



Walid Slaybi

**YES TO RESISTANCE.
NO TO VIOLENCE.**

YES TO RESISTANCE. NO TO VIOLENCE.
نعم للمقاومة. لا للعنف.

Walid Slaybi
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Introduction

This book consists in a series of questions about the philosophy and the strategy of violent or nonviolent resistance that are put in the simplified form of a dialogue; questions that have been repeated dozens of times over the years between the author and his interlocutors.

Among these questions, we chose to publish excerpts from a dialogue between the author and a young woman activist. Violence has always been as fascinating in her eyes as “nonviolence” provocative, although she admits, like most others, that she has never figured out how a struggle could be conducted without violence.

This dialogue was inspired by the Palestinian “*Intifada*” (Stone Uprising), in its early years, a very convincing example of a leading civil, popular, nonviolent resistance in the contemporary history of our Arab world in particular.

The above was the brief introduction to the book at the time of its first edition in 2005.

Today in 2015, I would like to convey to you what my students, from Palestine in particular, wrote to me in their analysis of this book as part of their postgraduate study to obtain a Master’s degree at the Academic University for Non-Violence and Human Rights (AUNOHR). They wrote, while the events of Palestine were repeated before them and, sometimes, “over their heads”; they wrote to me confirming that my words were “life forces.”

Here are a few examples:

“The Palestinians in their first and second *Intifadas* are like a man who patiently spent seven years building his house, stone after stone, and when he finished building, spent seven years demolishing the house, stone after stone! Allow me, Dr. Slaybi, to ‘change’ the title of your book from *Yes, to Resistance, No to Violence* to “*No to Violence, Yes, to Resistance*”, since education precedes action...” (a student from Ramallah).

A student from Gaza wrote under the recent devastation of Gaza: “Violence cannot serve a noble cause like the Palestinian’s... I agree with what Dr. Slaybi says that embracing nonviolence *and* ethics in the face of the Israeli entity, which does not possess a shred of moral qualities, is certainly in our favor...”

A student dreaming of Palestine from here, from the Palestinian camps in Lebanon, wrote: “The book put me in front of new data that I was certainly aware of, but my lucidity was clouded by media misinformation that clad violence in the attire of force, weakened people’s resistance and made its tools helpless.”

A student from Nablus who was one of the leaders of that *Intifada* wrote to me: “It is as if you were with us when we were experiencing the “Stone Uprising”. Although we were its “makers,” you made us know it as we never knew it, with so rich data, statistics and systematic, comprehensive documentation... More importantly, you gave us a slogan to brandish in the face of misleaders to the concept of resistance, so that we came to say, ‘Yes, to Resistance,’ and then add, ‘No to Violence,’ in one sentence. This made most of those who heard it pay attention, often with admiration, to resistance without violence...”

Walid Slaybi

Beirut, June 2015

- ***“Yes, to Resistance, No to Violence.” Why this message?***

Well, you know that I wanted it to be a special message to the Palestinians, out of my conviction that nonviolent resistance is the most powerful, the most appropriate to the justice of the Palestinian cause, the most ethical and the most effective.

We have repeatedly echoed such a discourse, and the reactions have been varied, but they have all borne a common trait: emotionalism.

Of course, this emotionalism is inherent to every tragic cause.

Emotionalism! Certainly. “Is it permissible to speak of nonviolence under oppression, persecution and injustice?” they invariably ask you.

Reactions to this proposition varied between mild forms, such as mockery, and ferocious ones, like accusations of betrayal!

On the other hand, we were pleased with the response of many to nonviolent options. In recognition of the need to devote more effort to the exploration of these options, some people continued to recommend the use of “mixed struggle,” i.e., both violence and nonviolence, together.

- ***But why this message now?***

This message is more than thirty years old. It dates back to the period when I was probably the first to offer similar words to activists and fighters everywhere. It appeared in the introduction to my first book *All the Story is about the Portion: Conflicts in the Feudal Era of Lebanon: 1590-1820* (published in 1984). I had, of course, announced my option for non-violence in thought, education and struggle since 1982. These were the beginnings that have been successively embodied through the Non-violence and People’s Rights Project¹, in the framework of which we have since held extensive dialogues and trainings on non-violence with a wide and diverse audience from Lebanon and other Arab countries. Beginnings that were characterized by movements and civil actions using nonviolent means and strategies that were unique at the time. Our audience included intellectuals, political, social and trade union activists, civil campaign coordinators, students, teachers and educators, clergymen and religious officials, etc.

I believe that we have reached a positive stage today, as the nonviolent option is being seriously considered, and sometimes embodied, in actual actions here and there in a number of Arab countries.

¹ Nonviolence and People’s Rights Project, founded by Walid Slaybi and Ugarit Younan, 1983.

- ***But “Sharon”² understands only the language of violence. Are not the Israelis who have resorted to the policy of violence?***

That is correct. This has always been the quickest and most concise response. Of course, it is Sharon’s favorite language! So, will we do him such a great service by addressing him in his favorite language?! Confronting him on his favorite “ground,” the one he has chosen and is well-equipped to fight on, the one on which he is by far superior militarily, politically and media wise?

The policy of violence certainly serves the goals of Israeli governments. But do we have to embrace it? However, it is not the opponent’s policy that should determine ours, by way of *mimicry*. We are not political parrots, for heaven’s sake! Shall we build our policy merely on reaction?

The oppressor has an unjust case for which he has chosen an unjust means. His immoral end requires an immoral means.

The Palestinian cause is a just and moral one and requires, therefore, a *just and moral* means.

The adversary uses violence, and it is precisely his intention to make the Palestinian retaliate. In this way he achieves way more than what he can accomplish through purely political means:

The debate and light are thus distracted from the real issue, namely, the justice of the Palestinian cause, and attention is drawn to the violence. The adversary is fully aware of his superiority in the arena of violence, so he drags the Palestinian to it and, under the “comedy of violence,” carries on with his settlement policy, showing the world the rightness of his case when he claims that the Palestinian is a “terrorist,” that he is merely defending himself, thus uniting and mobilizing his community behind extremists.

When we know that a policy of violence serves the adversary’s goals, how can we conduct such a policy or adopt such an approach?

The violence of the oppressor serves the cause of the oppressor. The violence of the oppressed *also* serves the cause of the oppressor.

I am fully convinced with Gandhi that “*Violence is a trap set by the oppressor, into which the oppressed fall.*”

- ***Don’t you believe that violence is sometimes effective?***

Violence is always effective... but in the service of injustice, in the service of destruction.

It is the weapon of tyrants *par excellence*, their most powerful weapon.

Oh yes, violence is effective!

If a colonialist wants to dominate (an)other country(-ies), to seize the wealth of the world, to impose his hegemony on the policies of governments, then violence may be effective. But not forever.

² The name has been used since the 1st edition of the book (2005), symbolically referring to any Israeli ruler or military commander.

If a state wants to occupy the territory of another state and usurp its people's decision, then yes, violence can be effective. But only for a certain period.

If a dictator wants to rule a people through tyranny, then yes, repression can be effective. But does tyranny prevail?

If we want to eliminate the other because he has a different opinion than ours, a different color or a different denomination, etc., then yes, elimination may be effective. But for what? And for how long?

Violence is violence, whether in education or in politics.

If we want to crush a child's character and make him into either a subservient, coward or a violent, bossy adult, in both cases there is a loss of self-confidence that is characterized by "disability." Then yes, in this case the slap is effective. This small slap on the child's cheek is always a huge slap to democracy everywhere.

- ***Let us stay within the framework of politics. What about the violence that served noble causes? Socialist revolutions, liberation movements, etc., all bear witness to this.***

Unfortunately, the very experiences you've just mentioned show that violence pollutes every noble cause it serves! Of course, it does not "serve" it. Say, rather, "distorts" it and turns it away from its higher end.

Violence has turned

- Christianity into the Inquisition and Crusades,
- Islam into the Conquests and *takfir* of people with different opinions,
- Socialism into Stalinism,
- Etc.

It has further reshaped movements of national liberation from foreign occupation to internal "occupation" régimes...

Violence has turned fighting crime and protecting society into the death penalty, thereby making the history of "justice" more atrocious than the history of crime!

Violence used God as a slogan, equipped Him with a machine gun, sealed weapons and battlefields with sacrosanct religious symbols...

That is why I invite you to distinguish between **effectiveness** and **military victory**.

Effectiveness implies achieving the high ends we seek, whereas military victory implies only the elimination of the opponent.

These are two completely different issues.

Let us always keep the *end* in mind.

It occurred to me for some time now that it might be useful to devise a speaking machine that constantly reminds the militant of the end he seeks whenever he is about to slip into the path of violence; a device like a "cuckoo clock" that has an automated cuckoo bird moving with each note. Thus,

whenever it strikes the hour, instead of the sound of a common cuckoo's the alarm clock repeats:

- LOVE... LOVE! (for the Christian),
- MERCY... MERCY! (for the Muslim),
- JUSTICE... JUSTICE! (for the Socialist),
- FREEDOM... FREEDOM! (for the freedom fighter),
- Etc.

The question is constantly asked: is the goal merely to kill an opponent soldier, a soldier who fights in the battlefield because he was ordered to or was brainwashed by Zionist propaganda?

Is the goal to kill a civilian from the "opposite camp"?

Is the goal merely to destroy a Merkava, an armored vehicle or an "enemy" radar? Is it to launch a missile?

Let us keep in mind the goal in Palestine: a just and comprehensive peace, a sovereign and independent Palestinian society.

- ***But the killing of a soldier or civilian or the destruction of a troop carrier are acts that are not intended to kill simply for killing or destroy just for the sake of destruction. These are not ends in themselves, but means of inflicting PAIN on the opponent so he may recognize our rights. Military victory is an essential first step.***

How strange is this painful, long, costly, twisted means! Is it not in the capacity of the human mind to invent more humane, direct and effective means?

The most dangerous thing that can happen in political action is for a just end to justify means that are unlike it, to justify them even if they are unethical.

Just because our cause is just, we allow ourselves to justify all means whatsoever!

How strange that you accept that logic! I do not wish that for you.

Most ideologies have gone from justifying the end to justifying the means.

The violence of the oppressed caused by anger and despair, that comes as a spontaneous, individual reaction to oppression and humiliation, is a human phenomenon whose reasons can be well understood, but without any justification whatsoever. But to "ideologize" violence and make it into a theory and a strategy of action, nay, to glorify it, this is a very serious matter!

Throughout history, violence has been accompanied by a combination of virtues, such as intrepidity, honor, nobility, courage, freedom, heroism, etc. The ideology of violence has added positive aesthetic values to every war it wanted to fight. What if we exposed together this "aesthetic lexicon," so as not to fall into its tempting trap? Let's then review such "suspicious" words that are commonly used, for example, to beautify wars.

Here I can only advise you to be very careful when you hear any of these:

<i>divine wars</i>	<i>wars for democracy</i>	<i>wars of independence</i>
<i>holy wars</i>	<i>wars for security</i>	<i>wars for sovereignty</i>
<i>just wars</i>	<i>preventive wars</i>	<i>preemptive wars</i>
<i>national wars</i>	<i>defensive wars</i>	<i>class wars</i>
<i>crusades</i>	<i>monotheistic wars</i>	<i>social wars</i>
<i>jihād</i>	<i>human rights wars</i>	<i>revolutionary wars</i>
<i>missionary wars</i>	<i>wars for international law</i>	<i>liberation wars</i>

The list is a long one...

As Paul Valery said, “*War: a massacre of people who don’t know each other for the profit of people who know each other but don’t massacre each other.*”

Whilst man is supposed to be the end sought by every ideology, cause or religion, man has become a means, and the ideology, the cause, the religion, the nation, the fatherland, the party, etc., are the ends in whose name and for whose sake man kills and is killed.

Ideology, as Khalil Gibran put it, is like a glass through which man sees life but which nevertheless separates him from Life.

Therefore, my dear, I do not see violence achieving a just and desirable goal. And for a simple reason at that. Not because it cannot beat the unjust, but because it defeats the activist for a rightful cause.

Violence turns a fighter who believes in human values into a cold, cynical person who gradually abandons, one by one, and the values he used to seek in order to justify his violent career. Each step forward in the path of violence means several steps backward in terms of the noble end. That person is in big trouble, you see. The more loaded with acts of violence his conscience becomes, the less he can turn back for redemption and the more he wallows in that path of violence he chose, which keeps him away from the end he used to seek. It seems as if he can only take one single path: to distort the promising noble end into other goals, such as power, money, position, repression, tyranny, despotic rule, military victory, etc.

The fighter is thereby defeated.

We can even say that the moment of the military victory over the opponent is precisely the moment of defeat.

The case is won but the cause is lost.

The king is dead, long live the king!

Whoever attains power by violence rules by violence.

And the outcome is: the opponent is defeated militarily but the fighter is defeated on the human level, and violence wins.

The fighter is defeated because he followed Machiavelli’s “the end justifies the means.”

I will read to you what Gandhi wrote and said eloquently and deeply about the end and the means: “*The means may be likened to a seed, the end to a*

tree, and there is just the same inviolable connection between the means and the end as there is between the seed and the tree.”³

I will quote too, if I may, the words of my friend Jean-Marie Muller, the French philosopher-activist, whom, as you may know, we invited more than a dozen times to Lebanon and opened the way for him into several Arab countries to enrich our nonviolent struggle. The man is of course a fervent supporter of our just causes. He says:

“In the present moment, we are not masters of the end we seek, we are only masters of the means we use; or, more accurately, we are masters of the end only through the means. The end is still abstract, while the means are immediately concrete. The end is about the future, while the means are about the present. But we are always tempted to sacrifice the present to the future by preferring the abstraction of the end to the reality of means. By agreeing to resort to means which effectively contradict the end we claim to pursue, we postpone its realization to a hypothetical future that does not belong to us. When justice is always postponed until tomorrow, the risk is great that violence would be always imposed on men as inevitable.”⁴

In the philosophic words of Blaise Pascal, *“So imprudent are we that we wander in the times which are not ours and do not think of the only one which belongs to us.”⁵*

Based on such premises, all ends look beautiful, as if similar. The difference lies in the means. At the end of the day, the choice between one policy and another is based on the determination of means. Means are the only criteria to evaluate the ideas we seek to realize.

Thus, the correlation between the end and the means is a major issue, not a secondary one. It is the correlation between effective political action and ethical requirements. This correlation between end and means is necessary, not only for the ethics of action, but also for its effectiveness.

The effectiveness of a means is measured by the extent to which it achieves its noble end, not by eliminating the adversary! It is measured by the extent of its elimination of injustice, not by eliminating the unjust!

I wish freedom fighters would always remember that effectiveness is only a means in the service of man, that it can only be determined according to the requirements of humanity which are essentially ethical requirements. Is an effectiveness that doesn't correspond to these requirements really “effective”?

What distinguishes nonviolent action is that it is both ethical and effective.

NON-VIOLENCE involves two “NO”:

- **No to the violence of self; and**
- **No to the violence of others, which practically means: *No to injustice.***

The first “no” is a moral no, in the sense that it prevents the self from doing something that it would not accept to be done unto it. The second “no” is

³ M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmadabad, 1952; p. 71.

⁴ Jean-Marie Muller, *Stratégie de l'action non-violente*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1981 ; 270 pp.

⁵ Pascal, *Pensées*, Section II, 172.

a no of effectiveness, as it seeks to be effective in the face of the oppressor, i.e., in the elimination of injustice.

A moral “no” and a “no” of effectiveness. This is nonviolent action in a nutshell. This is precisely what distinguishes it from violent action.

This is what makes the effectiveness of nonviolent action way greater than that of violent action.

While both non-violence and violence may be used against the tyranny of others, non-violence alone can counteract the tyranny of self.

- ***You talk about morality, while our rights are violated and political action around us abandons all morality...***

That’s relatively correct. One part of political action, especially that which has the ability to show off in the media, has been separated from ethical requirements. There is even an integrated theory positing that political action, in order to succeed, must necessarily separate itself from the requirements of ethics and act autonomously. The world of politics is completely different from the world of ethics.

Even “immoral” political action is associated with a set of “positive” qualities, such as cleverness, tactics and diplomacy.

Thus, hypocrisy reigns supreme and political action becomes the art of highlighting everything that shows we are in the right and hiding all that reveals the truth.

Schopenhauer described this reality with elaborate vocabulary. Quoting Aristotle in a footnote, he says that “[Sophistic Conclusions] *have no objective truth in view, but only the appearance of it, and pay no regard to truth itself; that is to say, they aim at victory.*” He then writes, “*If the reader asks how this is, I reply that it is simply the natural baseness of human nature. If human nature were not base, but thoroughly honorable, we should in every debate have no other aim than the discovery of truth; we should not in the least care whether the truth proved to be in favor of the opinion which we had begun by expressing, or of the opinion of our adversary. [...] Our innate vanity, which is particularly sensitive in reference to our intellectual powers, will not suffer us to allow that our first position was wrong and our adversary’s right.*”⁶

What you said is true: politics has largely drifted away from ethics. But is not this separation behind a large part of the tragedies of our contemporary society? Is not this separation behind the despair or disgust experienced by most of the citizens of the world, to the extent that political action is being regarded as “infected action” that leads nowhere?

If we embrace the definition of political action as action in the service of man and humanity, action we see today cannot be regarded as “political,” but as

⁶ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Art of Always Being Right: Thirty-Eight Ways to Win When You Are Defeated*, Gibson Square Books, 2004.

merely action that serves the power and vested interests of its actor rather than humanity. It is a power-driven action that calls itself “political.”

Nonviolent action seeks to restore political action to its essence and, thus, to enhance hope for its effectiveness.

- ***Let’s get back to the Palestinian land...***

We will return someday, so told me the Nightingale...⁷

- ***Do you believe we can ask Sharon to be moral or the Palestinian people to act morally towards Sharon? In other words, using the lexicon of nonviolence, do you think there is a shred of living conscience in Sharon to try to influence it?***

One thing I know for sure: if the Palestinian struggle does not comply with requirements of the ethics of nonviolence, “Sharon” will take advantage of the opportunity to continue practicing the worst forms of immorality.

As for your question about *conscience*, it is a *classic* one, especially when it comes to people who do not hesitate to exercise sheer brutality, such as Hitler, Stalin or Bush, to name a few.

To this, I have two answers: one principled, the other factual.

The *principled* answer is that no one in our opinion has completely lost his “shreds” of humanity. The question lies in the means to reach these “shreds.” Violence, of course, is not the best way to achieve this! Even in the case of serial killers, most research papers on these people showed that they suffered from all sorts of deficiencies due to traumatic episodes on the psychological, educational and family levels. It was found that these deficiencies can be properly addressed in the event that we provide to these crime perpetrators sincere attention, by being sensitive to their psychological requirements, and a well-considered environment appropriate to their needs.

I know that this principled answer is not convincing in general and did not convince you either in particular, as it borders idealism.

Answering *factually*, I remind you, if I may, that in individual conflicts *individual* conscience plays a very important role in reaching a solution. In collective conflicts, however, individual conscience is replaced by what may be called *public* conscience. A collective conflict does not only involve the conscience of the head of power but many consciences, consciences of individuals and diverse groups.

In the case of Palestine, the conflict not only questions “Sharon’s” conscience, but also the consciences of his cabinet members, as well as the consciences of Israeli parties and associations, as well as the consciences of

⁷ A phrase from the lyrics of a famous song by the Rahbani Brothers, sung by Mme Fairouz.

Israeli soldiers, as well as the consciences of Israeli settlers, as well the consciences of global civil and political forces, and so on.

Is it possible to assert that all these consciences have lost their humane “shreds”?!

- ***But did the “Intifada” actually affect public opinion in Israel?***

For the first time in the history of the Israeli entity, 80,000 people from the Peace Now (Shalom Achshav) movement are demonstrating and the slogan is *Down with occupation*.

620 Israeli university professors issued a statement: “Our occupation puts at risk the very existence of Israel.”

Did you notice that the Israeli is the one who refers to his state and its actions towards the Palestinians as “occupation”!

For the first time in Israel, a newspaper, *Derech Hanitzotz*, was closed and its Jewish editors imprisoned, officially charged by the government with treason for printing an evocative photograph of a soldier confronting an angry crowd of Arabs.

The chairman of the Israeli Television and Broadcasting Board also censored a footage showing an Israeli soldier bashing the head of a Palestinian youngster against a wall and breaking his hand.

A number of Israeli writers issued a statement after their visit to the Gaza Strip saying: “We cannot oppress a people forever.”⁸

Regarding the repercussions of the *Intifada* on the Israeli military in particular, it might be useful to recall some crucial facts:

- 1,600 Israeli officers signed a petition declaring: “Persisting in the settlement policy, the Greater Israel ideology and the continuance of the *status quo* is a threat to our nation.”
- 160 officers refused to serve in Tzahal.
- Some Knesset members and senior officers incited Israeli soldiers to refuse obedience. “I beseech you not to stigmatize your honor by obeying orders to break the bones of civilians living under occupation, but to protect their dignity as men,” wrote a senior officer to his soldiers. “My call to disobedience may be against the law, but it is the duty of every Jew who still has a conscience to refuse to obey orders.” Many a “rebel” conscientious objector served jail sentences. (It should be noted that some of these same “rebels” had led previous invasions.)
- Readiness to volunteer in military service decreased by 47%.
- The policy of suppressing the nonviolent uprising had negative repercussions on the morale of Israeli soldiers. 157 Israeli psychologists considered that there was a serious risk of corrupting the psyche of soldiers and society at large. The IDF Psychology Service also observed serious signs on soldiers. Israeli soldiers expressed their concerns in statements such as, “I cannot

⁸ Cf. *Le Monde diplomatique*, 406, 408, 410.

sleep, how they can ask us to do such things?!"; "They are killing the spirit of our youth"; and so on.

- A number of military historians also considered that there is a danger of disintegration of Tzahal, which was no longer an army, but a group of factions.

Thanks to its predominantly nonviolent character, the Stone Uprising has made its way into Israeli leadership and public opinion, gaining actual grassroots support in an important part of the Israeli society. It has been able to establish a link, a dialogue between the moderate in both Palestinian and Israeli sides. It is not only crucial that the society and public opinion of the adversary be disrupted or that its soldiers disobey the orders of their superiors. Rather, it is essential that such responses that emanate from a conscientious standpoint pave the way towards Life, not death or hatred for life.

Contrariwise, "Al-Aqsa Intifada", because of its violent nature, has strengthened the Israeli society's unity and public opinion vis-à-vis the Palestinians. "Al-Aqsa Intifada" reinforced the success of extremist plans on both sides and facilitated the takeover of extremists.

Are you aware of what can happen if extremists take over?

- ***In the end, what determines the outcome of a battle is not the balance of civilian power but the balance of military power.***

Before we examine this proposition on the ground, in the actual confrontation between the "Stone Uprising" and the Israeli army, let us first examine it from the theoretical, principled point of view.

A military victory does not achieve its objectives unless it is accompanied by a *political* victory. The military battle and the military victory are not ends in themselves. The goal is to achieve a political victory over the enemy; to achieve the political, economic and social compliance of the defeated people. If the latter decides not to comply with the will of the victorious régime the expected effect of the military victory will be aborted.

The logic of military decisiveness is valid only under conventional wars, i.e., border wars, where a state decides its political victory when its army breaches the border of the enemy state and invades its territory. But there remains the reluctance of the invaded society, its refusal to obey the will of the invading army. The proof of this is that many resistance movements were initiated by peoples who stood up to occupation despite the occupier's military victories.

What I want to say here is that the factor of military superiority is not a decisive one in political conflicts. This was eloquently demonstrated by the first Palestinian *Intifada*. What was achieved by the "Stone Uprising" is truly very great.

The *Intifada* used a "weapon system" (I have reservations about the word "weapon" though) radically different from the Israeli weapon system, which paralyzed Israel's military superiority. This is at the core of the strategy of nonviolent confrontation: abstention to confront the oppressor adversary on

the ground of violence, his favorite ground where he largely outperforms the oppressed.

We all know that a few countries have been producing and stockpiling weapons for decades in order to control the world's wealth and establish collaborationist political régimes.

It is also well known that these countries distribute weapons to political régimes in the world according to carefully calculated quotas that are only sufficient to ignite wars between these régimes and within each of them, but not sufficient to pose any threat, even in the least, to the countries producing weapons. Periodic wars are the essential markets for arms factories.

Therefore, the battle of the oppressed cannot be based on the "ground of violence" which is controlled by an oppressive minority. It can only be based on the ground of rights, solidarity, the masses, culture and economy. What has been accomplished by the "Stone Uprising" in the face of the adversary military action is truly remarkable in this respect.

- ***What, for example, about the accomplishments of the "Intifada"?***

I will only remind you of two facts.

First, the Israelis were at a loss. *They could not determine the nature and essence of the Intifada*, which made them confused in setting the goal of war against it:

Is the *Intifada* a war? Is it an insurgency? Is it a long-term conflict? Is it a people's war? Or is it a civil revolution?

Within the Israeli government, for example, there was a view that the *Intifada* was "a war, albeit with different rules." Most ministers rejected it as a "long-term conflict." Most of them wished to see the uprising as if it could be crushed at once by a military operation of the Entebbe type⁹.

There were also those who saw it as a war that is worse and more difficult than all previous wars, because it is a long and continuous war at close range of IDF, a war that will not end without a radical change in the *status quo*: a political solution, a transfer, a genocide, etc.

One of the experts in the occupied territories affairs saw it as a people's war, while another saw that the Palestinians do not apply the principles of a people's war, like in Algeria and Vietnam. Rather, it was a civil revolution that is successfully run and that the real victory is the Palestinians' success in mobilizing the entire population on their side¹⁰ or, to put it otherwise, in establishing a "mobilized society"¹¹.

Since the outbreak of the *Intifada*, it has been clear that it confused the Tzahal leadership, which rendered the latter unable to make a correct estimate of the size, prospects and goals of the *Intifada*. However, the military

⁹ Ze'ev Schiff, "What Happened to Tzahal in the Intifada?" *Ha'aretz*, quoted in "IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*," *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, winter 1990, pp. 204-219.

¹⁰ *Davar*, quoted in "IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*," JPS, *Ibid*.

¹¹ Ze'ev Schiff, *Ibid*.

leadership, like the political leadership, insisted that the actions of the *Intifada* should be considered mere “breach of regulations acts” that could be quickly controlled. The Israeli leadership viewed the *Intifada* lightly, believing that the population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip were unable to initiate any organized action against the occupation.

Since the second week of the *Intifada*, in December 1987, Israeli leaders have acted as usual, out of the arrogance of power, repeating that the Palestinian population in the territories were tired of the *Intifada*, were frustrated and differed among themselves, that it was only a matter of a very short time until the *Intifada* would subside, especially that the Palestinians “do not see the light at the end of the tunnel,” according to the head of Israeli intelligence. All these bets, however, proved wrong and the *Intifada* continued.

Even when a few months passed after the outbreak of the *Intifada*, the Israeli military leadership remained under the shock of surprise. In a short while, their bet on suppressing it was “gone with the wind.”

The Israeli military commanders confessed that the first phase of the *Intifada* had been a surprise, that even in the subsequent phases they felt a gradual loss of control over the events because more elements and sectors joined in the uprising¹², that Tzahal needed months to learn how to operate systematically¹³.

The confusion was reflected in the statements of senior officials, which were characterized by contradiction and lack of credibility regarding the possibility of crushing the *Intifada*. Less than two months after the start of the *Intifada*, Chief of Staff Dan Shomron, at the Center for Strategic Studies of the Hebrew University, expressed his confidence in pacifying the “unrest” in the territories¹⁴. Then he declared that “there is no possibility of reaching a solution with military force unless the State of Israel amends the special law that restricts the use of weapons, which I don’t recommend.”¹⁵ More than a year after the *Intifada* had started, he retracted and declared that “there is a military solution to the intifada.”¹⁶ After that, he delivered a lecture at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies in which he declared that only a political solution would put an end to the *Intifada*¹⁷. Later on, he justified the non-elimination of the *Intifada* on the grounds that anyone who demanded the immediate liquidation of the *Intifada* must remember that there are three ways to achieve that: transfer, starvation or physical liquidation, i.e., genocide¹⁸. Later, Shomron admitted to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that “the use of excessive force, repression and collective punishment will not contribute to the suppression of the *Intifada*” and that “IDF lack sufficient forces to close all gaps in all areas.”¹⁹

¹² Amram Mitzna, *‘Al HaMishmar*, 24/07/1989, quoted in “IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*,” *JPS*, *Ibid*.

¹³ Ze’ev Schiff, *Ibid*.

¹⁴ *Ha’aretz*, 14/01/1989, quoted in “IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*,” *JPS*, *Ibid*.

¹⁵ Interview in *Davar HaShvua*, 18/03/1989, quoted in “IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*,” *JPS*, *Ibid*.

¹⁶ *Ha’aretz*, 01/06/1989, quoted in “IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*,” *JPS*, *Ibid*.

¹⁷ *Ha’aretz*, 13/06/1989, quoted in “IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*,” *JPS*, *Ibid*.

¹⁸ In a lecture, *‘Al HaMishmar*, 16/06/1989, quoted in “IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*,” *JPS*, *Ibid*.

¹⁹ *‘Al HaMishmar*, 06/09/1989, quoted in “IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*,” *JPS*, *Ibid*.

The statements of Yitzhak Rabin, the minister responsible for suppressing the uprising, were marked by the same contradictions: “I’m not prepared to set a goal that is unattainable, except in movies.”²⁰ “We have to carry on with military activities to send a clear message to the locals and foreign countries, namely, that they will not make us budge with stones.”²¹ “New means of suppressing the *Intifada* will not help, the only solution is political.”²²

Secondly, *the Intifada has chosen a ground for confrontation other than the ground of violence* and a “weapon system” different from that of the military régime, paralyzing the Israeli military superiority.

The *Intifada* shifted the conflict from the arena in which Israel wanted to restrict it, namely, *a fanatical Arab world that wants to destroy Israel*, to its true arena, the arena of *legitimate right to self-defense against occupation*.

The “enemy” was no longer, as Israel envisioned, “colossal armies armed with massive weaponry with the aim of destroying Israel, but deterred and overcome by the superior Israeli war machine.” The “enemy” this time was the people, the first stakeholders. Israel was no longer the initiator to define the “enemy” to strike and achieve its political and strategic goals; nay, the “enemy” this time was the initiator. It was not Israel this time that brought the battle to the “Arab” enemy’s territory, but it was the *Intifada* that brought the battle into Israel. “It infiltrated the Green Line,” as the Israelis say.

In addition, thanks to the general nonviolent nature of the *Intifada*, IDF have not been able to benefit from military and technological superiority. “There is frustration within Tzahal, because it is unable to actualize its power in this new form of war, namely, the civil revolution,” said Israeli military commentator Ze’ev Schiff.

“The military arts learned by IDF commanders and soldiers have been reduced from learning the use of the latest electronic devices, aircraft, missiles and tanks to the use of batons, having to specialize in chasing and dispersing demonstrators and breaking ribs.”

The practical translation of this transformation is the waste of time and effort necessary to pursue developing the Israeli military machine by the basic standards that were set for it before the *Intifada*.

A few days after the outbreak of the *Intifada*, it became clear that the air superiority, heavy firepower and experience of the Israeli military in using huge military formations would prove helpless in its war against Palestinian children²³.

The role of the Israeli military changed from being the “invincible army” to a chaser of children in narrow alleys. The whole army, fully equipped, was turned into a patrol force, its primary weapon being a stick²⁴. The Israelis were

²⁰ *Hadashot*, 26/08/1989, quoted in “IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*,” *JPS*, *Ibid*.

²¹ *Ha’aretz*, quoted in “IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*,” *JPS*, *Ibid*.

²² *Maariv*, quoted in “IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*,” *JPS*, *Ibid*.

²³ Yoram Peri, “Who Will Evacuate the Occupied Territories from the Israeli Military?” in *Politika*, quoted in “IDF in the Face of the *Intifada*,” *JPS*, *Ibid*.

²⁴ Ze’ev Schiff, *Ibid*.

not prepared for this new kind of confrontation: on the one hand, an army with conventional weapons, and on the other, an entire society fighting with civilian tools. The Israelis were the first to acknowledge this.

As Amram Mitzna said: “We cannot lose control of one million Arab citizens.” “Tzahal lacks sufficient forces to close all the gaps in all areas,” said Dan Shomron, despite the fact that the Israeli political leadership, facing the *Intifada*, mobilized all the field apparatus in the occupied territories, including the military, police, the Israel Security Service (Shin Bet), civil administration, military justice, prison administration, detention facilities, etc.

Perhaps the most eloquent statement about IDF’ inability to resist the uprising is the statement of a Labor Party minister who said: “It seems easier to destroy entire armies than to remove the sarcastic smile from the faces of widowed women who challenge us on the streets.”

I do not think you wish me to tell all the facts. Some are sufficiently eloquent to draw lessons from.

- ***In the end, what is suggested is to throw the tank and the plane with a rose! Is not this a kind of romanticism that borders naivety?***

You obviously underestimate roses!

I would like to ask you a question: What do you think “Sharon” is more afraid of: a “resistance rose” in the hands of the entire Palestinian people or a bomb belt around the waist of a few men?

After the nonviolent “Stone Uprising” accomplished major achievements it had to take a direct historic decision and escalate resistance in the face of the occupiers from the “stone” uprising to the “rose” uprising!

The historical error was the transition from the Stone Uprising to negotiations, with the cessation of the *Intifada* during the “peace talks.”

But nonviolence, mind you, cannot be reduced to a rose.

Nonviolence involves strategic principles and means, self-building and long-term planning.

In all cases, nonviolent means cannot be reduced to a “rose”!

The Palestinian *Intifada* has used 27 methods to confront the occupation. A study conducted by the Palestinian Center for Nonviolence Studies has already shown that since the beginning of the uprising, the Unified National Command of the Intifada—PLO (which included all political currents in the Palestinian society) has issued 17 tracts calling for collective resistance actions against the Israeli occupation. These calls focused on two main axes: resisting the occupation through *civil disobedience* and establishing the necessary institutions for resistance. In the 17 tracts, the Unified Command launched 163 appeals for resistance, mostly nonviolent, and out of the 27 methods recommended by the Unified Command, 26 were nonviolent.

Each experience creates its own nonviolent methods of confrontation²⁵. But in general, there are hundreds of nonviolent methods created by peoples in their history throughout the world that can be classified according to six main strategic categories:

1. Protest and persuasion;
2. Social, economic and political noncooperation;
3. Direct intervention;
4. Self-development;
5. Developing constructive programs; and
6. Local and global legal litigation.

- ***Is it not better to use nonviolence where it proves effective and violence where it proves effective? Especially since nonviolence may be applicable to internal social issues, while it may not be useful in matters of national liberation.***

You propose a so-called “mixed struggle.” But nonviolence and violence are opposing forces that cannot work together.

Each of these two forces has its special and integrated dynamic. These dynamics are certainly mutually exclusive.

- Nonviolence highlights the rightfulness of the cause, while violence highlights the violent acts to intimidate the adversary, the underlying cause becoming forgotten, and the vicious circle, the Byzantine debate over terrorism prevails.
- Through nonviolence, we can distinguish between the rightful and the unjust, whereas with violence the rightful cause and the policy of the unjust become equal, since both parties resort to violence.
- Nonviolence uses a different “weapon system” or struggle system that largely paralyzes the military advantage of the opponent, while violence allows the adversary to use its full military capabilities.
- Nonviolence allows for the effective participation of all segments of society and promotes national unity and public solidarity, while violence only permits the participation of a small number of insurgents, and internal divisions within the oppressed community are more likely to take place.
- Violence unites the leadership, public opinion and tools of repression of the political opponent and promotes extremism on both sides, while nonviolence divides the leadership, public opinion and tools of repression of the political opponent and promotes moderation on both sides.
- Nonviolence wins the sympathy of world public opinion, while violence brings about the discontent of world public opinion.

²⁵ Cf. Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action: Methods of Nonviolent Action*, Part 2, Porter Sargent Publishers, Boston, 1973; 326 pp.

- Nonviolence exposes the suppression and disqualifies the credibility of the unjust power, while violence justifies the suppression of the unjust power, which gains even vested interests in inciting violence.
- The cost of violence is huge, much higher than the cost of nonviolence.
- Violence allows negative emotions, fear and hatred to manage the conflict, while nonviolence allows the oppressed group to manage the conflict rationally and keep the initiative.

Therefore, violence and nonviolence cannot coexist. One violent act eliminates all the positive effects of nonviolent action.

To say that the effectiveness of nonviolence is restricted to internal social issues is to disclaim the history of the struggle of peoples, which shows exactly the contrary:

- Gandhiji's struggle in India for independence against the British rule that led to India's independence in the 1940s.
- The struggle led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Badshah Khan), the Afghan founder of the first Nonviolent Muslim Army, for independence in cooperation with Gandhi in the face of British rule²⁶.
- Resistance to the Nazi occupation in occupied countries of Europe consisted mostly in fierce armed, underground resistance; yet the history of many European countries recorded nonviolent resistance under Nazi occupation under the title *Armless against Hitler*²⁷.
- The overthrow of military dictatorships in El Salvador, Guatemala and a number of Latin American countries in the 1940s²⁸.
- The Civil Rights Movement against racial discrimination led by Martin Luther King, Jr., in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s that led to the abolition of all racist laws.
- Hungarian Revolution (1956-1957)²⁹.
- The struggle of Solidarność in Poland.
- Nonviolent struggles against the Apartheid régime in South Africa (1950-1990).
- The nonviolent uprising that toppled the Marcos régime in the Philippines in 1986³⁰.

²⁶ Cf. Eknath Easwaran, *Badshah Khan, A Man to Match His Mountains, Nonviolent Soldier of Islam*, Nilgiri Press, California, 1984; 240 pp.

²⁷ Cf. Jacques Sémelin, *Sans armes face à Hitler (1939-1943)*, Bibliothèque Historique Payot, Paris, 1989 ; *Face au nazisme, Résistance non-violente sous l'occupation allemande au Danemark et en Norvège (1940-1945)*, MIR-IRG, 1983.

²⁸ Cf. *Résistances civiles en Amérique latine*, ANV, France, 62, décembre 1986.

²⁹ Cf. *Les luttes non-violentes au XX^e Siècle*, tomes 1 et 2, ANV, France, 119, 120, 121, été, automne, hiver 2001-2002.

³⁰ Cf. *Philippines, non-violence contre dictature*, ANV, France, 63, avril 1987.

- The nonviolent struggle of grape growers led by César Chávez in the face of multinational corporations in the USA, which lasted about ten years, after which the farmers saw all their demands granted³¹.
- Etc.

The history of peoples is full of such civil confrontations and accomplishments.

- ***In the end, any experiment is evaluated in terms of accomplishments. You see the “Stone Uprising” as a model and an accomplishment, don’t you?***

Absolutely.

The 1987 “Intifada” was a contemporary model of nonviolent political struggle in this region.

It is an accomplishment *per se*.

This “Stone Uprising” has achieved a lot. Of course, not the final recovery of Palestinian rights, but a major step towards a final solution.

The Jewish extremists realized the seriousness of the Palestinian achievements. They tried to abort them by assassinating Rabin and then by “Sharon’s” provocative visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque.

At that very moment, after the nonviolent “Stone Uprising” achieved its major accomplishments, it had to take a historic decision, namely, to escalate the resistance against the occupier from the “stone” uprising to the “rose” uprising.

Unfortunately, the Palestinian resistance regressed to “Al-Aqsa Intifada” and fell once again into the trap of Israeli extremists.

I see no solution except in the meeting of all Palestinian forces and currents on a common strategy whose slogan is the one and only *Yes, to Resistance, No to Violence*.

It is delightful that voices calling for such nonviolent uprising are rising...

³¹ Cf. Jean-Marie Muller, Jean Kalman, *César Chávez, un combat non-violent*, Fayard, Paris, 1977.

Quotes

“Nonviolent action outweighs twice violent action in terms of effectiveness. While both nonviolence and violence may be used against the tyranny of others, nonviolence alone can counteract the tyranny of self.”

“Violence cannot achieve a desired noble goal. Not because it cannot win militarily against the opponent, but because it defeats the fighter. It transforms him. And the outcome is: the opponent is defeated militarily; the fighter is defeated humanely. Violence wins.”

“Of course, violence is the favorite language of the oppressor. Will we do him such a great service by addressing him in his favorite language?!”

“After the nonviolent “Intifada” (Stone Uprising) achieved its major accomplishments it had to take a direct historic decision and escalate resistance in the face of the occupiers from the “stone” uprising to the “rose” uprising!”

• After all, do you want us to face the tank and the plane with roses?!
*“You obviously underestimate roses!
I would like to ask you a question: What do you think the oppressor is more afraid of: a rose in the hands of the entire people or a bomb belt around the waist a few men?”*

“The violence of the oppressor serves the cause of the oppressor. The violence of the oppressed also serves the cause of the oppressor.”

“A small slap on the child’s cheek is always a huge slap to democracy everywhere.”

Walid Slaybi

Walid Slaybi

As Erich Fromm wrote about the human dilemma in *To Have or to Be*, Walid Slaybi had to opt in his life journey for a humane existential meaning: *TO BE*.

One of the pioneers of nonviolence in Lebanon and the Arab world, Walid Slaybi is cofounder of the first University of Non-Violence and Human Rights (AUNOHR), one of its kind locally and worldwide. www.aunohr.edu.lb

Writer and strategic thinker, specializing in political economy, physics and sociology, Slaybi is also a researcher in human rights, civil action and the philosophy of violence and nonviolence.

During the last three decades, he has been known as one of the pioneers of innovative civil action in Lebanon, one who influenced generations of young people, activists, as well as intellectuals.

He was honored with the *Prix des Droits de l'Homme de la République Française* 2005 for his pioneering role in abolishing the death penalty.

He authored more than 20 researches and books and did a series of translations of the nonviolence world heritage to Arabic, in addition to scores of lectures, articles, training programs and drama texts.

Slaybi shares this intellectual and struggle-oriented career with Ugarit Younan, his lifelong companion in pilot initiatives and earnest endeavors for the values of nonviolence, non-sectarianism, justice, freedom and love.



على غرار ما كتب وآمن به إريك فروم Erich Fromm حول "أن نكون أو أن نتملك" "To Have or To Be"، اختار وليد صليبي لمسيرته في الحياة معنىً وجوديًا إنسانيًا؛ أن يكون.

من رواد اللاعنّف في لبنان والمنطقة العربيّة، مؤسس جامعة اللاعنّف وحقوق الإنسان AUNOHR. كاتب؛ متخصص في الاقتصاد السياسي والفيزياء وعلم الاجتماع؛ باحث في حقوق الإنسان واستراتيجيات العمل المدني وفلسفة العنف واللاعنف.

يُعرّف أنّه من رواد العمل المدني المجدّد في لبنان في العقود الثلاثة الأخيرة. كُرمَ بِـ "جائزة الجمهورية الفرنسيّة لحقوق الإنسان" للعام ٢٠٠٥، لدوره الرياديّ من أجل إلغاء عقوبة الإعدام.

في كتاباته، أكثر من ٢٠ مؤلّفًا، وسلسلة من ترجمات تراث اللاعنّف العالمي، إلى محاضرات ومقالات وبرامج تدريبية ونصوص بحثية وخواطر. في مسيرته هذه، تشارك صليبي مع أوغاريت يونان، رفيقا حياةٍ ودرّب دؤوبة ومبادرات فكرية ونضالية، من أجل قيم اللاعنّف، واللائقافية، والعدالة، والحرية، والحب.

This book consists in a series of questions about violent or nonviolent resistance that are put in the simplified form of a dialogue, questions that have been repeated dozens of times over the years between the author and his interlocutors.

Among these questions, the author chose to publish excerpts from a dialogue between him and a young woman activist.

Violence has always been as fascinating in her eyes as "nonviolence" provocative, although she admits, like most others, that she has never figured out how a struggle or resistance could be conducted without violence.

This dialogue was inspired by the Palestinian "Intifada" in its early years, a very convincing example of a leading civil, popular, nonviolent resistance in the contemporary history of our Arab world in particular.

جملةً أسئلةً وتساؤلات حول النضال بالعنف أو باللاعنف، تجتمع في هذا الكتيّب بصيغة حوارٍ مبسّط، كان قد تكرّر عشرات المرّات بين المؤلّف وآخرين على مدى سنوات، اختار منها مقتطفات معبّرة من حوارٍ مع صبيّة ناشطة في الميدان العام، كان العنف ما فتئ يُبهرها بقدر ما تستفزّها مفردة "اللاعنف"، ولو أنّها تقرّ، كما معظم الآخرين، بأنّها لم تتعرّف من قبل كيف يكون النضال بغير العنف.

وقد ألهمّت ذلك الحوار "انتفاضة الحجارة"، مثالاً بالغ الإقناع عن نضالٍ مدنيّ شعبيّ لاعنفيّ رائد في تاريخنا المعاصر في هذا العالم العربي بالذات.