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Three Years After the Bombs Fell on Gaza

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It's exactly three years ago that the ins and outs of the overpopulated strip were sealed off by the Israeli military just as tightly as the entire "International Community" shut its eyes and ambivalently turned its back on a horrifying massacre that was in the making. And it's three years ago that we've used up what little was left of our quota of sympathy and compassion towards the Palestinians and took our collective apathy to a whole new level.

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Three years after the "unilateral cessation of military operations" on January 18th, 2009; and the Israeli apparatus of mass murder and annihilation is still roaring at the borders; ready to be initiated at a moment's notice, the IOF is literally licking its lips, salivating at the chance of yet another vicious round of wholesale slaughter, its animalistic zeal for more bloodletting is as vigorous today as it was only three years ago –if not more-, Israeli political, diplomatic and military officials alike don't seem to miss an opportunity to beat the war drums - and they do so with an almost reckless abandon.

The day starts and ends with the gloom of impending war amassing over Gaza; on December 27th, 2011 (third anniversary of the war on Gaza), Israeli army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Benny Gantz stated that another attack on the strip is "inevitable" while southern brigade commander Tal Hermoni was quoted by Haaretz newspaper as saying that another "varied and different military campaign" is being prepared, this is of course not counting the fact that targeted killings, aerial night raids and the occasional ground incursion have already become such horrible albeit daily realities in the strip.

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Today, an entire population in Gaza is held hostage to dire living conditions and the Zionist state's death grip, Israel's heartless policy of meticulously calculating and determining the calorie-intake for Gazans is still the order of the day; university students are being robbed of their academic futures due to arbitrary travel restrictions, patients denied their right to treatment and systemic disregard for anything even resembling human rights still goes on apace.

Three years after the bombs fell; and Palestinians in Gaza –with so many cards stacked against them- are still trying to piece together the broken shards of their lives and entire families are still living through worn out photographs of their loved ones; those who lost their lives to Israel's Casting Lead and the rest of the world's self-incriminating silence.

Three years after the bombs fell; and new injustices heaped on top of ongoing ones. The piercing wail of sirens, keening voices of loss amongst the ruins of the strip still prevail till this very day in the little coastal enclave. Three years after the bombs fell; and the only justice the international community could afford to the people of Gaza was a meek report that was even disowned by its author.

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Three years after the sky of Gaza was blanketed with all means of spiraling white phosphorous ammunitions; and the ground of the strip is still littered with leftover shells and unexploded bombs laying in wait for a second chance to claim yet more lives of Palestinian kids. Three years after the bombs fell; and living a normal childhood still remains such a rare feat for Gazan children as the sheer weight of life on Israel's draconian terms takes its heavy toll on their

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fragile souls; deathly hues of the last war still take hold of their memories and the overcrowded makeshift classrooms are daily reminders of the horrors they've endured in that winter of 2008/2009.

Three years after Israeli "spectators" from nearby southern cities took to hilltops in groups to catch sight of the sky raining death and destruction on defenseless Palestinians, giggling, sharing laughs and passing their binoculars from one person to the next as they cheered enthusiastically for the "might" of the IOF as if the carnage unfolding right before their eyes was a mere sporting event; and killing is still a spectator sport for Israeli authorities, trigger-happy junior Israeli border officers still get their kicks from firing live rounds at Palestinian farmers attempting to harvest their crops near the "buffer zone" while hunting the Palestinians in their tunnels near the Rafah border with unmanned drones is still the "standard operating procedure".

Three years after the bombs fell – almost one year after the dictatorship of Husni Mubarak was dissolved-; and the crushing weight of Israel's blockade is still pressing hard against the chests of Gazans, the inhumane siege of Gaza –which has long outERVED its theoretical usefulness, if there ever was any to begin with- has gradually morphed into this internationally condoned policy that the world has become, for all intents and purposes, far too comfortable to abandon; eventually this chronic passiveness has sadly maneuvered the Palestinians in Gaza into a seemingly unending life of siege and collective punishment, a life in which they have no choice but to literally tunnel their own way out.

Today "Operation Cast Lead" remains an open wound and a dark stain on the conscience of the world as its sense of morality and justice is rapidly waning and the value of a human life remains gravely skewed. Are Palestinian victims somehow not worthy of mass candle-lit vigils at dusk in honor of their memory? Will they ever have someone to recite each and every one of their names at their own "hallowed ground"? The images of the 22-day long massacre in Gaza are too strong to be forgotten; of grief stricken fathers digging the remains of their loved ones buried under the rubbles of what was once their house, of the injured wheeled into chaotic emergency rooms on office chairs, of unidentified bodies of dead children with the word "anonymous" scribbled in black markers across their tiny bellies at the morgue in the Adwan hospital and of doctors at al Shifa Hospital desperately performing CPR on little infants' chests to no avail.

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Unfortunately the media still has a blind spot when it comes to Gaza; screams of protest from Tunisia, Cairo, Benghazi and Sana'a have drowned out the incessant appeals to lift the blockade. Of course; plenty of exploits to be reaped from the Arab Spring nowadays, where -sadly enough- opportunism and gutter politics reign supreme, and so little time to do so.

Three years after the bombs fell; and it seems that Gaza will remain on the back-burner for a while; largely absent from our TV sets and daily dose of news bites, until perhaps Cast Lead II.

Amman.

Post-scriptum :

Ahmad Barqawi is a Jordanian freelance columnist & writer based in Amman, he has done several studies, statistical analysis and researches on economic and social development in Jordan.

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