

FROM THE URDU PRESS

No. 84

1-15 January 2014

28 Safar-13 Rabiul Awwal 1435 Hijri

[Note: Using editorials as an indicator, this series presents views, understanding and attitude of the Urdu periodicals in India towards various developments concerning the Middle East. The selection of an item does not mean the endorsement or concurrence with their accuracy or views. Editor, MEI@ND]



Dawat Online (Invitation), New Delhi
Editorial, 1 January 2014, Wednesday

1. Meaningless Peace Negotiations

The current phase of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations seems to be in favour of Israel as Palestinians are increasingly under pressure. Although Israeli behaviour has been cited as the reason behind the halted talks, and this is not just an accusation rather is agreed upon by all parties, Palestinians are pressurised to reopen the negotiations. In general, it is argued that it is the Palestinians who are refusing to come to the negotiations table, and that Israel is ready for the talks without any preconditions. It is always ready for talks but without any preconditions. These negotiations have broken down umpteen times after the death of Yasser Arafat and it is always revived citing some or the other reason. It is the US which is seen as the most active mediator working towards the reviving the negotiations. The negotiations are restarting again due to American activism. Efforts were made to make Hamas as a party to the talks. The ceasefire due to former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi's efforts was supposed to be part of an exercise in that direction. In this game of breakdown and revival of talks, it is the Palestinians who find themselves on the losing side. Israel gets away with approval of one or other of its conditions and then new settlements are created leading to increase in the Jewish population.

The demands of Palestinian people are always ignored such as the status of Jerusalem, but Israel has always been able get its conditions accepted. Although the status of Jerusalem

remains contested and Israel's stand has not been accepted, what is followed in practice is in accordance with Israeli wishes. It wants to make Jerusalem capital of the Jewish state and is working explicitly and implicitly towards it, the West very well knows it but has failed to take any punitive action. The city is holy for Muslims, Jews and Christians alike. Similarly a legitimate demand of the Palestinians that Jewish settlements should be stopped could never be implemented, nor the US or Britain have been able to force Israel to stop building settlements. Interestingly, every negotiation breaks down due to announcement of new settlements and then after some time Palestinians are pressurised to come back for talks. This cycle of negotiations and new settlements leads to more loss of land for Palestinians. The people of Palestine always find them losing something or the other while their dream of a state remains unattained.

Source: http://dawatonline.com/Archive_Editorial.aspx?sDate=01-jan-2014



Roznama Rashtriya Sahara (National Sahara Daily), Delhi

Editorial, 2 January 2014, Thursday

2. Release of Palestinians

The New Year has started on a positive note for Palestinians as Israel announced the release of 26 of its prisoners held in Israeli jails on 31 December 2013. Although this was part of the negotiations that were held in July under the US mediations, it remains an important step. These prisoners were under Israeli detention for more than two decades, and their release evokes some hope for some forward movement towards resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In fact, 2013 was not a very good year for the people of Middle East, even though the Arab Spring had created a lot of hope in 2012. The developments during previous year, however, doused all these hopes. The first ever democratically elected government in Egypt was removed through a military coup. In Syria the civil war between government and rebels intensified due to Western conspiracies. The American and Western hypocrisy came under full public view during the year, in the context of these two countries. The supporters of rebels in Syria were talking about legitimacy of the government while employing all illegal means to resolve the crisis. In Egypt the same forces remained mute when a democratically elected government was overthrown. Unfortunately, the neighbouring Arab countries did not come forward in support of Morsi government in Egypt.

The military government in Egypt is putting all effort to demolish the Muslim Brotherhood; their leaders have been imprisoned, they are being tortured, and the so-called upholders of Islamic unity have remained mute. In fact they are implicitly supporting the military. Perhaps the reason is that a democratic process in an Islamic framework will lead to problems for their rule.

Thus, the year 2013 witnessed a lot of loss of life in Egypt and Syria. Similarly, Iraq continued to remain under turmoil with peace eluding it for the past 10 years. The Nouri al-

Maliki government has failed to bring the situation under control and use of force has magnified the problem. Moreover, the resignation of 40 cabinet members from the government indicated to a large scale division. The one country which can claim to have achieved some success during 2013 was Iran. The election of moderate leader Hassan Rouhani proved to be good as he was able to bring down the tensions with the West that had continued for the past three decades. Although a permanent solution on its nuclear programme remains elusive, concrete steps in this direction has led to easing of economic sanctions. The improvement in the US-Iran relations has rattle Israel and some Muslim countries but their concerns are baseless. In fact, it can help avoid any war in the region.

Another good thing during 2013 could be the positive support of the Islamic world towards Palestine. Though the dream of an independent Palestinian state remains a dream, the release of prisoners from Israeli jails bodes well for the future of the conflict. Hopefully, the coming year will prove to be a good year for the entire region.

Source: <http://roznamasahara.samaylive.com/Details.aspx?id=76782&boxid=2159953>



Dawat Online (Invitation), New Delhi
Editorial, 13 January 2014, Monday

3. Another Step Backward

The US Secretary of State John Kerry has focussed so much on certain issues since taking charge that it appears that he has been given the special task of looking after the issue. The mission he has been charged with is related to the Muslim world. On top of his agenda is the Palestinian conflict. His frequent visits to the region have no precedence; making short of the distance between Washington and Tel Aviv/Ramallah. He has also visited Riyadh and Jordan frequently. It seems he is hell bent on taking the negotiations forward. First of all he made all efforts to remove all roadblocks to start the negotiations but with caution aimed at not hurting any Israeli interests. In short, he was trying to bring the Palestinians to negotiations table without any respect for their stand. On top of that, the Palestinian team is not representative of all groups and shades of opinion. Notwithstanding even their concerns, Kerry overruled the stand that any negotiations cannot take place without Israel recognising an independent state of Palestine and end to building of new settlements. In response, the Palestinian representatives were given a lesson in need for negotiations without preconditions.

Meanwhile, a new issue cropped up when the Palestinian Authority stated that the Balfour Declaration was akin to murder of humanity and that Britain should apologise for it. This became an excuse for the Israeli leadership to announce that no negotiations can take place without Palestinians recognising Israel as a Jewish state. According to the Israeli prime minister, the Palestinian stand of not recognising Israel as a Jewish homeland is the root of the problem and that until this is resolved the conflict cannot be resolved. It has now become apparent that the US Secretary of State has started to put pressure on Palestine to agree to this demand to save the 'peace process.' Kerry has discussed the issue with Arab League and

many Arab leaders. The US has denied the reports that Kerry has discussed the issue with Arab leaders including Saudi Arabia and Arab League. However, various sources have confirmed that Kerry wants to protect Israeli interests in all circumstances. In other words, the situation as of now is that the people of Palestine will have to take another step backward.

Source: http://dawatonline.com/Archive_Editorial.aspx?sDate=13-jan-2014

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