan) to give Hamas a choice to make a settlement, where Dahlan benefits. Hamas has clearly become poor and is welcoming almost any financial supporter. Egypt has been trying to cast Hamas from the Qatar-Turkey alliance to United Arab Emirates-Egypt alliance. They couldn't succeed in the past, but clearly there is a chance now. Also, clearly Mahmoud Abbas has persuaded and helped Egypt, Hamas and Dahlan to take this initiative.

**Should we understand that PA procedures meant to weaken Hamas, or to fight the whole of Gaza's people?**

Let's be clear. Israel's current project is to separate Gaza. We all know that Israel is the biggest party in this issue, and they stand to benefit the most from this situation. There are other parties in the region that went along with this project. There are four parties involved; Israel, Hamas (who took over Gaza strip in a way that separates Gaza from PA), the PA (because all the funds poured into Gaza have been used by Hamas to participate in the political separation of Gaza from the PA, and the PA know this), the fourth party, and the most effective is Qatar; which has always been moving between Tel Aviv, Ramallah and Gaza, and has poured a lot of money into the process.

**How about a fifth party? Egypt?**

If Egypt wanted Gaza to be separated, they would have not closed the borders. Egypt has not played any role except to push Gaza back towards Israel. It has been a historical strategy between Egypt and Israel.

### **What is Dahlan's role? What is he looking to gain from all this?**

He's trying to get back to the Palestinian political system. He's a man who has money, regional relationships and fans on the ground. He objected to being ousted from the political system and seeks to get back to it with more power. This is a historical chance for him to get back through Hamas and the case of the Gaza Strip; the West Bank is totally closed to him politically.

### **What President Mahmoud Abbas is doing to Gaza, is it a trap to get rid of Gaza? What is the rationale behind his recent moves?**

What is happening is destroying the National Unity Project. Gaza is a core part of the project. Historically speaking, Gaza is the home of National Unity. What I think is happening is a collapse of the National Unity project. It has been collapsing for years. It seems as if the West Bank will be added to Jordan, and Gaza will be added to Egypt, and we have no choices or decisions to make.

Israel has had strategic plans to get rid of the Palestinians and it never succeeded in making them work, but now I believe the Israeli project is becoming realized because the Palestinian governments are so busy dealing with internal conflicts.

I trust that Gaza is the home for Political and National unity, I have no doubt about this. That's why we have to understand that if Gaza falls, the National Unity Project will fall too.

### **Regarding the Dahlan-Hamas agreement, what do you think about the leaked documents concerning about what is happening?**

Look, Mr. Khalilal-Hayya and Sameer Al Mashharawy have declared some things.

Al-Hayya is the second man in Hamas, and Al-Mashharawis the second man after Dahalan. Their declarations can be taken seriously and analyzed. It seems like there is something serious being prepared and which will probably result in positive outcomes. Not because it's a Palestinian-Palestinian discussion, or an Arabic Palestinian one, but because this happens in parallel with what happened to Qatar at the Riyadh summit. In addition to that, the major changes in the region, such as raising UAE to high control over Qatar. The region is being redesigned and restructured.

### **What is Dahlan giving to Hamas and what is Hamas giving Dahlan in order for this agreement to succeed?**

Dahlan is paying by taking on the negative reputation of making peace with Hamas whom he hates, in that Dahlan represents Fatah, which is fundamentally against Hamas. This will surely affect his powers and will make him less popular with Fatah members. Also, if the agreement goes well, he will have to work under Hamas's control in Gaza (the agreement states that the Ministry of Interiors, local police and resistance will stay under the control of Hamas). His only gain is getting back to the political system in a strong way.

Hamas's only gain is support; financial support. They are poor now and need someone to lift them up and pay their bills. We can also expect that Hamas chose this agreement to protect itself from being cast away because the summit at Riyadh summit declared that they consider Hamas a terrorist organization. If Hamas is going to make agreements with Dahlan under Egyptian censorship, it will be understood that they're trying to be a part of the Egyptian-regional and international system. This will mean that they have put their foot down.

### **Do all of these events pave the way for Dahlan to be the new President?**

This is related to more than one issue. It is related to his agreements with Hamas, and if these agreements can be transferred and are continuous in the West Bank, he will be elected. Regional opinions about it are important here too. Also important is Israel which hasn't declared an opinion yet. Also, the USA plays a strong role, because Obama's last government had a tough opinion about Dahlan. The USA has ordered some regional countries to stay away from Dahlan because they had the Brotherhood party project and Dahlan was totally opposed to it.

### **As a Palestinian Citizen, what would you like to happen from all of this mess?**

Unity for the whole political system which establishes an independent country, as per the 1967 plan. We don't want half solutions or half unity, we want complete reconciliation.

The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS) is one of the major institutions of political education in the Federal Republic of Germany. RLS serves as a forum for debate and critical thinking about political alternatives, as well as a research center for progressive social development. It is closely affiliated to the German Left Party (DIE LINKE). The Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Regional Office Palestine has supported partners in Palestine since 2000, and established the Regional Office in Ramallah in 2008. Today, the office is in charge of project cooperation with partners in the West Bank, in East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip as well as in Jordan.

Let's talk about Gaza is a collection of interviews from people of Gaza about their personal daily life experience. It describes the sociopolitical and economic situation of the people in Gaza. Views and opinions expressed in the interviews are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily represent the views of interviewer/organization.

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