

ISRAEL'S PROTECTIVE NET OF TYRANNY TEARS

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Amira Hass, [Haaretz.com](https://www.haaretz.com), 11 February 2011



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Where is that moment for us? A group of Palestinian businesspeople had discussed the possibility of joining the popular struggle in the villages near Ramallah against the separation fence. That was before the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. The conclusion, a participant told me, was that they cannot allow themselves to take part in those activities because the very next day "Beit El" (the nickname for the Civil Administration, whose base is located near the eponymous settlement) will revoke all the special passes that allow their businesses to exist. The experiences of others in similar circumstances (for example, senior Fatah officials who deigned to take part in a demonstration or two and had their VIP passes revoked) are enough to create the fear.

A machinery of repression depends not only on guns and torture in cellars. As the Soviet-bloc regimes proved, bureaucracy is central to the system. The same is true with us: Far from the barriers of transparency of a proper democratic society, Israel has created a complex and invisible bureaucracy that completely controls Palestinian freedom of movement, and hence freedom of employment, livelihood and studies, the freedom to fall in love and establish a family, to organize and other basic liberties.

Any regime that does not respect these liberties is automatically categorized as "tyrannical." We have escaped this categorization because in our case it is a collective tyranny of Israeli-Jews (those who profit from the system) over the Palestinians. The representatives of this collective tyranny, which systematically harms the sanctity of ownership of the other and discriminates against the other, are admired army officers, well-spoken Defense Ministry officials, architects, contractors and others. But the freedoms do not care about categories; an entire people is still denied them.

The Israeli-made machinery of repression has learned how to manufacture a protective net in the form of the Palestinian Authority. It does all it can not to upset the order of things, so no match will be lit that blows up the mirage of economic prosperity and the construction of national institutions.

The picket line organized through Facebook in front of the Egyptian representative office in Ramallah on Sunday was broken up by the PA's security forces. The young man who initiated it was

tracked down and detained for prolonged questioning. The Hamas regime is also afraid of matches. Some 25 people who organized through Facebook came on Monday to Gaza's Unknown Soldier Square to express support for the Egyptian people. They, too, were set upon by enthusiastic security people. Six women were arrested.

Sooner or later, the protective nets the Israeli tyranny has excelled at creating will tear. Will the masses flood the streets then, will they break through the barriers and roadblocks, march to Sheikh Jarrah, Silwan and Psagot, as my colleagues Akiva Eldar and Aluf Benn have predicted?

Let us not delude ourselves. There will be no confusion here. Precise instructions, clear and immediate, will be given to the Israeli soldiers. The IDF of Operation Cast Lead will not give up its heritage. Even if it is a march of 200,000 unarmed civilians - the order will be to shoot. There will not be 10 dead, because the army of Cast Lead will want to outdo itself. We have not yet reached the stage in which the machinery of Israeli repression breaks up into its component parts - the people - who instead of obeying, begin to think.

