

There is no substantial refusal movement in Israeli the army and no mass opposition within Israeli society to the crimes being committed in Gaza

The importance of Anti-war Tel Aviv demonstration must be found, however, in the very fact that it was a demonstration against fear

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Where are the refuseniks?

There is no substantial refusal movement in the army today as there is no mass opposition within Israeli society to the crimes being committed against the Gaza population.

One of the most important aspects of the Israeli anti-war movement was the refusenik phenomenon: between June 1982 and 1984, hundreds of officers and soldiers refused to join their unit and went send to military prison. More of the same occurred during the Intifada (1987-1990). The refuseniks were not only a crucial component of the anti war/occupation movement, but a factor that impacted the Israeli decision to withdraw from Lebanon and Rabin's decision to open negotiations with the PLO.

As far as I know, since the beginning of the aggression against Gaza, only three soldiers have refused.

True, this is not new: during the reconquest of the West Bank in 2001-2004, there was only a handful of soldiers who refused to serve and were ready to pay the price for that. There was, however, a simple explanation: the reconquest-war was conducted by active duty and not reserve units, while the refusenik movement was essentially a reservist phenomenon. For a young soldier in uniform and under military discipline, refusal could cost him a much heavier price than a reserve soldier, who will be sentenced to maximum of 35 days in military prison.

This explanation cannot be applied today. According to the media, in addition to the regular army, more that 60,000 reserve soldiers were mobilized for the attack on Gaza. 60,000, and only three or four soldiers who refused to obey the military order!

For the past two weeks I have been asking myself why there is such an insignificant number, and finally reached the conclusion that the lack of a refusenik movement is the most concrete expression of the broader phenomenon I have tried to describe in my blogs over the past weeks: the

deterioration of Israeli society as a whole.

A soldiers' movement is part of a resisting society, and in 1982 or 1987 a substantial part of the Israeli people opposed war and occupation. This is, unfortunately, not the case today, and the absence of a mass opposition to Israel's crimes against the Gaza population explains why there is no substantial refusal movement in the army.

Michel Warschawski

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Anti-war protest in Tel Aviv: much too late

Israel is involved in a double war: a war against the Palestinian people and a war for the future of the state. Saturday's demonstration in Tel Aviv is a late, much too late, attempt to save a certain image of Israel, an Israel which doesn't exist.

Is this the beginning of a recovery of sanity by Israeli society? It is much too early to answer this question, but Saturday's anti-war demonstration in Tel Aviv was the first mass event in protest of Israel's bloody operation against the people of Gaza. Between four and five thousand people expressed their opposition to the Israeli aggression, but also their worry about the dangerous course that Israeli society has entered this last month.

In fact, I believe the fate of Israel was the main concern of the majority of demonstrators.

While the core of the demonstrators was the "usual suspects", i.e. activists of the movement against occupation, I identified many women and men who don't usually come to such kind of events, people who are closer to the national consensus. Their main concern is that the old consensus does not exist anymore, and a new frightening voice is taking front stage.

In harmony with quite many other Israeli journalists, I use the name "fascist" to characterize this new political force. Like other fascist movements in modern history, Israeli fascism is trying to terrorize opposition movements and voices. And the actions of the Israeli fascists have indeed succeeded in spreading fear, including among veteran activists.

For an important segment of Israeli society, "their" Israel is at risk, an Israel which tries to keep an image of democracy and liberalism, not a brutal state which is importing into its own society the methods it uses against the colonized Palestinian population. This image has seriously eroded in the last three decades, but for a strong minority it was still important to maintain it.

Suddenly, they are looking in the mirror and discovering they are monsters. Somehow, after three weeks of a murderous operation, comprised of war crimes and over 1000 dead, mostly civilians, they try to dissociate themselves from what they see in the mirror.

The importance of Saturday's demonstration must be found, however, in the very fact that it was a demonstration against fear: "We are not afraid" said the people in Tel Aviv, or, at least, "we are able

to overcome our fear”.

In a way Israel is involved in a double war: a war against the Palestinian people and a war for the future of the state. Saturday’s demonstration in Tel Aviv is a late, much too late, attempt to save a certain image of Israel, an Israel which doesn’t exist.

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P.S.

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