

A Gnawing Issue

Last week, I shared possibly the most humane 40-second video I've ever seen on Facebook. It was about Haj Abu Farouq Shehada, who is currently 90 years old, meeting his sister Rasmia after 70 years of forced separation. Post 1948, Shehada remained in occupied Palestine while his sister ended up in a refugee camp in Lebanon. It took years of coordination and court orders to let the Haj cross into Lebanon to see his sister. The scene was heartbreaking, with Rasmia ululating in typical Palestinian manner and the Haj weeping like a baby. *The post was removed by Facebook three hours after I shared it!* It was probably my "inciting" comment: "*This is what the Palestinian question is ALL about; a story of injustice and dispossession.*" When I informed my FB friends about the deletion of the post, many found it on YouTube and reposted it. As they say, even bad publicity is publicity, and the end result was that the post was shared innumerable more times than it would have been had it not been deleted from my timeline! I have to add that I read somewhere that the Haj had seen his sister once in the late eighties, but even so, this is still a very moving story.

Indeed, ours is a question of ongoing injustice and dispossession – for 70 years now. Until when? Politics aside, when will those who were forcibly removed from their towns or villages, or even those who fled for safety, be allowed to go back home? When will they be compensated and receive reparation? The question of Palestine is essentially a question of refugees; literally millions of them today. They will not vanish into thin air or be taken care of by the deal of the century that will "transfer" them to Sinai or Mars! All Palestinians know that ending the refugee problem means liquidating the issue of Palestine, and as we see it, the new Palestinian generations are not only more savvy but also more *nationalistic* than previous generations. According to the *+972 blog* published on April 18, a number of surveys show that at least a fifth of Israel's Jewish citizens are open to the idea of Palestinian refugees returning to their homes. If that's the case, we only have to convince another 31 percent!

Only recently, award-winning Israeli author David Grossman was quoted as saying, "If the Palestinians don't have a home, the Israelis won't have a home either." I couldn't agree more. The question of Palestine will continue to gnaw at Israel and at the whole world until it is resolved and justice restored. Pressure from Facebook, YouTube, Google, Twitter, and the like will simply not help.

As Ramadan is set to begin in mid-May, I would like to wish a blessed Ramadan to all those who will celebrate.



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