

# CIVIL WAR IN GAZA

*By Claude Moniquet, President of ESISC*

For several weeks, if not months, the European media have given serious thought to the question of whether *'Gaza is headed towards civil war.'* This strange formula was, no doubt, inspired by a form of political correctness whereby one would like to present the Palestinians as eternal victims and never, in any case, as the actors (and the persons with primary responsibility) for their own failures. **This is a strange formula, because, in fact, they are not *'heading'* towards a civil war. They are in the middle of one.** And this has been going on for months.

How would you describe the situation of a country where day after day the official security forces confront an armed militia that has no legal existence? How do you judge the repeated and murderous confrontations between 'armed branches' of the various political factions present? What do you call a situation in which the supporters of the (elected) Prime Minister fire mortars at the offices of the (elected) President while the friends of the latter hurl grenades at the residence of the Prime Minister? What is the correct word? 'Disturbances'? 'Incidents'? 'Discord'? To tell the truth, a twelve year old schoolboy could answer this question: the term 'civil war' seems to be most appropriate.

Thus, the Palestinian Authority – and in any event the Gaza Strip – is in the middle of a civil war and it is getting worse day by day. But where did this civil war come from? Some say it is the *'Israeli pressure'* which is suffocating Gaza. Others say it is due to *'the attitude of the international community, which has isolated the legitimate government of Hamas.'* Let's be serious: **civil war is never imposed from outside (even if external factors can make it worse): it is always and principally the result of serious internal tensions.**

Alas, the origin of these tensions is very clear even if some pretend they don't know about it. Ever since the Oslo accords which led to its birth in 1993, **the Palestinian Authority has experienced three major setbacks which have only grown bigger with the passage of time.**

**The first of these failures was the refusal of Yasser Arafat to take the peace process begun in Oslo all the way.** What resulted was the failure of *Camp David II* in the summer of 2000. Bill Clinton later said that he regretted that *'Yasser Arafat missed the opportunity to give his nation an existence.'* Moreover, this is a view shared by some Palestinian leaders, not least among them Minister Nabil Amr. A former bodyguard of Arafat has revealed that the *Raïs* was afraid of being

assassinated by extremists in his own camp if he made too many concessions... The consequence of this failure was the continuation of the cycle of terrorism/reprisals and a succession of clashes and aggravation of the tensions between Israelis and Palestinians.

**The second failure of the Palestinian Authority was its inability, despite very large scale international financing, to develop a viable economic activity and working systems of public education and sanitation in the territories over which it was given responsibility. On the one hand, the population has sunk into every greater misery, while on the other hand, an 'elite' which confiscated power has enriched itself in a scandalous manner.**

**The third failure of the Palestinian Authority is that it was unable, despite promises that were repeated a hundred times, to implement the terms of the *roadmap* and in particular to disarm and dissolve the militias.**

We are witnessing today the terrible consequences of this triple failure: its legitimate hopes frustrated and its being kept in poverty while watching frightful corruption of so many of its leaders, the Palestinian population decided to chase out Fatah in January 2006 and bring Hamas to power with a large majority (76 seats versus 43). They expected a better management of affairs from Hamas. Not only did this not happen, but the international isolation has aggravated the crisis. And so, today, the militias, which were never disarmed, dictate the law in the streets of Gaza and in the West Bank. The false friends of the Palestinian cause who are proliferating in Europe pretend to believe that it would be sufficient to unite the Palestinians against Israel (for what kind of 'victory'?) to put an end to this civil war. They are wrong. Even though terrorism and the constant firing of rockets into the South of the country are intolerable, Israel's survival is not threatened and will not be threatened by this.

**The principal victims of this unnamed civil war are the unfortunate Palestinians who have suffered so much and deserve other leaders.**