



Palestinian Fratricide – The Arab View

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Several Arab governments and the media are fretting over the violent confrontations between *Hamas* and *Fath* in Gaza and the West Bank. PI Online examines the views of several writers and reaction in the street to these events. While the media generally reflect the concern of their respective governments, the few comments from the public on the web portray a disinterested public, depressed over the fighting and wanting to ignore the situation, essentially wishing it away. This time, the public recognizes that the situation has been created by the Palestinians themselves rather than outside forces like Israel and the West. This morning, the leader of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, *Muhammad Mahdi Akef*, who is known to support *Hamas*, called for both parties to refrain from violence, stating: “We have asked the *Hamas* leadership to follow the law in pursuing the criminals in Gaza. As far as the other group [a reference to *Fath*], we ask them to cool down.”¹ *Akef* was also critical of the Egyptian government, claiming it is more interested in securing the release of the Israeli prisoner, *Gilad Shalit*, than relieving the Gaza blockade. That view exemplifies the frustration felt by those watching the Palestinian situation deteriorating into a power struggle between *Hamas* and *Fath*, with each group claiming to be the true representative of the Palestinian people.

Palestinian writer “*Adnan abu-‘Amer*” paints a bleak view of the situation, explaining the lack of choices currently available to *Hamas*.² He totally rejects the idea of any capitulation or surrender by *Hamas*, whom he considers to be the only democratically elected representative of the Palestinians. Lacking any political assurances, ‘*Amer* does not see it as in the realm of possibilities for *Hamas* to accept an interim technocratic administration, of which *Hamas* is not a part. In his opinion, any alternative solution must entail tangible guarantees that the will of the Palestinians will not again be proclaimed in rhetoric but ignored in reality, as was the case after *Hamas* won the last election. In contrast, *Bilal Al-Shubaki* believes that *Hamas* made a mistake after the election by acting more like an opposition party with an agenda that ignored the realities of the situation on the ground and

¹ Al Jazeera - August 5th, 2008

URL: <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/5C2F3E7C-7424-4473-97D3-ED12F188EE10.htm>

² Islam Online - August 7th, 2008

URL: http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1218033664659%20&pagename=Zone-Arabic-News/NWALayout

the views of the international community.³ *Al-Shubaki* points out that, in comparison to *Hamas'* control of Gaza, the organization has suffered drastically in the West Bank. *Hamas'* effort to impose its entire agenda on the Palestinians was not, in his view, a wise decision and he suggests that the Palestinian electorate should rectify the situation at the earliest opportunity.

Today, in the newspaper *Al-Hayat*, Lebanese writer *Raghid Al-Sulh* called for transforming the violent struggle into a political one.⁴ He suggests that a temporary agreement under which *Fath* controls the government and *Hamas* controls the parliament. The arrangement would remain in force until new elections take place. What seems certain is that Egyptian and Yemeni mediation has been unsuccessful. The leadership of *Hamas* renewed their threat that more tightening of the Gaza blockade will lead to another uprising on the Egyptian side.

Generally, voices on the Arab street seem to be choked into silence by the internal problems generated by the "*Hamas-Fath*" confrontation, even to the point that they are no longer able to articulate their usual condemnation of Israel and the West for the ills plaguing the Palestinians.

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³ Islam Online – August 5th, 2008

URL: http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1217798733838&pagename=Zone-Arabic-News%2FNWALayout

⁴ *Al-Hayat* – August 7th, 2008

URL: <http://www.alhayat.com/opinion/08-2008/Item-20080806-98f55fd5-c0a8-10ed-01bf-ee337f4d16ac/story.html>