

COMMENTARY

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Erecting a Giant Prison for all Israelis

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The demagoguery of Prime Minister Netanyahu seems to have no limit—demagoguery in a sense that he says and acts on anything to buttress Israel's hold on the West Bank in the name of national security. This time around, Netanyahu came up with another absurd idea, proposing, as he stated, a “multi-year plan to surround Israel with security fences to protect ourselves in the current and projected Middle East.”

Netanyahu went on to say that: “In our neighbourhood, we need to protect ourselves from wild beasts.” Knowing Netanyahu and his sentiment toward the Palestinians, using inflammatory language is customary for him, as he views every Palestinian as a would-be beastly terrorist.

It is obvious from everything we know that the purpose of building such a fence, which runs through a significant portion of Palestinian territory, is to make the expropriation of Palestinian land permanent.

At the same time, he continues to expand settlements in the West Bank and more than likely will build new ones while providing more than 10,000 soldiers to protect the settlers, ensuring that Palestinians will never establish (under his watch) their own state; of course, all of this is in the name of national security.

Netanyahu knows only too well that no fence, however high and regardless of the material it is made of, will prevent a determined terrorist from finding a way to penetrate it.

True, he will introduce the newest technology to detect any attempt to pierce through the wall; however, he seems to ignore the fact that Palestinian militants have perfected the art of building

tunnels through which insurgents can still wage attacks on Israeli civilians or military personnel, even at the expense of getting killed in the process.

Netanyahu himself raised the question of the tunnels, stating: “If you’re thinking of erecting a fence there you have to take into account that they could tunnel underneath it. The people who said that there is no significance to [retaining] territory in the modern age should go to Gaza.”

Let us go to Gaza then; what do we find? Hamas has been able to build scores of tunnels underneath the fence that separates Gaza from Israel, and have successfully been able to go through the tunnels and attack Israeli forces and civilians.

Although Israeli forces found many of these tunnels during Operation Protective Edge in July 2014 and destroyed the majority of them, Hamas is now at work building new tunnels, knowing that no matter what security measures Israel takes, it will not find all the tunnels. Hamas is still in a position, should they chose to do so, to cross the fences from underneath.

Netanyahu also seems to ignore the fact that no fence, however sophisticated it may be, can stop rockets from being fired at Israel. During that same operation, Hamas was able to rain more than 3,000 rockets, which reached much of Israel’s urban areas and caused tremendous havoc.

True, most of these rockets were intercepted; however, it was not the fence that intercepted them but the Iron Dome air defence system, demonstrating the ineffectiveness of the separation wall.

Netanyahu appears to ignore another reality in northern Israel along the Lebanese border, where Hezbollah is in possession of tens of thousands of short and medium range advanced rockets that can reach just about every part of Israel. What kind of fence, one might ask, does Netanyahu have in mind to stop Hezbollah from firing dozens of such rockets simultaneously?

Of course, Netanyahu conveniently did not talk about Hezbollah in Lebanon, because he has no plans to occupy any part of Lebanon.

In reaction to Netanyahu’s plans to build a wall that encircles Israel, one of his main coalition partners, Education Minister Naftali Bennett, who is far more to the right than even Netanyahu, stated “The prime minister spoke today about how fences are needed. We are wrapping ourselves in fences. In Australia and New Jersey there is no need for fences.”

Coming from an individual who is sinister and dangerous, Bennett is not against the wall because he feels that walls will not be effective, but because he believes that all of the West Bank belongs to Israel. Given the opportunity, he would annex much of the West Bank outright—why then build a wall in one’s own land?

Netanyahu has never been committed to a two-state solution and is using the current violent flare-up, the so called ‘knife Intifada,’ as an excuse to cement Israel’s hold on much of the West Bank. His plan amounts to establishing small cantons for the Palestinians where they can exercise a sort of autonomous rule, while remaining under the watchful eye of the Israeli security forces.

A big part that gives Netanyahu the license to do what he wants is the sad complacency of the Israeli public, who has fallen into the national security trap that Netanyahu has so masterfully used to spread fear and dread among Israelis.

He successfully brainwashed the majority of Israelis to believe that the Palestinians pose a present and imminent danger and must be dealt with, not as human beings with whom one can reason, but wild beasts who are determined to destroy rather than coexist with Israel.

Netanyahu’s presumed recipe as he stated it, to “...surround the entire state of Israel with a fence, a barrier”, is nothing short of building a large prison for all Israelis.

To be sure, instead of reaching out to the Palestinians and the whole international community to reach an agreement with the Palestinians, he seeks to turn Israel into a garrison and apartheid state, detested by and isolated from the international community.

I wonder what the founders of Israel, who were dreaming of a just, moral, progressive, and compassionate Jewish state, would say had they been able to witness the moral decadence of a so-called leader who is shattering their noble dream and putting Israel’s very existence at risk.

Note: This article was originally published in the web portal of Prof. Ben-Meir and has been reproduced under arrangement. Web Link: <http://www.alonben-meir.com/article/erecting-a-giant-prison-for-all-israelis/>

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