

A DEAFENING SILENCE

By Ari Shavit | Jun.14, 2012

Tolerance in the face of Assad's bloody murderousness is liable to have the same effect on Arab-Jewish radicalism in Israel.

Remember Deir Yassin? The number of innocent people murdered in Syria over the past year is 100 times greater than the number of innocent people who were murdered in this Arab village at the edge of Jerusalem in 1948.

Remember the Qibya incident? The number of innocent people killed in Syria over the past year is 250 times the number of innocent people killed in this pastoral village in Jordan in 1953.

Remember Sabra and Shatila? The number of innocent people butchered during the past year in Syria is 20 times the number of innocent people who were butchered in those Palestinian refugee camps in western Beirut in 1982.

Remember the bloody rioting in October 2000? The number of innocent people who were shot to death in Syria during the past year is 1,000 times the number of innocent people who were shot to death by the Israel Police in the Galilee and the Triangle area in central Israel.

Remember Operation Cast Lead? The number of innocent people who were felled in Syria during this past year is dozens of times the number of innocent people who fell in the Gaza Strip during that widely condemned Israeli military operation in the winter of 2008-09.

The picture is clear: During one year, the secular Arab nationalism of Bashar Assad has spilled more innocent blood than the Zionists have in decades. This Arab tyrant, who in the past was the darling of Arab Knesset members, is massacring his fellow Arabs in a way that Israel never did. Arab cities are being bombed, Arab women are murdered, Arab children are slaughtered. An Arab society is being shredded, and an Arab state shattered into fragments.

Despite all this, the The High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel is not demanding that the United Nations intervene to stop the bloodshed. Adalah, the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel, is not petitioning the International Criminal Court in the Hague to put the war criminals on trial. Large Land Day type demonstrations have not been called. Protesters who take part in mass marches every October aren't marching. Arab students who mark the Palestinian Nakba of 1948 aren't coming out against the Syrian Nakba of 2012. Israel's Arab minority and its anti-Zionist left are watching as thousands of Arab are massacred - and are standing idly by.

It's crystal clear that the Syrian tragedy unfolding before our eyes has serious international ramifications. It is taking all meaning out concepts such as international community, international law and the idea of moral validity in international relations.

It's crystal clear that the Syrian tragedy has serious pan-Arab ramifications. It is taking all meaning out of concepts such as Arab unity, Arab solidarity and the idea that the contemporary Arab world accords any real meaning to human rights.

But the Syrian tragedy has serious ramifications for Israel's anti-Zionist community as well. The inability of this community to directly confront Arab evil undermines the moral basis for its battle against Israeli evil. Its unwillingness to demand that universal values be upheld in Hama and in Homs pulls the rug out from under its demands that universal values be upheld in Ramallah and Nazareth. Its silence when faced with the butcher of Damascus makes its condemnations of the State of Israel sound hollow.

The Syrian challenge is a moral challenge. There are some Israeli Arabs who are passing this test honorably. For example, Azmi Bishara, the former MK who fled Israel after being questioned on suspicion of aiding the enemy, who in the past was close to Assad, is today waging a brave and intensive campaign against him on Al Jazeera tv. Unfortunately, few of Bishara's colleagues in Israel are following suit.

Israeli Arab artists in Israel and Jewish radicals in Israel are silent about what's going on just over the border. This troublesome silence makes one wonder if their declared humanitarianism is authentic. When they spoke up - against Israel - about human dignity and freedom, perhaps they were simply fooling us?

Communism in the West was destroyed in the 1950s because it tolerated Stalin's bloody dictatorship. Tolerance in the face of Assad's bloody murderousness is liable to have the same effect on Arab-Jewish radicalism in Israel.