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From time to time, the Palestine Center distributes articles it believes will enhance understanding of the Palestinian political reality. The following article by Ahmad Tibi was published by the Richmond Times Dispatch on 22 December 2011.

"World beginning to understand Palestinians' hopes for state"

By Ahmad Tibi

The arrogance of some American politicians and presidential candidates toward the Palestinians and Palestinian national aspirations is breathtaking. Last week, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor stated, "If the Palestinians want to live in peace in a state of their own, they must demonstrate that they are worthy of a state." He appeared to hold all Palestinians responsible for the violence of a few.

A man living in a glass home ought not to throw such stones. Cantor's remarks ignored the fact that Americans engaged in genocidal violence and enslavement when establishing the United States of America. He vilifies a Palestinian "culture of resentment and hatred" yet says not a word about his own Richmond neighborhoods that still extol the virtues of Confederate leaders who fought to uphold slavery.

His words are clearly hypocritical and the hysterical vitriol of a man frightened by the fact that Palestinians are edging closer to freedom as more of the world begins to understand the cruelty of Israel's subjugation of the Palestinians. His words do nothing to advance peace, and they allow too many Israelis to think they can use \$3 billion annually in American taxpayers' money to steal Palestinian land through military might.

Americans, I believe, are better than this. They support freedom for Arabs throwing off decades of repression with the Arab Spring, and I believe they will support Palestinians if told Palestinian stories of loss, hardship and suffering under Israeli occupation. Certainly most Americans already support the two-state solution more than Cantor, who excuses Israeli colonization of Palestinian land.

I, too, reject the Palestinian violence Cantor mentioned that is directed at Israeli civilians, but unlike Cantor I believe in strengthening nonviolent efforts to overcome Israeli domination. Cantor is perfectly content with such control. Furthermore, he regards Israeli violence as pure when, in fact, it has brought the deaths of far more Palestinian civilians than Palestinians have ever killed on the Israeli side.

But the over-the-top rhetoric does not stop with Cantor.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich recently claimed that we Palestinians are an "invented people." And what, pray tell, are the Americans? Gingrich's people are every bit as invented, perhaps more, as they come from every corner of the globe. Good for the Americans. But don't disparage us and try to kill our freedom aspirations.

Thomas Friedman wrote recently that Gingrich seems to think Israel's "choices are: 1) to permanently deprive the West Bank Palestinians of Israeli citizenship and put Israel on the road to apartheid; 2) to evict the West Bank Palestinians through ethnic cleansing and put Israel on the road to the International Criminal Court in the Hague; or 3) to treat the Palestinians in the West Bank as citizens, just like Israeli Arabs, and lay the foundation for Israel to become a binational state."

Rather than throw rhetorical bombs, Gingrich should study the dispossession of more than 700,000 Palestinians that occurred immediately before and after the creation of Israel in 1948. These Palestinians have never been allowed to return to homes and lands from which they fled or were expelled.

Presidential candidate Michele Bachmann, speaking earlier this month at the Republican Jewish Coalition forum, asserted there would be "no right of return to Israel for Palestinian so-called refugees." Palestinian private property rights mean little to nothing to her.

Democrats, however, give no indication they will be any better. They surely knew they were misrepresenting the Republican position when they argued a Republican president would jeopardize aid to Israel.

Rather than raise fundamental questions about the discriminatory legislation right-wing Israeli politicians are enacting, the two parties squabble over "pro-Israel" bona fides.

It is a recipe for disaster. Americans will awaken one day and realize they can no longer ignore the bigotry gripping Israel. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has already complained about Israeli buses, which require Jewish women to sit at the back. Notably, she did not comment on the Palestinian Freedom Riders arrested on the edge of occupied East Jerusalem. And scarcely a word is said in the United States about legislation that allows hundreds of communities in the Negev and Galilee to discriminate against Palestinian citizens of Israel who might want to move there.

American politicians can use their free speech to taunt Palestinians and inflame tensions in the region or they can think sensibly about what they would do were they oppressed and dispossessed by Israel. My fear in this campaign season is that it will only get worse and the winner will be confronted with a Palestinian people who have zero confidence that the president will treat them fairly and be willing to press Israel to end the occupation. Consequently, the

America that was once respected around the world is increasingly reviled in the Middle East for backing Israeli domination rather than Palestinian freedom.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of The Jerusalem Fund.