

150th birth anniversary of Gandhi
Apostle of non-violence and human rights
By Jawad KERDOUDI
President of IMRI (Moroccan Institute of International Relations)
Honorary Consul General of India to Casablanca and Marrakech

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India and all the Indian Embassies all over the world celebrated on October 2, 2018 150th birth anniversary of Gandhi (1869-1948). Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in India in Porbandar in the State of Gujarat. From Hindu religion, he learned, since he was young to know, other religions and tolerance towards them. At the age of 19, he went to London to study law. Back to his country, he successfully served as a lawyer. In 1883 and for 21 years, he lived in South Africa where he was appointed Legal Adviser of an Indian Society. He discovers how blacks and Indians are deprived of many civil rights, and are victims of intolerance and racism. He began a fight of nonviolent resistance and non-cooperation with the South African authorities. In 1909, he developed his theories of struggle through nonviolence and mass civil disobedience in a book entitled "Hind Swaraj".

He returned to India in 1914, traveled all over India to know it better, and asked the Indians to join the army to support the British in the First World War. He Becomes famous throughout India, he organizes civil resistance and non-cooperation campaigns, including the boycott of the authorities, courts and schools. It is at this moment that he was named by the Indians "Mahatma" (The Great Soul), and that he started a campaign aiming at the economic independence from the British colonial policy. He was arrested by the British authorities in 1922 and released in 1924. In 1930, he began a new campaign of civil disobedience aiming to eliminate taxes, especially on salt. He was again imprisoned and released in 1931; then he began a struggle for the abolition of the caste system and equal rights for the "untouchables". India obtained a partial independence in 1935. Later, He sets up the Congress Party with Nehru and works for the total independence of India.

During the World War II, he refused to support the British without giving immediate independence to India, and asked them to leave India "Quit India". Later, a radical revolt for independence and terrible repressions took place. Gandhi was arrested in 1942 and released for health reasons. In 1944, the British pledged to grant independence to the Indians if they put an end to the fights between Muslims and Hindus. Gandhi heavily objected to the partition of India, but must decide to establish the two states in 1947: India and Pakistan. He could not prevent the

outbreak of violence between Muslims and Hindus. India officially gained independence on August 15, 1947 and Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948 by a Hindu fanatic. We can only bow to this Great Man for his non-violent struggles and the defense of human rights. Gandhi has had a tremendous influence on liberation movement and defense of civil rights all over the world, including blacks in North America under the leadership of another great man, Martin Luther King.

Gandhi's message is the most relevant at the beginning of the 21st century. The world is indeed marked by violence and the lack of respect for human rights. Thus in 2006, "The Islamic State" was founded on a part of the territory of Iraq and Syria. The totalitarian system that was established is incredibly violent and does not respect any human right. The inhumane acts of "The Islamic State" have spread in the form of terrorist attacks all over the world hitting the five continents. Moreover, following the "Arab Spring", acts of violence touched North Africa with a chaotic situation in Libya.

The Middle East is also facing a deadly war in Syria and Yemen. The Israeli army does not hesitate to fire live ammunition at civilian protesters in Gaza during "weekly return marches", resulting in thousands of deaths and injuries. Another phenomenon appeared in the West at the beginning of the 21st century: the rise of nationalism with the election of Donald Trump in the United States, and the rise of extremist parties in Europe.

Now all these acts that we are currently experiencing have been denounced by Gandhi in his quotes. This is how he declared "I object to violence because when it appears to do good, the good is only temporary; the evil it does is permanent."

Regarding the Palestinian resistance under the Israeli occupation, another quote from Gandhi justifies it. "As soon a person understands that it is against his dignity as a man to obey unjust laws, no tyranny can enslave him." Finally, on the rise of nationalism, Gandhi said: "The very right to live is only given to us if we fulfill our duty as citizens of the world. Nationalism is not the highest concept. The highest concept is the world community." This quote should be meditated by Donald Trump and all extremists on all sides.

In conclusion, we can only deplore the dangerous situation of today's world marked by violence, the lack of respect for human rights and the rise of nationalism. Civil society, and especially intellectuals, must mobilize themselves by putting pressure on policies to restore the values that were gradually established after the Second World War.

