

AS OLD AS THE HILLS

BY: HELENA RABASA BROTO

Can you imagine living in the middle of a war created by political problems? The beginnings of the conflict between Israel and Palestine date back to the colonial period and the emergence of nationalist movements in Europe and the Middle East. Since the end of the 19th century, nationalist movements were developing in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, demanding the self-determination of the indigenous population by asserting their Arab identity. Also in Europe, in the heat of the wave of nationalism, a unique movement was articulated, Zionism, which advocated the creation of a state entity for Jews, dispersed throughout the world. This immigration became widespread under the British Mandate between 1920 and 1948. While other Ottoman provinces gradually gained independence, the disputed Palestine remained under colonial control. The two national projects, the Palestinian Arab and the Zionist, clashed when the immigrant Jewish community, although a minority, took on a larger scale and expanded its properties following territorial control plans.

On the one hand, the Palestine people claim Jerusalem, the Israeli capital, as their own and demand the creation of a Palestinian state. Although conflict does not come down to dispute over territory, it is an important variable. Two wars (the Six-Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973) and two Intifadas have been recorded in this context. The latest are violent uprisings declared by the Palestinians to get their demands and to protest against Israeli abuses. The first intifada was declared in 1987 and ended in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Accords. The second one broke out on 28 September 2000 due to Israel's alleged non-compliance with the agreements and has not yet been completed. The toll so far is close to 1,000 Palestinians and Israelis killed. The load of rebellions of the Palestinians has lent itself to bloody clashes between the two sides. The radicals of this population immolate themselves and attack Israeli infrastructure and citizens.

On the other hand, Israel, with the unconditional support of the United States, has declared itself capable of anything in order to stop the Palestinians. Measures such as the construction of the West Bank wall and attacks on Palestinian leaders such as those that took place in early 2004 have been taken on that basis. The international community has not been oblivious to the problem. Many international organizations had spoken out against Palestinian terrorism, but above all against the human rights violations Israel had committed through its actions. In response, the Jewish people relied on their right to self-defense. Because of its instability, the conflict is always on the verge of becoming a major war. However, the election of Mahmoud Abbas as president of the Palestinian National Authority gave a new air to the conflict and to the possibilities for peace.

From my point of view, all of us should support the Palestinians because since the beginning of the dispute, the people of Palestine have been the victims of an ethnic cleansing, of terrorist acts, of disrespect for their human rights, of usurpation of territories, of mass and systematic expulsion, of imprisonment even of minors and an endless number of outrages. Furthermore it's horrible how the people of Israel were able to build a wall to separate the different countries because if you want to go to the other side, you would have to cross the border.

