

# Palestinian State by 2005: President Bush



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**J**ERUSALEM, the great city of Palestine, with its Dome of the Rock within the compound of Masjid-Al-Aqsa (Noble Sanctuary), was a nerve centre of the revealed religion -- the religion of the Unity of God and the total surrender to God and God alone. The revealed religion was propagated and perfected in stages by God Himself through Prophets -- Abraham (Ibrahim AS), Moses (Musa AS), Jesus (Isa AS), David (Daud AS), Solomon (Sulaimaan AS) and finally Muhammad (S) who is known to have had his heavenly journey on the Rock that dignifies the Dome. This great city witnessed the advent of big powers who fought great wars, occupied, ruled, and then faded into the history. The rulers of these big powers must be facing Almighty God for their deeds and misdeeds. This should remain as a lesson for the present powers -- minor, major and super/hyper -- all inclusive.

The First Lady Laura Bush, of the present superpower USA, came to visit to Jerusalem on May 22, 2005, not as an occupier; unfortunately though the place was under the occupation of Israel -- the foster state of the USA. She was looking dignified and indeed noble in her black pantsuit with black headscarf donned in religious respect and held tightly on her head -- the dress that took her much away from the scantily-clad culture largely seen in the USA and the west. Though she faced brief disturbances during the short visit, she was nice and diplomatic and did not respond to any of the remarks made by a small number of Palestinian and Israeli hecklers. She deeply observed and fully understood the emotions attached to the place. She said, "What an emotional place this is as we go from each one of these very, very holy spots to the next... We're reminded again of what we all want, what everyone of us prays for... what we all want is peace." She also added, "the chance of achieving peace right now... is close as we have been in a really long time." She also seemed to be quite aware of the problems on the way and remarked, "it will take a lot of baby steps and I'm sure (there) will be a few steps backward on the way". She probably meant foot-dragging or putting road-blocks on the peace path by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his associates.

It was obvious that the First Lady would communicate her feelings to President Bush and tell him what type of "emotions" this blessed place carries and the dire need for immediate actions from the side of the USA to achieve peace. The US president is committed to establishing Palestinian State in 2005 and it is already mid 2005 and hence the need for quick action. The First

Lady's possible advice, unofficial though, was reflected in President Bush's press conference on May 26, 05, with President Mahmud Abbas of Palestinian Authority in the White House Rose Garden. This is the first time a Palestinian President came to the White House since peace talks collapsed in 2000. It is worth remembering that Late President Arafat stood in the same place with President Clinton in the year 2000 and talked about the same subject -- the establishment of the Palestinian State.

Years passed by, not quietly though, and Arafat's successor Mahmud Abbas talked about the same subject standing with the next president -- George Bush -- and the world watches on with great anxiety what outcome these talks and commitments would produce. Would the President of the only superpower indeed the hyper power be able to stick to his commitment which should be taken as the commitment of his great country! It is a solemn undertaking so far as President Bush is concerned and his next moves would determine the shape not only of the region but of the United States of America and the world as well.

The first and the hopeful indication came from President Bush when he issued, as mentioned above, his sermon on May 26, 05, with President Mahmud Abbas by his side at the press conference in the White House Rose Garden. Mahmud Abbas complained about Israel's continued settlement activities and made an anxious appeal that "time is becoming our greatest enemy" and "We must end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict before it is too late." In reply President Bush said, "Israel should not undertake activities that contravene Road Map obligations with regard to Gaza, West Bank, and Jerusalem... must remove unauthorized outposts and stop settlement expansion." Indeed, all settlements are against the international law. The latest verdict of Israeli Supreme Court also clearly confirmed that the evacuation from Gaza was legal. This means that all evacuations from all settlements from occupied territories should be legal. In other words, all settlements in the occupied territories are illegal.

President Bush also questioned Israel's building of barriers in the name of security which Palestinians call 'land grab'. He also pledged \$ 50 million as an aid to Palestinians and added, "To help ensure that the Gaza disengagement is a success, the US will provide the Palestinian Authority \$ 50M to be used for new housing and infrastructure projects in the Gaza." President Bush also gave green signal to Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice to travel to Jerusalem and Ramallah "to consult with Israeli and Palestinian leaders about Israel's planned pullout from the Gaza Strip." His statements in official press conference with Mahmud Abbas put Sharon on notice that he should not undertake activities that would damage the chances of peace in the Mid East.

The present stand of President Bush leads one to suggest that he appears serious about the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. May be he has in his mind his earlier commitment to establishing the Palestinian State by the year 2005. Hoping that this is the case, one may

take the courage, despite the presence of Ariel Sharon at the helm of affairs in Israel, to suggest a brief plan of action to help resolve the age-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The courage emerges from the fact that, after all, Israel is nothing but a foster state of the USA and thus whatever US president says should hold good for Israel.

However, before the brief plan of action for achieving peace is presented, it should be in order to remind Israel of the following major points. The US should also be advised to keep these in view while

the Intelligence Agencies of the USA (ref "By Way of Deception" - by a former Mosad intelligence official). Let the world ponder over this question and do some serious research on the issue and the answer would, one day, may be to the utter surprise of the Americans.

Israeli terrorism and consequential Palestinian violence including suicide bombings (which fall within the definition of terrorism as suicide is prohibited under the revealed religion) continued to spread around the world because of the short sighted policies of the USA, unfortunately, at its own peril.

Israelis want. They want peace for themselves, apparently happy with land within 1967 borders, and not more land at the cost of terrible violence, for the foreign Jews including the Flashas and those from Russia and Eastern Europe, who are already a big burden for ordinary Israelis in terms of jobs and political uncertainty in Israel. I have myself traveled through several places in Israel and I was told very clearly that majority Israelis want peace. It could be a big chance for President Bush to be remembered as the President of peace for the Palestinians and

are also the realities on the ground which must also be kept in view. However, some settlements immediately beyond the Green Line which have, over the years, taken the shape of semi-permanent structure (most of the settlements are of temporary nature) may be allowed to stay provided these settlements do not make Palestinian State a truncated one. However, Palestinians must be compensated for the retention of such small number of settlements within Palestinian State by releasing fresh land from Israel proper.

enterprises for earning their livelihood.

5. Israel shall never cross into Palestinian State under any pretext. This has to be ensured by the UN and the international community. Any violation will mean declaration of war.

6. The Palestinian State must be allowed to have its permanent armed forces which should militarily be equipped to defend a sovereign Palestinian State.

7. UN armed forces shall be stationed within the borders of Palestinian State and shall protect the borders of Palestinian State until Palestinians can take over the defence work independently. This will serve dual purposes -- stop Israeli aggression, and stop Palestinian radicals' attacks against Israelis.

8. All walls and barriers built within the Palestinian State must be removed under the supervision of the UN.

9. The should be total renunciation of all forms of terrorism and violence by all including the Palestinians and Israelis. Terrorism in all its forms and manifestation must be jointly thwarted, if there is any.

10. East Jerusalem with the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock and their compounds and other areas around them shall come under the sovereignty of Palestinian State and East Jerusalem must be declared as the Capital of the Palestinian State. Western Jerusalem shall be under the sovereignty of Israel. Israel should be free to declare Western Jerusalem as its Capital. In such an event, the Prime Ministers/Presidents of both countries could drive down to each other's capital and sort out any problem over a cup of coffee. That sort of relationship should exist after the Peace agreement.

11. The Western (Wailing) Wall with its adjacent plaza shall be under the sovereignty of Israel with Dung Gate as the gate of entry. Even now Dung Gate is being used for entering into the Wailing Wall area.

12. No further digging of the Noble Sanctuary areas for finding the existence of the walls of the Temples. It has to be borne in mind that the walls are not holy; so any findings would only be of archeological value. The holiness and virtues lie in the right type of prayer to God Almighty and God alone. (It is blasphemous to say and believe that God has a son and a companion. It is simple to understand that God is an Infinite Power -- most Beneficent and Merciful -- and not a human being to have a companion and son etc. God also does not have to come down to earth in some human form as some believe. God sent His apostles from time to time to give His messages to His creation). While praying to God, one does not have to ask for any intervention of any prophet. Even the prophets had to pray to God and God alone for possible sins of their own as they were all human beings. For prayer the place is available and the people of Jewish faith should perform their prayers without any interference. This has to be ensured by the UN and the international community.

13. Hamas and other radical groups must disarm and join the formal political process within Palestinian State and renounce violence and also hand over all arms to the Palestinian Authority (PA).

14. All settlers within (total

migration of all settlers may not be possible) and around final international borders accepted by all parties must also hand over all arms to the Israeli authority. Adequate security from both sides should be ensured.

15. Israel must agree not to import any more Jews into Israel.

16. Adequate economic aid from the UN, the World Bank and the international community should be available to the Palestinians -- both refugees who would return and others within the Palestinian State -- so that they can build up their commerce and industries. Aid should also be available to Palestinian Authority (PA) to build up the State's infrastructure, industries and commerce and also the establishments for good governance.

The most important and effective role could be played by the US if the US Administration keeps aside its domestic Jewish pressure for a while. In fact, many Jews within the US are in favour of clear settlement of the age-old conflict and establishment of peace. Keeping all these in view the US Administration can practically ask the leaders of its foster State -- Israel -- to stick to the provisions of the Road Map that has been prepared and approved by the big powers -- the US, the EU, Russia and the UN and finally accepted by the Palestinians too.

Mahmud Abbas rightly said the time is running out and one can say it is in US interest to resolve this major problem which has given rise to all forms of terrorism. The US is too involved in the M-E and particularly in Iraq and indeed its own security would be in a serious state in the face of any military problem against the US flaring up in any other part of the world. Then the US would simply not be in a position to effectively deal with such a situation. In this unsettled world with all forms of terrorism, political uncertainty in global terms, unethical fight for sphere of influence and finally nuclear competition, one cannot rule out such disastrous possibilities.

The EU, Russia and China and all other countries concerned must also be fully involved in the peace process so that they can give full support within the UN to any agreed deal that would establish the State of Palestine, hopefully within 2005 as committed by US President George Bush.

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This is also the concluding comment in the book "The Promised Land -- The Land of Milk & Honey" (a compilation of comments printed in this paper under the rubric "Spotlight on Middle East" by the author to be published soon by a Research group with Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada).

## SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

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brokering the peace deal:

First, Israel has to keep in view the fact that it's one piece of land to be shared by two peoples.

Second, the children of Israel, as per original Torah, are not entitled to any state of their own. However, the international community considered it convenient to provide a state to them so that they do not go on seeking citizenship in different European countries and North America. The idea of a Jewish State was obviously not meant to allow importation of established citizens of other countries just because they are Jews into Israel, a tiny piece of land, which indeed displaced a large number of original inhabitants of the land of Palestine. This also gave rise to unprecedented humanitarian problems because those displaced Palestinians became refugees in the neighbouring countries. It's not only strange, it is absolutely unjust to throw out original inhabitants of the land and allow foreigners to come in and settle in the same land just because these foreigners happen to be Jews by faith. Same faith does not entitle people to converge on one place to live together.

Terrorism indeed first started with some Jews forming terrorist groups under Jewish leaders like Monachem Begin, Yitzhaq Shamer and their associates with the aim of returning the "promised land". Though the terrorism was first directed against the foreign power, the final axe fell on the Palestinians who were thrown out of the land and that resulted in violence from the Palestinians. Thus the whole world came under the grip of terrorists and unfortunately the USA became the worst affected country. The US authorities never looked into the matter carefully -- may be avoided intentionally to see the role of Israel in Twin Tower attack.

The big question still agitates the minds of many people as to why the 9/11 Commission did not even mention anything about Mosad's role in the intelligence gathering. Can anything happen in the US and places anywhere within and around Mid East without the knowledge of Mosad? Absolutely not. It is a well known fact that Mosad's intelligence activities are intertwined with those of



Bush with Sharon and Abbas

The US actions against terrorism, very cumbersome and humiliating though after the worst had already taken place, has robbed off much of the civil liberties not only of the people of the United States and particularly those of the Muslims in America, but also of the people of the world, who visit America. America is no more America of Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson, Washington; it is America of Bush, Dick Cheney, Rumsfeld and Company. Unfortunately indeed! Condolences to the great Statue of Liberty -- she must be feeling terribly hurt and embarrassed.

The latest statement by President Bush on Israel-Palestinian issues looks encouraging. He is known to be a religious man. He should, however, keep the ultra Jewish advisers and his Vice President Cheney at arms-length and seriously keep in view the remarks of the First Lady Laura Bush that she made in Jerusalem. He should also ignore Ariel Sharon for a while and recall what the majority

Israelis. Former President Nelson Mandela reportedly said -- He (President Bush) is unable to think properly. Let President Bush prove that President Mandela was wrong.

The following Plan of action on major issues should be seriously considered for resolution of the age-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict to establish a contiguous, sovereign and economically viable Palestinian State which will usher in durable peace in the area:

1. Israel has to withdraw completely from the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. In other words, it must withdraw and go beyond 1967 border. All settlements are to be dismantled so that the state of Palestine could be a contiguous state. However, while negotiators proceed with detailed negotiations some adjustment may be made keeping in view the "realities on the ground" as stated by President Bush. Terrible violence including suicide bombings in the absence of peace

2. Even after adjustments, if some settlements are allowed to stay in the Palestinian State, the inhabitants will have to accept the citizenship of the Palestinian State as there are many Palestinians within Israel with Israeli citizenship. Those may, however, be allowed dual citizenship with the agreed rights and obligations. Such steps may help ease the situation and the negotiating process.

3. Here comes the issue of Palestinians Right of Return to their homes in Israel. The Right of Return should, in principle, be accepted and allow Palestinians to return on selective basis on proper documentation. This should be done by a Committee where members of Palestinian leadership should be present.

4. Those refugees who would not qualify on the basis of proper documentation should be entitled to adequate aid for building homes in the Palestinian Territory and for starting viable commercial

# Barbarians stalk the land



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

**T**HE gruesome murder of Mili, a student of class V of PN. Girls' High School at Rajshahi after rape in May last and rape of a three and half years old girl by a 16-year boy at Bhashantek in Dhaka on June 17 have once again stunned the whole nation. Savage, beastly, barbaric, frightening, traumatic, humiliating could all these epithets give vent to our expressions of anger and hatred against the abusers? As newspaper readers in the whole world know about the dastardly and ghoulish sexual assault of minor girls, they would hasten to comment, "There are no devils left in hell, they are all in Bangladesh now." Even in a country where life is so easily extinguished by miscreants and hired killers these days, there was a feeling of revulsion about the macabre crimes committed. To violate an eleven year old girl who has yet to understand the meaning of sex is simply barbaric, not to speak of the three and half years old victim. The women's group at Rajshahi town forming a human chain and protesting against the beastly incident and raising their voices for the arrest of the rapists reinforce our belief that the alleged criminals are linked with the high-ups in the administration. The three and half years old girl's rapist is still at large.

The ordeal in the life of 17-year old girl Laboni of village Harinakundu in Jhenidah has just begun. Fair complexioned Laboni was lured by her step-mother to

accompany her in connection with shopping for sister's marriage to the capital city Dhaka and was reportedly sold to Hotel Capetown at Maghbazar in the city. For more than a week, the innocent girl was subjected to brutal sexual assault when the hyenas took their turns day in and day out. Laboni is now groaning in pain in the one stop crisis center at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, Laboni could take leave from her 'customers' on the plea of bringing medicine for her headache when she went to the emergency ward of the hospital and narrated her ordeal. Doctors say she will need lengthy treatment and even surgery to recover from the wounds inflicted on her vital organs. On a complaint filed by women's activist group involved in stopping repression on women, police in the meantime has arrested the manager of the hotel but the owner of the hotel is still at large. With the arrest of the hotel manager as well as Laboni's disclosure to the police, the sleazy activities in the hotel have come to public attention and this has Ecaused near hysteria reportedly among some police personnel known to be the hotel owner Azad's beneficiaries.

Not an unusual and familiar case in this country, this notorious hotel owner has allegedly greased a substantial group of the police administration by offering fabulous gifts and it has been learnt through newspaper reports, amassed crores of taka by allowing his mentors and godfathers enjoy the company of society girls in some plush houses in the city at Rampura, Banasree and Hathkolia areas. As his sex trade started unraveling, a section of the law enforcers has chosen to drag their feet. And sure enough such notorious hotel owners in the city and different parts of the country who have destroyed the lives of such unsuspecting young girls have evaded punishment because all these years they have

The criminality seems to be spinning out of control undermining the country's once good name uniquely attached to values. The blatant and brazen criminal acts have so shaken public confidence in the law enforcement agencies that many are even questioning the need for them in the country any more. What is most shocking is a return of the medieval mindset which continues to dominate our society Tragically true, the last vestiges of decency have left us abandoned among some beasts in the garb of humans.

been protected by their mentors in the political party and administration.

People now increasingly feel that unless the guilty are tried and convicted, such scammers are likely to flourish with ever increasing strength. As women activist groups characterise, such incidents are symptomatic of the total lawlessness in what has become the rape capital of the nation. What is worse is the lack of outrage. Even with a veil of modernity in our outward manner, we still regard women as property and sex object. Unhappily for women across the country, fear is a constant companion and rape is a stranger they may have to confront at any place, at any hour. It's a term that is being increasingly brought home to urban women especially garments workers and women employees in most workplaces as they strike out on their own in search of economic and social independence.

The nation learnt with similar trepidation about the incidence of gang rape on Nipa, a student of class VI of Muslimnagar High school of Baktabali village under Fatulla thana of Narayanganj district in the early part of June. After a nightlong brutal sexual assault on Nipa, the rapists killed her and threw her body in a corn field. In the face of agitation by the local public after Nipa went missing and the incidence of rape on Nipa came to light, local police retrieved her body. The police in the meantime has arrested Shukur (20), Kamal (21) and Dolly, a king-pin in this ghoulish incidence. Two more alleged criminals, it is reported by the police, are on the run.



Whose responsibility is it to provide her security and honour?

Enough, the grotesque incident of gang rape on Afroza Begum, an insurance worker in Jaipurhat, Bogra was committed in broad day light when she was returning to Jaipurhat after collecting insurance premium from nearby villages with one of her colleagues, Pradip Mandal. The rapists, all village mastans, ambushed them on the way, tied Pradip in a house nearby and then they took turns to rape Afroza. To hide their involvement in this dastardly incident, they dramatised the whole incident implicating Pradip as the perpetrator. More shocking, the offenders by exercising their political clout on local union Parishad called an arbitration council meeting next day that passed a verdict like shaving the heads of Afroza and Pradip. Meanwhile the mastans also looted the

premium money of one lakh and thirty thousand taka from Afroza.

Deeply humiliated, Afroza has vowed to take her life should she fail to get justice. Meanwhile the alleged criminals continue to hurl threats to her family with dire consequences should they decide to proceed with the case.

Women are definitely afraid to go to court or seek the protection of law enforcers because almost 80 per cent of women look at rape as a social stigma. That's the reason why only 10 per cent of such cases get reported. Undeniably true, society as a whole has a very conservative attitude towards women. Despite a growing trend of migration to cities for education and work, society at large is still not accustomed to women on their own or with men who are not their fathers, husbands

or sons.

Across the country, in offices and in colleges, in factories and in fields, and most shockingly in schools, sexual harassment and abuse are no longer the victim's secret. For a minor girl student Nazma Akhter, a student of class IX of R.K.D.S Girls' School at Sharankhola in the district of Bagerhat, fear and intimidation gave way to action when in October last year Aynal (22), son of Abdul Haque of the same village in association with his criminal friends locked Nazma in a room and gangraped her. For months before that, Aynal had reportedly been subjecting her to lewd comments, innuendo-filled remarks and threats. While the alleged abduction of and sexual assault on Nazma came to light with some local ruling party leaders working as perpetrators of the crime, Nazma was whisked away to a hideout at Chittagong from where she came fleeing to Bagerhat. Ignoring the threats of local union Parishad chairman, Nazma's mother has filed a case in the local thana against Aynal and his associates Moulana Amir Ali Khan, Abdul Huq Shikder and Sohrab member.

True women today in many places of the country are emboldened because of the legal assistance, moral and economic support they are getting from many women's activist groups in the country. Nobody should call it a revolution but there is an awareness that sexual harassment or abuse is not acceptable and you don't have to submit to survive.

But truth is stranger than fiction. It is particularly when the abuser is a powerful person in the society and

enjoys political backing and patronage that economic compulsions compel most women to sweep their cases under the carpet. Newspaper report published in a Bangla daily on June 20 revealed that the abuser of a mentally crippled domestic help in Manikganj could not yet be arrested by the police although a warrant of arrest had been issued against him. The alleged abuser Manzur Ahmed, it is reportedly learnt has been moving freely in the area with the powerful backing of a local MP.

Sadly enough, all hopes for the revival of the society and change of mindset to put the delinquent on trial or on road to justice seem to evaporate when people learnt with almost disbelief that a Madrasah Principal and a Superintendent of a Girls' Madrasah Hostel in Comilla and Sylhet, respectively, humiliated their students in the madrasah compound.

Shockingly, most of the rape incidences in the country these days relate to minors and even if the prosecution starts and the case advances in a court of law, it would be most shocking and intriguing to find that such minor girls, who were once sexually abused are again made to undergo harrowing cross-examinations in the court. How can such minors respond with clarity and in detail which even an adult would balk at answering? It should not take us too much time to realise that the trauma these minor girls or their parents must have undergone is unimaginable. If rapists accused of sexually abusing a minor girl or women cannot be punished because of insufficient legal grounds, flawed laws and shoddy investigations then it makes sense to enact new laws which are more stringent, scientifically advanced and fool-proof especially when the victim is a minor.

Recent advances in DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) finger printing that matches microscopic strands of DNA, floating around an abuser's cells with the victim's clothes, hairs

or any part of the body, can give clue to such cases and help identify the accused without going through an arduous and tortuous process. In the Indian city of Hyderabad, such DNA profiling machines are working quite successfully and scientists in that laboratory assert that almost half the cases they get cover rape and the other half to establish paternity.

In dealing with transparency, people feel the need of setting up a special women's cell in the "state police" -- a long standing demand by the women's groups -- headed by a woman SP. Besides senior police officers have to be personally held responsible if crimes against women are not effectively controlled. Believably, the status of women and children is a perfect indicator of how civilised a country is. By all reckoning it is true that there has been a steady influx of women in a variety of professions and their contribution to the country's economy is quite significant. But the horrific attack on women in cities as well as in rural areas seems to negate the hope we are pinning in about progress and development.

Few countries have watched their social degeneracy drop so low as Bangladesh's. The criminality seems to be spinning out of control undermining the country's once good name uniquely attached to values. The blatant and brazen criminal acts have so shaken public confidence in the law enforcement agencies that many are even questioning the need for them in the country any more. What is most shocking is a return of the medieval mindset which continues to dominate our society Tragically true, the last vestiges of decency have left us abandoned among some beasts in the garb of humans.

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