Palestine online: cyber Intifada and the construction of a virtual community 2001-2005

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The support was important because much happened since I started this research—the impact and racist backlash of 9/11, the war in Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh, the rise of xenophobic politicians, and the recent electoral triumph of extreme right Geert Wilders. These tendencies were reinforced by absurd dichotomies such as “Muslim”/“non-Muslim” or “Allochtoon/Autochtoon”; sometimes the daunting situation made me feel more secure in war-torn Palestine or Lebanon. Albeit these temporal/territorial escapisms: organized activism was essential. Many people I worked with deserve mentioning: Eva, Ruben, Naima, Jamna during the initial antiracism activities; Rene Danen, Mohammed Rabbae in our fight against Islamophobia (VerWildering); and the enjoyable engagement of Jaap Hamburger, Tariq Shadid, Amal Bensalah, Wim Lankamp, Lokien Holleman, Lily van der Berg in the antiwar/Palestine campaigns. These people illustrate that, however important to interpret and analyse the world as we academics love to do, it is important to help change it as well.

Regrettably, war is still being waged and racist demagogy even surpasses previous held boundaries. We continue the struggle. Despite the obvious reactionary constraints, and not so obvious impediments. ‘Not so obvious’ because several progressives tell us we are mistaken (or trapped in a ‘false consciousnesses’); others have replaced racist islamophobia with new
euphemisms as ‘freedom of speech’. I started to believe that some of the ‘armchair left’ were seriously confused when some even conflated outright populist rhetorics with axioms of Voltaire (the Muslim bias became a bit too obvious). Alas, the struggle goes on with or without their blessings—with the ‘pessimism of the intellect and the optimism of the will’ as Gramsci brilliantly noted. On this note, some say comradeship is one of the strongest relationships. I shared tough and inspiring times with many activists of Internationale Socialisten; they gave me the stamina and conviction to see that another world is possible. So to Bart, Pepijn, Peyman, Michiel, Sylvia, Maina, Johannes, Karima, Mahmoud, Wael, Karwan, Ruth, Catherine, Peter, Hamid, Hans, Bram, Angela, Pat (who first introduced me to Marxist politics in New Cross), John Rees, Sabby Sagall, and many many more: power to the people, united we stand!

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