

We are all Palestinians

An appeal¹

*To any and all who – in South Africa – would have
joined the blacks in their struggle*

Had we been whites in South Africa,
we would be outraged by the massive killing of black citizens,
the brutal devastation of their habitat.
Many Jewish citizens would probably have denounced the regime
and called to overthrow it,
some would have joined the blacks to create a united front against the ruling power.

We would have said 'We are all blacks'
Now is the time to say 'We are all Palestinians'.

Had we been whites in South Africa,
we would probably have opposed the apartheid regime
that divides the country and constructs separations and ghettos for other ethnicities.
We would probably have come out, called for boycott,
risked our lives to prevent the killing of whoever's blood
was free to be shed on grounds of ethnic origin.
We would have joined the struggle
against a regime that abandons
its subjects..

Why does this not happen here?
Because a campaign is being fought against us citizens, too
It is called propaganda.
It sounds like an old fashioned cliché,
remnants of old movies,
of other times, of wicked regimes.
In our age of internet and multi-media channels

¹ English translation: tal haran

the idea of 'propaganda' is hardly taken seriously.

Anachronistic as it might sound
we **are** living under a regime
that invests huge resources in propaganda,
in recruiting us daily to collaborate with acts of state
that, had we heard of their likes elsewhere, else-when,
we would wonder, shocked: 'How could this possibly be?'

This regime operates simultaneously,
targeting Arabs with its sophisticated, state-of-the-art weaponry
and targeting us, its privileged citizens, with an ancient weapon, no less sophisticated.
This weapon – so embarrassing – is propaganda.

Most of us know it

Others know it too.

Nevertheless, time and again we make the same mistake to assume
that this very knowledge might protect us from propaganda,
keep it external.

But propaganda is everywhere.

Everyone lends a hand, sending long-Johns to soldiers,
offering discounts to pilots.

To constantly brace oneself against such propaganda is just not enough.

It is not enough to engage in endless deconstruction of information,
for which we don't always have the time.

Distance is needed from the places where such information is produced.

Nowhere around us is there such distance.

That is the nature of propaganda,

we have nowhere to hide:

Across the street lives the pilot who dropped a bomb,
down the street lives the journalist who did not publish
the horror stories and the voices of protest,
the neighbor's son is editing the army invasion of Gaza,
around the corner lives the girl-soldier who

operates the latest model of detect-and-shoot
To resist propaganda, more than steady effort is needed.

We citizens of the State of Israel have willingly become the hostages of propaganda.
In normal times, and especially in times called "war" by the Israeli government,
a mere few of us bother to surf non-Israeli news websites or check foreign television
channels, find different images – not in abundance, either, for the army prevents
direct reporting from within Gaza,
and only Ramatan news agency,
from the heart of this darkness, transmits images
to other media worldwide.

But a chance meeting on the street
is a flash reminder that only few have seen these images or read that information
(beside the handful of friends to whom we email-forwarded our booty
and anyway we saw them at yesterday's demo
and will see them again at the rally tomorrow).

All the others, people across the political spectrum,
are reading and saying other things.
They denounce the "murderous Hamas",
muttering an occasional comment on Israel's exaggerated use of force.
The pilot, too, whose hands are now stained with civilian blood,
(on other days he is a law student at the university),
said to a Haaretz reporter: "Look, first of all it's bad that people are hurt."
and even added:

"The way I see it, Hamas is using the civilian population".
Criticism is voiced even inside the army,
but the pilot, the army spokesperson, the girl-soldier from detect-and-shoot
and all the hostages of the information they produce
speak of a 'no choice' campaign.

Therefore,
now that the war is over
they are trying to mobilize us once again

to keep silent,
not mention names,
not incriminate "our commanders" who fought for us at the front.
Attorney General Mazuz,
Army Attorney General Mandelblit
and Chief of Staff Ashkenazi
are protecting their subordinates.
The censor will implement,
the press will obey,
and we will forget
that we agreed to conceal information
which even our leaders openly described
as incriminating for those whom they sent to war.

Even if we did not voice our consent,
the regime acts as if we have,
and thus we, too, are condoning
the regime's actions against our Palestinian neighbors, co-governed,
and this has become self-evident.

For sixty years
expulsion, devastation, killing have been allowed
and all around us people parrot the regime,
blaming the Palestinians for their own suffering –
"They brought this upon themselves,
they elected the Hamas, they shoot, they are murderous".
The weapons-tunnels,
the ammunition boats
making their way to the "Strip",
all are cited as justification and proof.

Justification, and proof that there is no one to talk to
and claim yet again that Israel turned every stone on the road to peace
as if it is not Israel that forfeited every single peace proposal,

as if it is not Israel that uselessly and resolutely adheres to the Occupation
and offer no solution
except to suspend all solutions
and hold the Palestinians subject to its grip,
subjects whose any attempt to resist
forces **us** to show **them** who's the real bully around here.

The dispute between those who pursue information
and those nourished solely by Israeli television and press,
accepting the regime's dictate that Israeli and foreign reporters
cover only the suffering of the people of Sderot and the south -
this dispute is a lost one.

They do not read the same information,
nor see the same images,
nor interpret them the same way.

Whoever does not make the effort to overcome this propaganda campaign
carried out by Israel's political, media and military leadership,
(a huge success, let it be said),
whoever does not refuse to serve patriotism unconditionally
and enlist in the propaganda campaign that markets evil disguised as victory,
whoever does not insist on seeking alternative information channels -
might think that Gaza is inhabited only by terrorists
or a people blindly following its leaders.

Without posing as generals and speaking their language
(after all it is not the only language, even if dominant since 1948),
and without assuming that reading shared information will produce unanimity
against the offensive in Gaza,
how, in the 21st century,
can citizens
possibly perceive their state as democratic
while they possess no credible, accessible and reliable information
on the killing of 1300 human beings and the wounding of thousands more in Gaza?

Why, elsewhere,
when citizens' contract with their state
became one-sided and they were forced to blindly condone
horrors perpetrated in their name,
why was it obvious to many of them, and to the world at large,
that theirs was an evil regime,
whereas here
all the horrors perpetrated by the regime since 1948 to this day
are perceived as local events?
Is this regime not dark,
the source of all evil,
from which we citizens should liberate ourselves?

We cringe to admit it,
but we have no precise information about deeds done in our name,
nor of that which has been done in our name in the past,
nor do we demand such information now.
If we saw the whole picture we may not have ventured out the door
for sheer shame.

One might insist that this is not the whole picture,
that Israel maintains freedom of speech,
"freedom of opinion" can be found in the press - after all, Amira Hass and Gideon
Levy are still writing publicly.
But what is freedom of opinion
without freedom of information?
Some will insist and mention that
Ynet did write about some refuser,
another site posted a horror story of the unjustified targeting of children,
the media aren't all that monolithic,
everything is out there.
Yes, perhaps. But not the basic things -
What channel,
what newspaper

featured Palestinians whose lives have been devastated?

Who heard their voices?

Who heard the refugees whose lives

have been devastated once and then again and again?

Who heard them telling how this time,

unlike 1948, they have nowhere to run to when bombs
are dropped on them with inconceivable force?

If the newspaper itself cannot obtain information

and is required to censure its material

and report only from the restricted spot the army allots journalists

and is prevented from publicizing images coming in

from the Palestinian news agency Ramatan,

prevented from opening an investigation

of that which is beyond reasonable doubt a war crime -

why does the newspaper not call it quits?

Why does it not issue a blacked-out first page

featuring only a statement that it can no longer do its duty?

Perhaps it would thus help remind its readers

in almost every line they do read

what sources of information the writers can access,

and what that place is, hollowly christened "press hill",

where nothing but smoke can be seen billowing,

and to which (Israeli) families travel to show the kids

Gaza being bombed.

In South Africa apartheid was at least exposed, overt,

whereas here it happens in detention camps

not only beyond our field of vision

but also outside the central body of the law

(just as slavery regulations, the "Black Code",

were kept outside the law of states that nurtured slavery).

The Palestinians who are ruled alongside ourselves

are exposed to various evil regulations

imposed in the Occupied Territories ad hoc
by senior officers and subordinates, soldiers.
They are inaccessible – neither to those ruled according to them
nor, certainly, to ourselves, democracy's citizens,
so that we remain unfamiliar with their injustice
and especially, so that it would not desecrate
the hallowed body of "our" law,
us – citizens of a democracy.

Slowly the Palestinians disappear from our lives
(walls, closures, workers from Thailand, silent transfer out of the mixed-cities).
The exploitation, brutality and oppression they suffer
are becoming less and less visible to us.

At the end of a workday,
when citizens still wish to know something about life in Gaza
they can get their VOD items carefully selected by the army spokesperson,
or check out the army channel on youtube:
"Paratroopers charge a mosque", "a medley of sea, air and ground missions", a missile
deflected so as not to hit the "uninvolved".
These citizens do not see the destruction of Gaza
as a habitat of living people just like them.
They see the "elimination of terrorist infrastructure",
courtesy of the army spokesperson.

The press does not feature objectors who refused to join this offensive on Gaza
The media silence the arrest of Jewish participants in non-violent demonstrations.
It does report the arrest of Arab demonstrators, thus
reframing the Arab as a maker of "troubles" or "law-breaker"
and re-emphasizing yet again the insoluble, national nature of "the conflict".
The media impose total veto on joint demonstrations of Jews and Arabs,
for fear of cracking the fortified separation between Jews and Arabs which they
promote,
for fear of suggesting that the rivalry of populations is not "fated".

Cracks in the separation
will suddenly reveal a different picture.
Subjects would step up together against the regime
that has made their lives impossible.

That is the only threat we hold over this regime:
Jews who would refuse to position themselves against Arabs
(both inside the 'green line' and outside it).
Jews who will perceive Arabs
(both inside the 'green line' and outside it)
as fellow citizens..

If we were in South Africa, some would join the blacks.
But here, how can we join the Arabs when the regime acts to separate us
with its concrete wall, its divisive television and VOD,
withdrawn information and massive mobilization
of the mass-media?

This separation regime is commonly seen
as concerned only with Arabs,
a regime that sets Arabs apart.
How can a separation regime set only Arabs apart?
Any separation has two sides
A separation regime separates these from those
and thus, our separation regime sets us apart as well.
It remains only to ask – apart from what?

It separates us from the possibility
granted even the worst of peoples or nations,
to turn a page in our own history,
to change our ethos, language, horizon,
to stop persecuting the Arabs,
to stop thinking we deserve what they do not,

and to choose to share a feasible life
with the people with whom our parents brought us here to live.

This regime forces us to collaborate
with deeds of which we are not a part and do not want to be done in our name.
It forces us to be separated from those with whom we were fated to live.

Until we manage to gather enough working hands and axes to smash the wall,
and protest together with the Arabs against this regime,
we can merge – bodily.

We can wear *keffiyehs* around our necks,
thus declaring that we are not representatives of this regime,
that we cannot be relied upon,
that if we happen upon incriminating information
about the army's actions in Gaza
we will not hesitate to hand it over to whoever asks for it,
that we shall seek ways to make this regime understand
that it cannot rely on us
to be its collaborators.

We shall not agree to be its (mis)guided missiles
and the bearers of its lies.

In order to act in our name,
the ruling power should have our consent,
the consent of Jews who mix with Arabs, Arabs who mix with Jews.
Until then we wish to be set apart
from the deeds of this rule.

Until then, facing Gaza, remembering Gaza,
we are all Palestinians.