

Palestinians - Oppressed By Their Own Leadership

by Cheryl Hancock

The *Constitution of the State of Palestine, March 25, 2003* states that:

“The Palestinian political system shall be a parliamentary representative **democracy** based on political pluralism”.



Yet, according to some Palestinians who actually live in the West Bank, what the Palestinian Authority (PA) says and what it does is contrary in many cases. One Palestinian said to me recently, “We are a people oppressed by our own leadership”.

As the world plans and prepares for a “Two State Solution” for Israel and the Palestinians, one key question is not being asked: Are the Palestinian people living in freedom and democracy under the Palestinian Authority today? The truth is some Palestinians seem to be doing well, while others speak out against the PA but only behind closed doors due to fear of their leadership.

Speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves

The Bible tells us to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves:

"Open your mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open your mouth, and plead the cause of the poor and needy."

(Proverbs 31:8-9)

The following information illustrates the sharp contrast between definitions provided by the World Book Encyclopedia and statements made directly to me by real Palestinians.

I have written their words exactly as they were spoken to me except in cases where their broken English was not clear enough to understand. I cannot reveal the names of these Palestinian people without endangering their lives.

The World Book Encyclopedia:

Democracy means rule by the people. Abraham Lincoln defined democracy as “government of the people, by the people, for the people.”

Versus

The Testimony of a Real Palestinian:

We are an oppressed people by our leadership. We are without freedom and are arrested if we come against those who rule over us or even speak against them.

The World Book Encyclopedia:

Democracy is also a way of life. True democracy recognizes the rights of all men. It states that all persons are equal before the law. It refuses to allow the government to grant special favors because of a person's birth, wealth, race, or religion.

Versus

The Testimony of a Real Palestinian:

Most people suffer from lack of medical care unless they belong to [families of, or are working for] the PA. High medical costs without insurance coverage prevent us from seeking needed help. Families of the PA leadership have the best of care and go to the best doctors, but the poor go without or receive help only if they plead with the PA. In this way they can control the people.

The World Book Encyclopedia:

Democracy provides freedom of speech, freedom of the press...

Versus

The Testimony of a Real Palestinian:

My friend was shot because he spoke the truth about the PA. Another friend [a teacher] lost his job because he would not let Hamas members into his classroom. If we speak against the PA maybe one of our family will be killed, or we will be killed. We need financial help and only the PA [can] give it to us. If we speak against them, we may lose both that help and our jobs. Then how can I feed my family? I must survive for their sake. I must teach my children to study and become educated so they can leave this place and have a free life and not be a slave of the PA.

The World Book Encyclopedia:

Democracy provides freedom of religion.

Versus

The Testimony of a Real Palestinian:

We are born as Muslims. If we change our religion we are considered traitors to our people. Sometimes there is a Fatwa put in the newspaper telling our people it is legal to kill us because we became Christians. Some of us are arrested and tortured and told to go back to Islam or our family will suffer.

Because I became a Christian, I have been separated from my family for years and will be killed if I return home. We who are ordinary Palestinian people only want to have a life without violence. We want our families to grow and learn and be united. We do not want to be oppressed by a Government who does not care for the people. We do not want to live in a Palestinian State that does not give people freedom of speech or freedom of religion. The words you hear on the television sound good in your ears, but we who have to live inside these borders are suffering and [some of us pay] with our lives. This new Palestinian State with the current Authority will actually be a state of terror for the ordinary Palestinian people. Please do not let this nightmare become a reality!

The World Book Encyclopedia:

A democracy needs educated citizens who can think for themselves.

In a dictatorship, the student is taught to accept without question the policies and decisions of the individual or group in power. He learns to ignore moral and human issues, if necessary, in obeying the orders of the rulers. He becomes a servant of the state.

Versus

The Testimony of a Real Palestinian:

The children are taught that they must take the Land of 'Palestine' (Israel) away from the Jewish occupiers. They are taught that the Land was stolen from them and it must be taken back at any cost, even their lives. This is written in my children's school books.

The World Book Encyclopedia:

The most important obligation of a government official in a democracy is to look upon public office as a trust. A dictator believes that his power is his as long as he can keep it by force.

Versus

The Testimony of a Real Palestinian:

Many families and children here are in hunger and do not have proper clothing for the winter. The Palestinian Authority only helps those people that belong to them. They keep the people dependant upon their aid. But in return they require much. Many Palestinian people do not trust their government; they say the PA is corrupt.

Please note:

I did not write this to attack any individual person or people group.

Rather, I am writing this because of my love for the people who will be impacted by the present plan to form a Palestinian State under the current leadership. These people are already victims of their current rulers, the Palestinian Authority.

To thrust them into closed borders under the PA leadership will turn this Palestinian State into a place of terror for many poor and needy Palestinian people.