

Ramzy Baroud

The Second Palestinian Intifada

A Chronicle of a People's Struggle



The Second Palestinian Intifada

A Chronicle of a People's Struggle

RAMZY BAROUD

Foreword by Kathleen and Bill Christison

Introduction by Jennifer Loewenstein

Photographs by Mahfouz Abu Turk
and Matthew Cassel

Pluto  Press
LONDON • ANN ARBOR, MI

Contents

Foreword by <i>Kathleen and Bill Christison</i>	viii
Preface	xiii
Acknowledgements	xvii
Introduction by <i>Jennifer Loewenstein</i>	1
1 The Intifada Takes Off (2000–01)	16
2 Intifada International (2002)	36
3 Calls for Reform (2003)	53
4 Profound Changes, Insurmountable Challenges (2004)	90
5 End of the Intifada? (2005)	120
Epilogue	158
Appendix I Total Deaths and Other Losses During the Second Palestinian Uprising	166
Appendix II Timeline of Events During the Second Palestinian Uprising: 2000–05	168
Notes	196
Recommended Reading	207
Notes on Contributors	208
Index	210

that has left their narrative unknown. The leadership has also never been able to make the transition from revolutionary movement to state-building institution. With no coherent territory to govern over and no true governing authority anywhere, the leadership has never known how to balance resistance to the Israeli occupation with preparation for governing a state. Where once Yasser Arafat and Fatah and the P.L.O. were rallying points and unifiers for the Palestinians, in the half-light of the Oslo so-called "peace process," where they were able neither to control the pace of negotiations nor freely to advance the interests of their own people, the leaders and the organizations all soon descended into mundane political hackery and corruption. In this volume, Baroud discusses the level of betrayal felt by ordinary Palestinians because of this failure of leadership, as well as the crippling corruption that has become pervasive within Palestinian institutions. But the long vigil of Baroud's grandfather also demonstrates the Palestinians' great strength: their resilience and remarkable endurance. Even in the face of being ignored, exiled, repeatedly dispossessed, oppressed by successive conquerors, occasionally massacred, the Palestinians carry on vigorously. Baroud's grandfather obviously had a clear sense that the injustice done to him and to all around him was so very great that redress simply had to come sometime soon. And so he waited in that state of suspended animation. And, it must be asked, what better way is there after all to carry on in the face of massive power and gross injustice?

This puts one in mind of the great Palestinian novel, *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Pessoptimist*, by Emile Habiby, about the difficult life of the small remnant of the Palestinian people who remained in Israel in 1948. In one episode, the Palestinian hero, the Pessoptimist, watches as an Israeli military governor drives a Palestinian woman and her child away at gunpoint from a field where she is working. "At this point," says the hero,

I observed the first example of that amazing phenomenon that was to occur again and again.... For the further the woman and child went from where we were, the governor standing and I in the jeep, the taller they grew. By the time they merged with their own shadows in the sinking sun, they had become bigger than the plain of Acre itself. The governor still stood there awaiting their final disappearance, while I remained huddled in the jeep. Finally he asked in amazement, "Will they never disappear?"

The answer to that Israeli question is no, the Palestinians will endure. Palestinians like Ramzy Baroud and his grandfather will make it so.

Preface

The Second Palestinian Uprising will be etched in history as an era in which a major shift in the rules of the game occurred. From the shock of witnessing scores of young people voluntarily blowing themselves up, to the shame of the construction of one of the largest walls in history to create an eternal divide between two peoples, it has been a time in which both sides, oppressor and oppressed, have become intimately and painfully affected by the scourge of the Israeli occupation and the subsequent Palestinian resistance.

I was a teenage boy in high school when the First Palestinian Uprising erupted in December 1987. As the world's media wrangled in an attempt to construe or misrepresent the actual causes of violence throughout the Occupied Territories, the impoverished and persistently grief stricken residents of my Gaza refugee camp were consumed with other more worldly matters: would they eat today, would they find clean water, would they seize their long-awaited freedom? Family members, friends and neighbors lost their lives in that evocative fight in which the Palestinian people once again reclaimed their rightful role in the struggle. It was an awesome awakening which forced all parties that had traditionally laid claim to the Palestinian struggle to relinquish their stake. Ordinary Palestinians took to the streets, defying the Israeli army and articulating a collective stance that echoed a seemingly eternal commitment across the generations: "Our souls and our blood are forfeited to free you Palestine." I grew up hearing the echoes of that chant and soon joined in.

My house was positioned at the forefront of what the refugees referred to as Red Square. There, many of my peers fell to a cruel fate, the trails of their blood leaving stains that would last forever. Directly beside Red Square was the ever-expanding graveyard, wherein many graves were adorned by the colors of the Palestinian flag, marking the resting places of the many martyrs. It was in those dismal yet stirring surroundings that I began to write. In my earliest attempts, I wrote poetry. Many of my verses would soon evolve into chants that would resound throughout the camp, in times of celebration and in times of grief. My first works were published all along the walls of Gaza's refugee camps. Sadly, that is where they would stay, along with the other countless screams inscribed on those pockmarked walls. The

Israeli occupation was impenetrable, and our hopes as well as our legitimate grievances would remain cloistered within the camps, perhaps never to reach the outside world. Palestinians were intensely aware of the relationship between the virtual indifference toward their plight and the role of the media in misrepresenting their struggle and national aspirations. That awareness bred untold frustration among Palestinians, for their hands were tied as the narrative of their life and death was determined almost exclusively by the Israeli military and government.

I was studying in the United States when the Second Palestinian Uprising erupted in September 2000. The world's media once again wrangled to construe or misrepresent the causes of the violence. Palestinians were duly blamed and condemned. Venomous hate speech was spat out everywhere and by every media, reducing the Palestinians to the role designated to them by the official Israeli account—they were the wrongdoers, innately violent, politically conniving and manipulative, twisted and essentially terrorist. It was an arduous task to counter these fraudulent yet prevailing interpretations. For most Americans, as for the world at large, the Palestinians had been criminalized through decades of relentless propaganda devised so carefully that challenging it seemed utterly futile. But the same force that ignited courage in the hearts of millions of Palestinians throughout the Occupied Territories to confront an increasingly violent occupation empowered those who dared to challenge the ingrained and one-sided narrative that saw Israel as a "besieged" nation fighting for its survival amidst hordes of barbaric Philistines.

This book is my contribution to what I believe is the largely neglected Palestinian narrative of the Second Uprising and the Palestinian struggle as a whole. One of the largest controversies throughout the past five years—highlighted time and again within activist groups, intellectual circles and the media—concerned the growing rate of violent resistance employed by Palestinians against Israeli military forces and civilians. Because this topic was of great consequence, and the violence had in many arenas compromised the credibility of the Uprising, I felt that it was critical to contextualize this phenomenon, not to justify it, but to present the Palestinian response as a tragic yet predictable human reaction to decades of subjugation—as well expressed in the foreword to this book by Kathleen and Bill Christison. While I find it difficult to reconcile myself to the point of view embraced by those many supporters of

Palestinian rights around the world who find any sort of violent resistance reprehensible, I have a profound respect for their life-long activism, and this book is by no means an attempt to discredit their principles.

Equally central is the issue of the fragmentation of Palestinian nationhood, as eloquently addressed by Jennifer Loewenstein, one of the most prominent Jewish-American activists at the forefront of the struggle for Palestinian rights. In the Introduction that follows, Loewenstein examines the relationship between the decades-long Israeli military occupation, Israel's policy of isolating and breaking up Palestinian communities, whether at home or in Diaspora, and the palpable disintegration of the long-aspired-to notion of Palestinian nationhood. Her contribution is most pertinent.

This volume is divided into five chapters, each representing one of the five years of the Uprising. The first chapter, entitled "The Intifada Takes Off," covers the end of 2000 and the year 2001, and focuses on the circumstances which led to the onset of the Uprising. Chapter 2, entitled "Intifada International," deals with the events of 2002, and addresses the ever-growing international solidarity which Palestinians garnered from people and organizations around the world. The third chapter, "Calls for Reform," addresses the growing problem of corruption within the Palestinian Authority (P.A.), their subsequent loss of credibility in the eyes of ordinary Palestinians, and how such corruption was manipulated by Israel and the U.S. to exert pressure on the P.A. Chapter 4, "Profound Changes, Insurmountable Challenges," commemorates the many events that occurred in the year 2004, from Israel's snubbing of the International Court of Justice's ruling on the illegality of the Israeli Separation Wall, to the death of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. Finally, Chapter 5, "End of the Intifada?" addresses the many issues of 2005 that led to the inevitable demise of the Intifada altogether. While the chapters of this book refer mostly to the Second Uprising of 2000, it derives many of its references from the First Uprising of 1987.

This book is by no means intended as a platform to vent, censure or settle scores, nor is it an attempt to chronicle an encyclopedia of events, so that by the end the reader may conclude who is at fault and who is not. However, an exhaustive timeline is provided in an Appendix, outlining noteworthy events within each particular year. Unfortunately, it was impossible to mention every significant event that took place throughout the past five years; such a timeline would have required its own published volume. The book is intended as a

means to articulate an independent Palestinian view that holds no allegiance to any political party, individual, or official entity of any sort. In this it is simply an attempt to cling to the same principles espoused by countless refugees in small and over-crowded refugee camps where freedom is proudly cherished over life.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank all of those who have supported me in my effort to bring attention to the Palestinian struggle: to newspaper editors around the world for publishing my essays and commentaries; to every student group and university department that invited me to speak about the Palestinian struggle, about peace and justice; to every person who dared to stand for what is right no matter how detested the word of truth may be. A special thank you to Roger van Zwanenberg of Pluto Press for his support, patience, and highly appreciated input and important suggestions that helped shape this volume. To Sejal Chad at Pluto, thank you so much for your valuable feedback and suggestions during the editing process. I also want to extend my deepest gratitude to the staff at the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue & Democracy (MIFTAH), for their kind assistance in gathering valuable data regarding Palestinian and Israeli losses during the Second Palestinian Uprising. Thank you to the many inspiring individuals that contributed to this book: Kathleen and Bill Christison, Jennifer Loewenstein, Professor Noam Chomsky, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, Norman Solomon, Professor Norman Finkelstein, Professor Robert Jensen, and Professor Ilan Pappé. Thanks also to Matthew Cassel and Mahfouz Abu Turk for their contribution of fantastic photos to this work. To all of these dedicated individuals and to many more I am deeply indebted. My deepest gratitude to my wife Suzanne, my editor for the last twelve years. What I owe her cannot be relayed in a few words. Finally, for those who have been a great support during this process, thank you to Scott Davis, June Rugh, Paul Cowan, Aijaz Sayed, Michelle Gasparek, Elizabeth Gimmestad, Hani Yarid, Mohammed Lamin, Lamis Andoni, and Nabil Hijazi, Jennifer Johnson, and Andrew Borland. Your support was invaluable.

I extend my gratitude to the editors of the following publications for kindly hosting many articles on the basis of which much of this volume was composed:

Al-Ahram Weekly (Egypt); *Japan Times* (Japan); *Seattle Post Intelligencer* (U.S.); *Washington Post* (U.S.); *International Herald Tribune* (U.S.); *Christian Science Monitor* (U.S.); *Arab News* (Saudi Arabia); *Middle East Times* (Egypt); *Asia Times* (Hong Kong); *Jordan Times* (Jordan); *Khaleej*

"Masterful prose. ... (A) scathing but heartfelt portrait."

Norman G. Finkelstein, author of *The Holocaust Industry*

"Few are spared [Baroud's] perceptive eye, and only the morally callous will fail to respond to his pleas to remedy the injustice that he exposes."

Noam Chomsky, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

"A compelling narrative of Palestinian victimization [presented] with candor and uncompromising integrity."

Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, Palestinian Legislator for the Jerusalem District

"[Baroud] enables readers to see through the distorted image provided by a biased Western media."

Ilan Pappé, author of *A Modern History of Palestine*

Ramzy Baroud is a veteran journalist and former producer for Al-Jazeera TV. This is his comprehensive account of the momentous events of the last five years which shaped the political landscape not only of Palestine and Israel but of the entire Middle East.

Addressing the most controversial issues, including the alarming escalation in suicide bombings and the construction of the Separation Wall, he reports on the huge rate of unemployment and hunger in the Occupied Territories – statistics so critical that NGOs compare their magnitude to African nations such as the Congo.

From the brutality of the Israeli army to the Palestinian elections, few are spared Baroud's thoughtful critique. The book is clear and concise, with one chapter dedicated to the major events of each year, and includes a comprehensive timeline.

Ramzy Baroud is a widely-respected journalist and Editor-in-Chief of the *Palestine Chronicle*. His writing has been published in newspapers worldwide from the *Washington Post* to the *Japan Times*. He teaches Mass Communication at Australia's Curtin University of Technology in Malaysia.



PLUTO PRESS
London · Ann Arbor, MI
www.plutobooks.com

ISBN 0-7453-2547-5



9 780745 325477

Cover image
Matthew Cassel
Cover Design
Lyn Davies