

The 2011 aborted Palestinian 'spring' : an assessment

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Rabat, École de Gouvernance et d'Économie,
November 22, 2012



ÉCOLE
DE GOUVERNANCE
ET D'ÉCONOMIE
DE RABAT
مدرسة الحكامة
و الإقتصاد بالرباط

An aborted Palestinian 'spring'



A statement of fact: **Palestine is still away from the Arab springs** in spite of the 2006 legislative elections and the 2011 facebook mobilizations.

- A reminder: rejection of the occupation and reversal of the political authority as failed experiences.

- The facts : What about the 'facebook intifada' of 2011?

- An assessment: an aborted 'spring'.

A reminder

L'évolution de la Palestine de 1946 à 1999

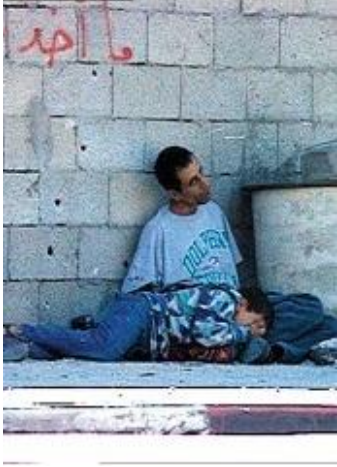


Palestine's specificity:

The question of the occupation and deprivation of the right to self-determination remains inseparable from those of the political representation.

The question of the social conflicts is traditionally inhibited by the national struggle.

A reminder



Rejection of the occupation:

Facing stalemate in the diplomatic process and loss of credibility of the negotiations,

the rejection of the occupation found expression through the **Intifada Al-Aqsa** and **later through a few episodic eruptions of armed struggle,**

but the civil mobilization is scarce.

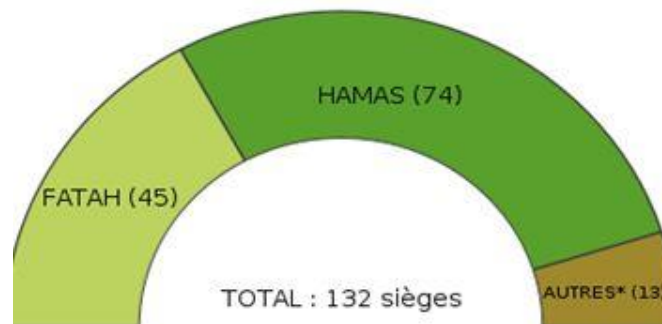
A reminder

Reversal of the political authority:

In this field, Palestine was a kind of pioneer as the **Parliamentary elections in January 2006 gave the victory to Hamas against Fatah** in a true democratic and transparent process.

But an alliance between the Donors (led by the US and EU), Israel, the Palestinian presidency and Fatah rejected their results.

A split between Gaza and the West Bank occurred in June 2007 as the setback of **a coup d'état attempted by the US and Fatah**.



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Copying the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings at the beginning of 2011, the proliferation of Palestinian initiatives on social networks was described by some observers as **beginnings of a “facebook intifada”**.

A suspicious Western over-interpretation:

A fascination occurred in the West for those who, finally, would be “like us“, modern and democrat in a distance from the religion.

A general misinterpretation

Social networks are nothing but instruments of mobilization (such as mimeograph, faxes and photocopies in old times) and don't constitute the mobilization itself.

Virtual “friends” are not necessarily actors on the ground.

This misconception was that of the observers but also of certain actors.

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

An aborted Palestinian ‘spring’

Gaza Youth Breaks Out (GYBO)

“Fuck Israel. Fuck Hamas. Fuck Fatah. Fuck UN.
Fuck UNWRA. Fuck USA!

We, the youth in Gaza, are so fed up with Israel, Hamas, the occupation, the violations of human rights and the indifference of the international community! [...]”

December 2010

This initiative, expressed in English and deprived of any political program, was the fact of a few students from Gaza. It benefited from a large echo in the West but remained almost unknown in Palestine.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Gaza-Youth-Breaks-Out-GYBO/118914244840679>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Gaza-youth-breaks-out-178910458815800/> شباب-غزة-للتغيير

<http://gazaybo.wordpress.com/>



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Thawrat al-Karâma Ghazza

Dignity Revolution Gaza (February 11)

“The Palestinian people say **no to division and yes to national unity...**

We call on **Hamas to stop its coup...**

Overthrow the unjust government in Gaza...

Initiate an intifada against the current situation in Gaza. A peaceful intifada to say yes to unity and enough to the **emirate of darkness.**”

<http://www.facebook.com/Change.Gaza>



More than 90 websites and facebook pages were created by an anonymous way from the 28th of January.

They were due to some Fatah members, mainly its most hostile to Hamas trend around former security chief in Gaza, M. Dahlan.

Total lack of mobilization on that precise day. **Facebook doesn't necessarily means mobilization.**

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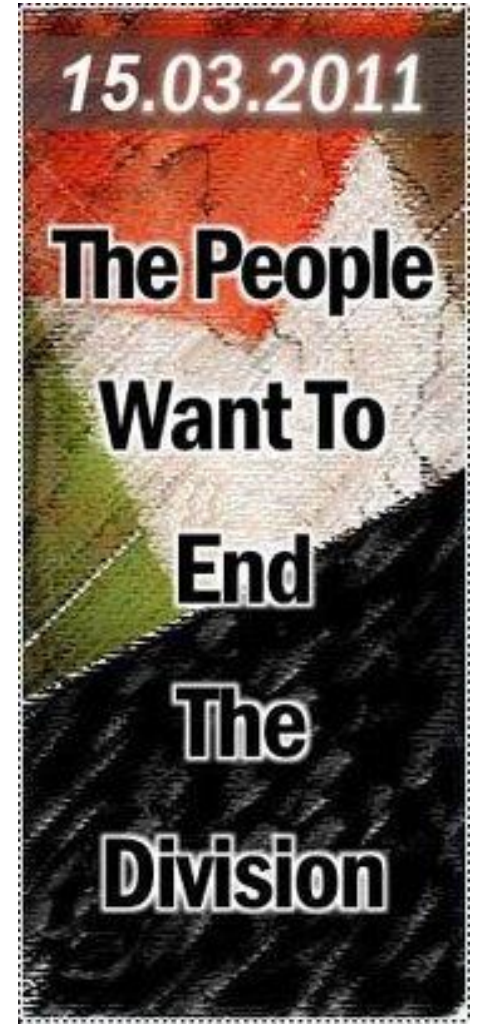


March 15, 2011

Mobilization was made on the ground under the slogan "End the division" between Fatah & Hamas, the West Bank & Gaza.

More than 150 facebook pages and 230 groups were created for this initiative launched by two coalitions and multiple associations.

Finally, it received the support of Fatah and Hamas.



<http://www.palunity.com>

An aborted Palestinian 'spring'



May 15

Memorial of the *Nakba* (“disaster” of 1947-1948 with the exodus of the majority of Palestinians from what became Israel).

The most spectacular mobilizations occurred on the Syrian and Lebanese borders with Israel, 15 killed.

June 5

Memorial of the *Naksa* (The “setback” of 1967), between 15 and 25 killed on the Syrian Golan.



An assessment

This fleeting Palestinian 'spring'

was **initiated** by a **certain youth** unable to lead the entire people and to maintain a mobilization on the duration

and was **instrumentalized** by some **political organizations** (Fatah & Hamas) and **States** (Syria, Egypt and Qatar).

Finally, it cultivated the **illusion of a national reconciliation** and the **illusion of a national reconstruction**

The Facebook logo, consisting of the word "facebook" in white lowercase letters on a blue rectangular background.

An assessment

The illusion of a national reconciliation

May 4, 2011: Signing in Cairo of a reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah.

February 6, 2012: Signing in Doha and **May 20** in Cairo of a declaration reaffirming commitment towards the reconciliation.

An **observed fact:** Lack of implementation on the ground.

A **misinterpretation:** The reconciliation as a result of the 15 March mobilization.

Two **realities:** Pressures from post-Mubarak **Egyptian** diplomacy in search of the reaffirmation of its regional role, and pressures from **Qatar** in search of a rising Arab and international influence.



An assessment

The illusion of a national reconstruction

The rediscovered **national mobilization common to all the Palestinians** in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and the 1967 Territories **fleeted**. May and June mobilizations were almost ignored in the West Bank and Gaza and were denounced in Syria as the fruit of a Baathist instrumentalization.

Reforming the PLO is still in a stalemate even if it is a recurrent demand of the people since 2005 (Cairo agreement, Prisoners agreement, Mecca agreement, etc.).

“Depalestinization” is still active. During the 70’s, the guerilla organizations gained to “palestinize” PLO leadership and its decision making process. Since 2003, in a regressive way, the Palestinians need external “sponsors” for handling their internal affairs.

Towards a third intifada?



One year after this aborted 'spring' and more that six years after the aborted democratic overthrow of the political leadership in charge of decision for the last decades, **are we on the eve of a third intifada?**

- A pre-condition:

An **intifada needs a prioritization of the national liberation struggle** and has never been the result of a decree.

- A question:

Is such a priority still existing?

Towards a third intifada?



I doubt about the persistence of such a priority among political apparatus.

- The end of occupation and the issue of refugees are no longer the priority of the **PA-Fatah**.

Preserving the “peace business” requires implementing neoliberalism and political submission to donors.

- The end of occupation and the issue of refugees have never been the priority of the **PA-Hamas**.

Religious socialization is the only mean for preserving the social link while the national liberation is postponed.

Towards a third intifada?



I doubt about the persistence of such a priority among the popular grassroots.

- Negotiation is totally discredited and no longer seems to be a stake (lack of reaction to the release of the "Palestine papers" (January 2011) (<http://english.aljazeera.net/palestinepapers/>).
- The application for membership to the UN (September 20, 2011) of a Palestinian State deprived of any sovereignty and without a solution to the refugees issue was a non-response to the national claim but hasn't dragged any mass mobilization, nor its failure did.

Towards a third intifada?



I doubt about the permanence of such a priority among the new social structures.

The nascent PA, as the PLO in exile, was a political and military bureaucracy acting as an arbitrator. By an economical repartition, it managed to inhibit social conflicts and keep up the priority of the national struggle.

Nearly twenty years later, in the West Bank, the so-called “State building” policies gained to impose neoliberal values (with credit facilities as a mean for population control) while security forces are supposed to be a-political.

In besieged Gaza, survival is a priority for the majority but a minority is now interested with consumption.

Towards a third intifada?



Today in the West Bank as in Gaza, the Palestinians seem to be tired of the occupation and its oppression. They despair of the international community for its refusal to grant them their national rights.

They seem now to be waiting for “normality”, in terms of individual enrichment (or survival) rather than collective mobilization.

Such a situation is likely to last even in a context of Arab “springs”.

Assuming a new intifada, which cannot be excluded although it seems to me unlikely in the current context, I am convinced that the Israeli Palestinians and Jerusalem will have a decisive role in its spark.

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