

There is no military solution - a statement of refusal

This land has a problem - there are two nations with an undeniable connection to this place. But even with all the violence in the world, we could not erase the Palestinian people or their connection to this land, just as the Jewish people or our connection to that same land cannot be erased. The problem here is supremacy, the belief that this land belongs to only one people. Violence cannot solve the situation, neither by Hamas, nor by Israel. There is no military solution to a political problem. Therefore, I refuse to enlist in an army that believes that the real problem can be ignored, under a government that only continues the bereavement and pain.

On the seventh of October, Israeli society experienced a trauma the likes of which was not known in the history of the country . In a terrible invasion, the terrorist organization Hamas murdered hundreds of innocent civilians and kidnapped hundreds more, families were murdered in their homes, young people were massacred during a rave and 240 people were kidnapped to the Gaza Strip. After the terrorist attack, a revenge campaign began not only against Hamas, but against all Palestinian people. Indiscriminate bombings of residential neighborhoods and refugee camps in Gaza, full military and political support for settler violence in the West Bank, and political persecution on an unprecedented scale inside Israel. The reality we live in is a violent one. According to Hamas and also according to the IDF and the political echelon, violence is the only way. Continuing this cycle: "an eye for an eye" without thinking about an actual solution that would provide security and freedom to us all, only leads to more killing and suffering.

I refuse to believe that more violence will bring security, I refuse to take part in a war of revenge. I grew up in a home where life is sacred, where discussion is valued, where discourse and understanding always come before taking violent measures. In the world full of corrupt interests in which we live, violence and war are another way to increase support for the government and silence criticism. We must recognize the fact that after weeks of the ground operation in Gaza, at the end of the day - negotiations, an agreement, brought back the hostages. It was actually military action that caused them to be killed. Because of the criminal lie that "there are no innocent civilians in Gaza", even hostages waving a white flag shouting in Hebrew were shot to death. I don't want to imagine how many similar cases there were that were not investigated because the victims were born on the wrong side of the fence. The people who said "no negotiations with Hamas" were simply wrong. Diplomacy, political effort, and policy change are the only way to prevent further destruction and death on both sides.

The violence that the army uses and has used over the years does not protect us. The cycle of violence is indeed a cycle - the violence of the army, like that of any army, produces more blood. In practice, it is nothing more than an army of occupation and its maintenance. At the moment of truth it has abandoned the residents of the south and the entire country. It is important to distinguish between the ordinary people and the generals and self serving people who sit at the head of the system: none of the ordinary people decided to fund Hamas, none of us chose to perpetuate the occupation, and none of us decided to move troops to the West Bank days before the invasion, because settlers decided to build a Sukkah in Huwara. And now, after a long-standing policy that was always destined to explode, we are the ones who are sent to kill and be killed in Gaza. We are not sent to fight for peace, but in the name of revenge. I decided to refuse to enlist before the war, but since it started, I am only more and more sure of my decision.

Before the war, the army guarded settlements, maintained the murderous siege on the Gaza Strip, and upheld the status quo of apartheid and Jewish supremacy in the land between the Jordan and the sea. Since the outbreak of the war, we have not seen any call for a real policy change in the West Bank and Gaza, for an end to the widespread oppression of the Palestinian people and the bloodshed, or for a just peace. We are seeing the opposite: the deepening of oppression, the spreading of hatred, and the expansion of the fascist political persecution within Israel.

The change will not come from corrupt politicians here, or from the leaders of Hamas, who are corrupt as well. It will come from us - the people of the two nations. I believe wholeheartedly that the Palestinian people are not an evil people. Just like here, where the vast majority of people want to live a good and safe life, have a place for their children to play after school, and to make ends meet at the end of the month, so do Palestinians. On the eve of the seventh of October, support for Hamas in Gaza was at a low of 26%. Since the outbreak of violence, it has grown significantly stronger. In order to change, an alternative must be put in place, an alternative to Hamas, and an alternative to the militaristic society in which we live. This change will come when we recognize the suffering of the Palestinian people over the years, and that this suffering is the result of Israeli policy. Along with recognition must also come justice, correction, and the construction of a political infrastructure based on peace, freedom and equality. I do not want to take part in the continuation of the oppression and the continuation of the cycle of bloodshed, but to work directly for a solution, and therefore I refuse. I love this country and the people here, because it is my home. I sacrifice and work so that this land will be one that respects others, one where you can live with dignity.

Tal Mitnick, 26.12.2023