

Christian Arabs, Muslim Arabs (Part 2)

The second great grim given in the Middle East, along with the persecution of ancient Christian communities by Muslims, is the steady under-hum of hate, directed at the Infidel Jewish state of Israel. Through the din of warfare between Sunni and Shi'a, Kurd and Arab, Berber and Arab, Al-Nusra and Al-Qaeda, there is the noise of another warfare: the endless war against Israel.

This war is a product of the Muslim worldview. In that view, the world is uncompromisingly divided between Dar al-Islam, the Domain of Islam, where Muslims dominate, and Dar al-Harb, the Domain of War, where Muslims do not yet dominate. It is the duty of every Muslim to participate in the struggle or Jihad, to remove all obstacles to the spread, and then the domination, of Islam, everywhere. And they are doing it, through terrorism, and propaganda, and economic warfare, and hijrah, the newest and most dangerous instrument of jihad, jihad through migration into the vulnerable (because confused about the threat they faced) lands of Dar al-Harb.

Israel's existence is regarded by Muslims as especially insufferable. For it is an Infidel nation-state, the Infidels in question being the long-despised Jews that sits smack in the middle of Arabdom, contra naturam, an insult to the amour-propre of Muslims everywhere, but especially to Arab Muslims, who conceive of that tiny country metaphorically as either a knife plunged into the heart of Arabdom, or as a cancerous growth in the middle of Arabdom. And you don't pull a knife out part-way, you don't cut out only part of a cancerous tumor. In other words, for most Arabs, Israel eventually has to go, to disappear, to become again what it once was, part of Dar al-Islam. Until the Six-Day War, the Arabs never hid – just read their propaganda – the final result they desired –

an end to Israel, and by military means. But their colossal defeat in that war, and the loss of the territory that the Jordanians had renamed the "West Bank," led to an entire rethinking of Arab strategy. They understood that they would now have to use non-military means to recover that "West Bank" through diplomacy.

That diplomatic maneuvering required the transformation of the local Arabs – those in Israel proper, those in the "West Bank," and those who had fled Mandatory Palestine in 1948-49 and had been called "Arab refugees" – into the deliberately-created "Palestinian people." This newly-invented "Palestinian people" would first recover, through negotiations, the "West Bank," and only then, with Israel pushed back into the armistice lines of 1949, would the Arabs, as many as chose to join in, go in for the kill.

This Arab strategy of conquest-by-stages has gone pretty well. The existence of the "Palestinian people" has been uncritically accepted, or almost so: Golda Meir always doubted their existence, but that's not surprising – after all, she was the Prime Minister of Israel. But another who doubted their existence was a "Palestinian" Arab named Zuheir Mohsen, head of the As-Saiqa terrorist group, who confided to a Dutch newspaper that "between Jordanians, Palestinians, Syrians and Lebanese there are no differences. We are all part of ONE people, the Arab nation. Look, I have family members with Palestinian, Lebanese, Jordanian and Syrian citizenship. We are ONE people. Just for political reasons we carefully underwrite our Palestinian identity. Because it is of national interest for the Arabs to advocate the existence of Palestinians to balance Zionism. Yes, the existence of a separate Palestinian identity exists only for tactical reasons. The establishment of a Palestinian state is a new tool to continue the fight against Israel and for Arab unity. There is no such thing as the Palestinian people."

And to back up Zuheir Mohsen, you might add that phrase

“Palestinian people” was never heard. If, however, you ask someone to explain why that phrase was never heard before late 1967, or what characteristics – language, religion, folktales, anything at all – distinguish this “Palestinian people” from all other Arabs, or ask why the word “Palestinian” should have been promoted from geographic adjective to ethnic noun, well, only embarrassment and confusion will result.

In the Sinai, the Arabs were very successful. Carter and Brzezinski at Camp David treated Sadat, the ruler of a country that had lost territory in a war of aggression, as a veritable Prince of Peace, who could do no wrong. It was Begin who was put constantly on the defensive, and it was he who was forced to relinquish every inch of the Sinai, with the airfields and the oilfields built by the Israelis, and the entire Sinai, to Saint Sadat, who graciously deigned to accept the gift.

But on the other side of Israel, on the River Jordan, Israel would not be so compliant. Most Israelis understood that in order to withstand a possible attack from the east, they could not surrender the “West Bank” (called by Israelis “Judea and Samaria”– these were, after all, the toponyms that everyone in Christendom, including Jesus, had used for 2000 years, but now the Western press universally mocked the Israeli use of these place names precisely because they were “Biblical”). For some Israelis, the “West Bank” was indeed a Biblical matter; it was part of the Promised Land. For others, Israel’s claim had a different basis – the Mandate for Palestine, and the territory assigned to that Mandate by the League of Nations.

For still others, what mattered most were the traditional rules of post-bellum settlements, by which the victor gets to keep some land. Just think of how the map of Europe, for example, changed after every conflict large and small (think of Alsace-Lorraine, or the Alto Adige, or Königsberg) both to discourage future aggressors, and because that land might actually prove vital in a future conflict.

Some time after the Six-Day War, a group of American generals visited the area of the "West Bank," and came back, and wrote a report. Their conclusion? Strictly for military reasons, Israel had to hold to that area. For them, neither the Bible nor the Mandate for Palestine needed to be invoked. It was a military matter.

So here we have, midst the swirl of Muslim turmoil in the Middle East, two melancholy facts, two givens. The first is, as noted in Part 1, that Arab Christians are being driven out of the Middle East. Christianity began in the Middle East; Christians held on in the Middle East for 2000 years; now their numbers are being reduced every day. The Living Christian Presence may end in the Middle East.

Where might some of those Christians – those Assyrians, Chaldeans, Orthodox, Catholics, Copts – end up in the Middle East, in a place that will offer them security, and may even allow them to be trained and armed to defend themselves? And where might they, merely by staying put in the Middle East, and not fleeing to Europe or Australia or Canada or America, perform the important task of being that Living Christian Presence?

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