

Life by the sword has paid off

Iran has been publicly humiliated, the Palestinians are crushed, and on Monday they will be stomped on with pomp and circumstance as the American Embassy opens in Jerusalem. These are days of great victory for Netanyahu

Gideon Levy | May 13, 2018 | 4:23 AM | ■ 1

These are days of great victory for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for the right wing and for nationalistic Israel. These are days of victory for their path, the path of force, and of their faith, the faith in the chosen people who can do anything they please.

Iran has been publicly humiliated, the Palestinians are crushed, and on Monday they will be stomped on with pomp and circumstance as the American Embassy opens in Jerusalem. Gaza is besieged, and Israel is rejoicing. On Sunday, Jerusalem Day, innocent people might be killed in Gaza and Jerusalem.

On May 14, the day of the embassy move, innocents will certainly be killed in Gaza and the West Bank; the day after, Nakba Day, many more will be killed.

The Israeli victory, a brief biography: piles of bodies of Palestinians, whom the world has stopped caring about, a siege on Gaza which also doesn't interest anyone, Iranian bases bombed without response, Iran under sanctions and an American Embassy in Jerusalem, a gift to the occupier and a slap in the face of the occupied. There is good reason for the joyous cries of victory in Israel.

First the settlers won and decided the fate of the state and the regime; then U.S. President Donald Trump won and gave Israel license to do whatever it feels like, and now Netanyahu has been declared the great victor. These are days of a win of his doctrine and a victory for his Israel. We should admit it. The prophecies of doom, that this would all blow up in our faces one day, the admonishments that the occupation won't stand forever and the warnings that Israel cannot live only by its sword, and that Iran is very dangerous, have been shown to be false for now. Nothing blew up, life by the sword has paid off, the end of the occupation has grown distant and so has the end of right-wing government.

This depressing forecast is the more optimistic one. The alternative is war with Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas and who knows whom else. That's the way it is when there's no real alternative, no ideas and no leadership. Shooting at demonstrators in Gaza and the continued siege? Everybody's on board. Canceling the agreement with Iran and bombing in Syria, everybody's cheering. And almost everybody is celebrating the move of the embassy to Jerusalem, including the female lawmaker from the "left" who is begging for an invitation. Tomorrow America will tell the Palestinians that it doesn't care about their fate anymore, that in America's eyes, they have no rights, that the two-state solution is dead. To Iran America said: Netanyahu was right. The agreement is bad and should be abolished. Two free gifts for Israel.

These achievements are corrupting. They prove to Israel that force is worthwhile, that there is no need to consider the other side, that international law doesn't apply here. Today Israel is celebrating the day East Jerusalem was conquered, and tomorrow it will celebrate its perpetuation. Two repulsive flag marches will take place one after the other, the first Israeli and the second American, and they are both cocky and aggressive. Moving the embassy while crushing what is left of the Palestinians' dignity is a clear American signal to Israel: Keep up the killing, the crushing and the ignoring of their rights. America not only permits, arms and funds it – it even encourages it.

Yes, moving the embassy is a reason for a party only for the right. All the rest, a negligible minority, should mourn this unilateral step. The same is true for the Syrian bombings, which a tweet on the right called a "concert" with enthusiasm reserved only for bombings in Israel. A direct line connects the embassy move, the exit from the Iran deal and the bombings in Syria: Israel First. Only Israel.

And what's the alternative? It wasn't even discussed. Instead of opening an American Embassy in Jerusalem, part of which is occupied, to establish two embassies in the city. Instead of massacring protesters in Gaza, to respond to Hamas' signals and reach an agreement to lift the blockade; instead of quitting the Iran deal, to preserve it with Israel's encouragement; and instead of bombing Iranian bases, to try to dialogue with Iran, directly or indirectly. That is not as exciting as rousing as bombing, not as thrilling as showing off a haul of binders from Iran. But these could have been Israel's true victories.

