

The Hague, 28 February 2015

Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker, President
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels
Belgium

RE: LIVING APART TOGETHER

Dear Mr. President,

Mr. President, what would you want to do if you could do anything that you could do to work towards a paradigm shift in the Israeli – Palestinian struggle towards peaceful coexistence? How could Europe forestall the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to recruit young Palestinians, especially from Jordan but also from all over the Middle East and the Global Diaspora, to regain their land and dignity from Israel? If you believe a military solution might obliterate ISIS, you've got another think coming. The more we bomb, the more we kill, the more will join ISIS, and the more determined, the blow back. ISIS is a direct consequence of the 115,000 innocent civilians, indiscriminately slaughtered and dismissed as 'collateral damage', according to the official government figures during America's tenure in Iraq.

In late June 2014, on the streets of Ankawa, a Christian community in Northern Iraq, I hear people say that the 600,000+ people in Mosul capitulated to ISIS not because the Iraqi troops fled from ISIS but because the Iraqi troops fled from the people of Mosul, many of whom welcomed ISIS into their midst to desperately restore rule of law. Only 850 ISIS troops captured all of Mosul. The Iraqi army was viewed as corrupt, functioning primarily as extortionists working on the right side of the law. Ever since America bombed Iraq back into the Stone Age, the criminals, the fanatics, the maniacs and the extremists in Iraq have risen up to the top, leaving the average Joe and his family stupefied, stunned and bewildered. Iraq has become a paradise for the serial killers, rapists, kidnappers, extortionists and thieves in search for easy money, easy sex, and easy might over the vulnerable. In its quest to bring 'democracy' into Iraq, America obliterated the rule of law, enabling the scum, including corruptible politicians, to rule the day. Though a minority, these tyrants in organized crime terrorize and rule the majority. Now, finally and at last, their days are numbered, if we are to believe ISIS.

For millennia and even with Saddam Hussein, there was mostly peace and tolerance among the divergent religious persuasions. Freedom of religion in all of its many different forms and variations, expressed in unique religious sects of Judaism, Christianity and Moslem as well as the Church of John the Baptist and the Church of the Yazidis and many others, was protected by the rule of law, traditions, and mutual understanding of their cultural norms and values. Respecting, honoring, and dignifying 'all the people of the Book' with all their unique idiosyncrasies were the hallmark of Iraq, until its social fabric was torn apart

ISIS, hallowed by many as a blessing from heaven and dreaded by others as a curse from hell, now controls an area the size of France. It is erasing the borders established by French and

British colonial powers through the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement. Noted American columnist, Chris Hedges, suggests: "ISIS, ironically, is perhaps the only example of successful nation building in the contemporary Middle East". In his column of 15 December 2014, *ISIS the New Israel*, Chris Hedges further states: "ISIS has launched a jihad against secular and discredited regimes in the Middle East rather than against Western targets abroad. It is seeking to establish, as the Zionists did in Palestine, a utopian, religious state. It holds up the ancient Caliphate—which united Muslims throughout the Middle East in the seventh century and whose time is considered the golden age of Islam—as an ideal, much as Jews held up the biblical kingdoms chronicled in the Hebrew Bible.

ISIS quest (or is it a pretense) for an ethnically pure Sunni state mirrors the quest for a (pure) Jewish state eventually carved out of Palestine in 1948. Its tactics are much like those of the Jewish guerrillas who used violence, terrorism, foreign fighters, clandestine arms shipments and foreign money, along with horrific ethnic cleansing and the massacre of hundreds of Arab civilians, to create Israel".

Mr. President, can Europe avoid the inevitable: the spread of ISIS toward Israel and the Levant? Some of my young friends in Jordan express cautious optimism. Most are excited at the prospect of becoming part of something greater than themselves. All crave dignity and self-determination.

"We do not hate the Jews", they said, meant from the heart. "We are to respect the People of the Book, all Jews, all Christians and all Moslems ... but we disdain", said in impeccable English, "the Israeli regime".

"What are you striving for ... where is it leading to ... how could you accomplish your goals", I asked.

"We want one state, a democratic state with equality for all".

"Aren't you dreaming" I responded carefully. "Why not a two-state borderless solution where everyone could be living apart together, with freedom of movement", I asked.

"No way", they said, "the Israelis will never accept that... borderless ... that will never happen ... freedom of movement ... even Palestinian Christians are not allowed to visit their holy sites in Jerusalem. The Israelis will never allow us to freely move ... and it's our own country ... they kicked my family out and seized and confiscated our home, one that's been in the family for many generations."

"Give the concept a chance ... let's try to make it work", I responded.

"How", they wanted to know.

"We could solicit Europe, the EU for help", I said.

"Europe, they sold us out. Europeans and Americans do not recognize us ... we do not have the right of existence. We do not exist, as far as the Europeans and the Americans are concerned".

We spent another half hour or so discussing the heated debates thank goodness in an Olympic size swimming pool overlooking the Dead Sea.

Finally I prodded them to confide to me how they plan to accomplish their lofty but quixotic goal. They all responded in unison with one word while US Special Forces were guests at the same resort: "War".

"You're out of your mind", I spoke gently as a father. "You're at the prime of your lives ... you're all well educated ... you speak flawless English ... you can accomplish great things in your lives ... you're willing to die"?

"Yes", they agreed emphatically.

Thereafter they continued playing water polo as though we just talked about the weather. I tried to swim another lap but the conversation over exhausted me. But they left me with some hope. They emphasized the words 'justice' and 'democracy'. I cannot fathom that those boys would ever become part of a theocratic, totalitarian regime, or could they? Come to think, Israel is a democracy but often represents itself as a Jewish State, a theocracy with, in fact, a totalitarian predisposition toward Palestinians. Young Israelis would die to defend Israel's right to exist ... why not Palestinians, for Palestine?

Europe, Mr. President, can and must effectuate a positive change in the Middle East. We are bigger than the economies of the United States and China combined. NATO is the most formidable military alliance the world has ever seen. If we're going to make a difference in the Middle East, we must gain the respect of all the people in the Middle East. ISIS and Israel should be put on notice that both will be treated according to one standard.

It is time that we in Europe call the beast by its name. I am borrowing the words verbatim from Chris Hedges, which he delivered in August 2014:

"Let me call things by their proper names. Let me cut through the jargon, the euphemisms we use to mask human suffering and war crimes.

Closures mean heavily armed soldiers who ring Palestinian ghettos; deny those trapped inside, food or basic amenities, including toys, razors, chocolate, fishing rods and musical instruments; and, carry out a brutal policy of collective punishment, which is a crime under International Law.

Disputed land? Disputed land means land stolen from the Palestinians.

Clashes mean almost always the killing or wounding of unarmed Palestinians, including children.

Jewish neighborhoods on the West Bank mean fortress-like compounds that serve as military outposts in the campaign of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people.

Targeted assassinations mean extra judicial murder.

Airstrikes, ... mean the dropping of huge iron fragmentation bombs from fighter jets on densely crowded neighborhoods that always lead to scores of dead and wounded ...

The peace process means the cynical one-way route to the crushing of the Palestinians as a people.

... Let me end with one last name. Let me name those who send these tanks and fighter jets to bomb the concrete huddles in Gaza with families crouching helpless, terrorized inside.

Let me name those who deny children the right to a childhood and the sick the right to care.

Those who torture, those who carry out targeted assassinations and (those who) murder children playing on beaches in Gaza; those, who deny the (people who are) hungry, food; and, the oppressed, justice; those who foul the truth with official propaganda and state lies.

Let me call them not by their honorific titles and positions of power but by the name they have earned for themselves by draining the blood of the innocent into the sands of Gaza.

Let me name these powerful state actors for who they are: *TERRORISTS*".

Mr. President, what is so despicable about these words is that they ring so shamefully true. Most Israelis and most Palestinians, tired and stressed out, seek a future without war. Both do not support indiscriminate brutality against the other. They desperately want security and peace. Yet, the Netanyahu regime's relentless cruelty against civilians has scaled new heights in Operation Protective Edge, raining death and destruction on a captive population of 1.8 million inhabitants, trapped on this tiny, isolated, desperately poor and densely populated Palestinian enclave, sealed by the Egyptians on one side and by the Israelis on the other.

Israel's precise weaponry can pinpoint its targets to the exact square centimeter. Yet, Israel launched its missiles to destroy private homes, mosques, hospitals, health clinics, ambulances, the Islamic University of Gaza, and UN schools and shelters. "A moral outrage, a criminal act", says UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon, referring to the Israeli slaughter in Rafah, which blew apart a large number of civilians sheltering in UN schools. Israel has also targeted and destroyed the only power plant as well as water and sewage systems, driving Gaza to the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe, with an estimated damage of \$5 billion. Over 475,000 people, who are inescapably trapped within the walls erected by Israel, have been displaced; more than 11,500+ Palestinians, injured; 100,000+, homeless; 2,200+ Palestinians, killed; and, 1,500 children, orphaned. Most were civilians, innocent bystanders, who were callously, heartlessly, violently and cruelly executed by the lethal and robotic Israeli Defense Force (IDF). These men, women and children were sentenced to death – a collective death penalty. Their crime? They were in the way, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, trapped inside one of the densest populated tinderboxes on earth.

One wonders how Israel can still make their propaganda stick. Mainstream media pinpoints, magnifies and broadcasts Israeli bombing as self-defense, a 'response' to terror perpetrated by Hamas. They deny their television audiences and readers to become fully apprised of the real issues: dispossession, displacement, confiscation, servitude, bondage, not to mention state terror and murder. And when some media outlets happen to show the losses on the Palestinian side, they often parrot the Israeli army's double-speak proclaiming the onslaught only aims to target Hamas' fighters and the tunnels threatening Israel's security, when most casualties are civilians. In war, truth becomes its first casualty. Rule of law becomes academic. The criminals, like those in Iraq, rise up to the top.

Since 2001, the Palestinian militants have launched 4,890 mostly homemade rockets and hurled 15,047 mortar attacks, into Southern Israel. They have terrorized the Israelis with fear. But *few Israelis were killed and injured*. Within a span of *thirteen (13) years*, Israel suffered a grand total of *28 deaths and 1,971 injured*, albeit *28 deaths too many; 1,971 injured, too many*. Palestinian resistance's rockets follow indiscriminate trajectories, flight paths invariably going to 'nowhere' on the vast open Negev Desert, exploding on land or, when intercepted, in thin air. Look on the map. Gaza is located next to the sparsely populated Negev.

It is truly David, the Palestinians, versus Goliath, the Israelis. Israeli's military prowess – a highly disciplined 1) Israeli Defense Force (IDF) together with 2) Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence service, and 3) Shin Bet, Israel Security Agency (ISA) (working under cover or "Magen veLo Yera'e" (Hebrew: lit. "Defender that shall not be seen" or "The unseen shield"), and working alongside 4) Aman, Israeli's military intelligence and (5) a network of Palestinian spies. Israel's combined military forces – naval gunboats to the east, tanks positioned on the land borders, and IAF aircraft, equipped with F-15 fighter jets, AH-64 Apache helicopters, Delilah missiles, IAI Heron-1 drones and Jericho II missiles are no match to the Gaza-based militants armed primarily with home- or factory-made missiles (and some long-range rockets, such as Grad missiles) but, with inaccurate trajectories, such as the Qassam rockets, which usually explode in open fields unless they are first intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome. In Israel, the term 'overkill' has become an understatement.

Mr. President will Europe continue its complicity with this predator? If so, we're on the wrong side of history. The people of the region might not have any other choice but to choose the lesser of two evils: the Law of ISIS versus lawlessness. Right now ISIS is positioning itself as the knight in shining armor, waving the banner of holy goodness, purportedly ushering in a new dawning of humanity and justice, the rule of law. In the land of the blind, the one with one eye is king. Many in the West, particularly the 30 million members of the Evangelical Christian Right, explain the ISIS phenomenon as a *clash* of civilizations when, in fact, ISIS has come about because of a *crash* of civilizations.

Don't let ISIS use the allied bombings as a recruitment tool to expand their realm! Can't we enrapture our moral imagination to think of a better way to re-root ourselves in the region? Can we win the hearts and minds of those ISIS now indoctrinates? What if we dispatch a Peace Corp – teachers, engineers, medical practitioners, social workers, venture capitalists, architects, preferably young men and women of Arab descent – to be escorted and protected by NATO to help rebuild what we have destroyed? Perhaps in the future, Mosul might reject ISIS similar to how they detached themselves last spring from the tyrannical and corrupt Iraqi army. Let's start with Israel and Palestine. If peace is possible there, it is possible everywhere.

Sincerely,

Abraham A. van Kempen