Opinion



by Ra'fat Al-Dajani

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Over the many years I've written in support of the Palestinian cause and more importantly to offer the Palestinian perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I have grown accustomed to every form of insult and personal attack that one can imagine in response to my articles. The response of Mr. Winters to my latest column on NCR is an example of one of the more aggressive ones. According to Mr. Winters I am a slanderer, a propagandist, angry, outrageous, reckless and some undefined characteristic beyond chutzpah. I have chosen not to get into a point by point rebuttal to the many parts of Mr. Winters' response that I disagree with or consider factually incorrect or selectively correct. Instead I would like to make myself very clear on three issues.

First, is that my articles are not journalistic in the sense that I devote equal time to both sides of an issue. Israeli apologists and their 'Amen corner' in the United States are a dime a dozen and have done an admittedly excellent job of portraying the Israeli occupation in the most sympathetic terms to the American public. What I present is the Palestinian viewpoint, offering the Palestinian perspective on matters relating to the occupation. The American public deserves to hear both in order to make a fully informed judgement for themselves on the extremely complex Israeli-Palestinian issue.

Second, I absolutely do not believe that *all* Israelis dehumanize, hate Palestinians or support the occupation. I have Israeli friends, have traveled to Israel and admire Israeli accomplishments and freedoms in many areas. Israelis have a right to their independence and security just like any other country and people. What I do believe, however, is that the Israeli political and ruling establishment has taken a sharp turn to the right since 2000 and is now unwilling to offer the Palestinians any real semblance of a future state. Israeli leaders have made it crystal clear that they intend to retain control over the borders and airspace of a future Palestinian state, including major parts of the occupied West Bank for existing Israeli settlements. This is not a Palestinian state in any sense. It is a Palestinian Bantustan that the Palestinian *people* will never accept.

Finally, and despite Mr. Winters' personal attacks against me, I will continue to respect his right to his opinion, no matter how much I disagree with it. It used to be that people had differences of opinion and analysis, presented their analysis supported by the facts and disagreed, but with respect. In the new Trumpian universe we now live in, it has become par de course to not only disagree with the opinion of others but to also vilify them at the same time. To not only disagree with the message but to also discredit the messenger.

I will always choose the first path.

[Ra'fat Al-Dajani is a Palestinian-American businessman and political commentator.]

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