

## Individuals sneaking in do not an intifada make

**The outbreak of a third intifada requires a leadership that wants one, together with a critical mass of people who are willing to engage in violent behavior.**

By Orit Perlov / Oct. 30, 2014

It has seemed recently that the violent incidents in East Jerusalem are gradually creating a fragile situation in the capital. With the high frequency of the incidents, words like “escalation,” “deterioration” and the phrase beloved by experts, journalists and researchers, “third intifada,” are being tossed about. Besides the obvious attraction of these terms and the fear they impose, one wonders: Really?

More than a million Palestinians are active on the social networks, allowing us to keep track of the mood and understand the broad context of the incidents in East Jerusalem, including questions such as: Does the Palestinian population want an intifada? Do the young Palestinians have the motivation, ability and street leadership to begin a third intifada?

In my estimation, the answer is no. The outbreak of a third intifada requires a leadership that wants one, together with a critical mass of people who are willing to engage in violent behavior. Judging by the discourse on the social networks, there is no such critical mass in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and no leadership with the ability (or desire) to get the “Palestinian street” worked up. At the same time, from understanding the broad context, we can see a willingness to increase the number of pinpoint incidents, “individuals sneaking in.”

Since Operation Brother’s Keeper in the summer, the security forces of Israel and the Palestinian Authority have been engaging in a wide-scale operation to “cleanse” the West Bank and East Jerusalem of Hamas and Islamic Jihad infrastructures. This operation has been met with a wave of protests against the Palestinian Authority and its head, Mahmoud Abbas.

At the same time, the Shin Bet security service and the PA’s intelligence agencies have been tightening their surveillance of the social networks and the shapers of Palestinian public opinion on the Internet. The Internet is supposedly an open place where people can express opinions freely, but actually, every young Palestinian who tries to organize a public protest to put pressure on the authorities or start an escalation is arrested or called in for questioning. Hamas is neither interested in nor able to create a provocation officially, following its defeat in Operation Protective Edge and because of the sensitivity of its relationship with Egypt.

The discourse on the Internet indicates that Hamas's strategy is to act the part of the disciplined child for the moment so that salaries and funds for reconstruction will reach Gaza, since it knows that deliberate escalation in the West Bank or East Jerusalem will delay the funds.

On the other side, young people and shapers of public opinion on the social networks who want to protest and start campaigns are held for questioning and forced to cease their activity. When the political, public and online spaces are closed to these young people, nothing is left for them but to scatter and act violently in pinpoint incidents.

While the social networks enable us to spot trends in public opinion, locate campaigns that are growing and take the pulse of "the street," they do not enable us to spot the lone terrorist or scattered groups of individuals. Despite the sensitivity in East Jerusalem and Hebron, I still see no broad public intention toward an escalation. The opposite is true: Most of the Palestinian public has no interest in violence, and calls are being heard to restrain the young people who are harming the entire population's quality of life.

Still, past lessons teach us that even "individuals sneaking in" can lead to dramatic and strategic changes, and so we must not take the chain of violent events in East Jerusalem lightly. Even if the intifada is not going into a third season, it could still be the pilot program of a different kind of format.

The writer is a social media analyst at the **Institute for National Security Studies**.

<http://www.haaretz.com/misc/article-print-page/.premium-1.623453?trailingPath=2.169%2C2.223%2C>