

Are Arabs Losing Interest in the Palestinians?
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Amir Taheri, an Iranian journalist whom I once knew as editor of the English language Tehran Journal in 1978 (while the Shah was still there) has lived in exile since the Islamic Revolution and is a hot potato. He often plays loose with facts, writing things that conservatives love to hear, sometimes without substantiation.

His latest column, however, however, makes a certain amount of sense. The Arab world is in such disarray that the Palestinian issue pales in comparison.

It is a fact that most of the foreign press in Israel has moved to Beirut and Istanbul to cover the sectarian wars in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. That's where the action is today.

One Arab columnist, Walid Abimerchid, notes that there is a growing fatigue with the whole Palestinian issue. He says the so-called peace process has run into sand. Even international peace-broker Tony Blair has resigned amid general indifference and French President Francois Hollande has reconsidered restarting an initiative in which no one has interest.

Hamas has split into three factions, and ISIS killers loom over the Sinai Peninsula in neighboring Egypt. Arabs feel safe nowhere today, certainly not in their own countries. But, ironically, Palestinians in the West Bank can feel safe because they know the Israelis will protect them!

Even in Gaza, says Taheri, most people secretly believe that Israel is their ultimate protection against ISIS fighters trying to strike roots in the Sinai. He certainly has a point.

Think about it: Look at what happened to Palestinian refugees living in the Yarmouk refuge camp in Syria: they were massacred by both Bashar Assad's troops and ISIS. Note how Christians, Yazidis, and Druze minorities are treated by Islamists in Syria and Iraq and how they are treated in Israel.

Jordan is bracing for an attack by ISIS in Zarqa, a Palestinian-majority city near Syria. This would bring ISIS close to the West Bank and Israel proper, in which case, some Jordanians believe that the Jewish state would stop its spread. They would probably have to do so.

One Lebanese commentator and TV personality, Eyad Abuchakra, calls dwindling interest in the Palestinians "Palestinitis." Arabs have much larger problems. Arabs are much more worried about Iran than they are about Israel, and the Palestinian problem that has served as a unifying issue for so long no longer cuts it.

Only the Iranian government is trying desperately to keep it alive. They keep flogging the Israeli and Palestinian issue in an attempt, unconvincingly, to persuade Arabs that they (Iran) are on the side of the Arab world.

The recent Iranian "Jerusalem Day" celebration, a big TV extravaganza in which once more they promised to "liberate Palestine" and wipe Israel off the map, created little interest and a big yawn in the Arab world. It even creates a big yawn in Iran among the majority of people as well, as do many of the state propaganda pieces. All one has to do is see how many American flags appeared on cell phones when the announcement was made that the nuclear deal was reached.

Iranians are so eager to join the world community that it is palpable! They are tired of their revolution; tired of being a pariah state; and certainly have a big case of Palestinitis too. Why should they not?

Iran has very little reason to hate Israel. This is an artificial hatred. They share no borders, had a long history of amity and cooperation, and Jews themselves lived for 2500 years in three Persian Empires. The Islamic Republic of Iran is indeed an enemy of Israel, but it is also not much of a friend of the Iranian people over whom it rules with an unpleasantly iron hand.

One rather shocking bit of news is that there has been an ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in Iraq, carried out by Shiite militias since 2003. The number of Palestinians there has dropped from 25,000 to 6,000 according to researcher Khaled Abu Toameh (August 10, 2015). Not a word from the UN or the Palestinian Authority,

both more interested in Israeli "crimes."

680 words

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