



INTRODUCING THE PALESTINIAN CHRONICLE

By: Fady Abusidu – Editor in Chief



Since this is the first issue of The Palestinian Chronicle, I will dedicate this space to introduce this new publication and familiarise the reader with the background, mission, aims and objectives that the chronicle embrace.

The Palestinian Chronicle is a bi-weekly newspaper that aims at bridging an existing gap in communication between the Palestinian and Arab community in Britain, and their surrounding social and political environment and institutions both governmental and civil.

The Palestinian Chronicle is concerned with the factual, accurate and fair representation of Palestinian and Arab view points and opinions. It is also concerned with the integration of the Palestinian community's voice and culture into British society by means of bridging the communication gap between the formal and informal, official and civilian, British and Palestinian, and eastern and western. The Chronicle's mission is to promote direct dialogue on three levels with the public, governmental representatives and civil society organisations.

The above mission and objectives, if to be achieved, require the recognition of reality dynamics as well as identifying the challenges correctly. While the differences in culture, language and history present a communication problem between the targeted communities mentioned above, one cannot escape the fact that the Middle East conflict, and the Israeli-Palestinian issue in particular, has been the cause of most misunderstandings, misconceptions and mistrust between various regional and international parties for many decades. Reaching consensus on the correct approach to solve such lasting problems amid an atmosphere of mistrust has proved to be particularly difficult. Resolving these misconceptions and misunderstandings while the conflict continues put us in a catch-22 situation. Overcoming such a predicament will only happen if we work on both levels of the issue simultaneously.

Since the beginnings of the Palestinian issue, Britain has been a central player in the Middle East, the Middle East conflict, regional security dynamics and economy. Britain remains an influential party to any political process at the European and international levels. This has been repeatedly proven with every major military or political process in the Middle East during the 20th and 21st centuries.

The British-Palestinian community is an integral part of the British society with unique cultural, economic and political concerns that need to be integrated and not excluded from their surroundings. Reflecting the interests and concerns of the Palestinian community in the UK is a practical step towards better integrating this community and reaching cohesion. Furthermore, such a process brings the British role, at both the Middle Eastern and international levels, closer to a more practical and inclusive role that has better understanding of the special requirements and considerations needed to succeed.

However, such role and integration cannot function in an atmosphere of mistrust or misconception. Factual presentation of all positions and information is the key. Recognising that communication is a two way channel is another key to success. The Palestinian Chronicle wants to take that one step further by working on ensuring that the channel of communication is not confined to the traditional community-government approach. Part of The Chronicle's mission is to ensure that both the community and the official representatives are able to communicate with relevant civil society organisations and vice-versa. This will be ensured through the implemented editorial policy and through ensuring adequate platform for these civil organisations work and mission to be presented.

In this respect, The Palestinian Chronicle will ensure that the community is informed and has an opinion on key issues at the British social, economic and political levels and that this opinion is voiced and fairly presented. Promoting the exchange of ideas, generating debate, and challenging preconceptions is the philosophy that will guide the Chronicle throughout its conduct.

The Chronicle is a British-Palestinian newspaper that seeks to challenge stereotypes, seek innovation and encourage participation.

A Bird's Eye View

By: Uri Avnery

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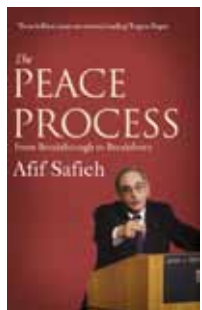
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Reviving the Palestinian National Council, a few challenges ahead

By: Fady Abusidu - London

On 14th May, few Palestinian academics and journalists, in cooperation with General Union of Palestinian Students, organised an open meeting to introduce a new initiative to register Palestinians in the diaspora for future Palestinian National Council (PNC) elections. While the audience were modest in number, the arguments, positions and debates were heated as one would expect in such setting.

Karma Nabulsi, the well-known Palestinian scholar for her controversial position on the Palestinian application for statehood at the UN, was one of the key speakers and is the person who approached the Palestinian leadership for permission and authorisation to start this project.

The idea and rationale behind such an initiative is sound and timely. Palestinians in the occupied territories have been thirsty for an opportunity to demonstrate their will and exercise their democratic right to vote at all levels of the Palestinians establishment. The most recent example was the wave of student union elections at Palestinian West Bank universities. More recently, the Palestinian National Authority did declare that it will hold municipal elections within the West Bank even if Hamas controlled government in Gaza refuse to organise similar process in the strip.

The campaign for registering Palestinians for future national council elections, as

portrayed by one of the speakers, is aimed to overcome, or at least assist, in promoting a civil society role that can bring the Palestinian people in solidarity through the democratic process of reviving their national institutions, and end the years old division between Palestinian factions. This same division is also one of the reasons why the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas that was signed in Doha on 6th February 2012 remains in the implementation phase. Democratic process and elections are one key factor behind the lack of progress in the implementation of Doha agreements since, Hamas refused to commit itself to cooperating with the elections committee in Gaza before the coalition government is formed and Fatah refuse to form such a government until the elections committee is guaranteed access to all Palestinian territories. Although there has been progress on that front, there are various other political and regional factors that affect the progress of Palestinian reconciliation, however, the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections as well as the presidential elections are the two main elements that will influence the PNC elections. According to the legal process, those elected to the PLC will automatically be members of the PNC, a rule that was put in place to secure the continuity in representation between Palestinians inside and outside of Palestine.

While the Palestinian division was touched upon during the meeting, the general discussion did not address the impact

of years long division at the political and institutional structure of the Palestinian establishment. Such impact present a serious challenge to the function and role of a future and democratically elected PNC was missing.

The role of Palestinians civil society has become much more prominent and active over the past ten years. This role evolved from the civil, social or human rights sectors to the more mainstream political arena. The networks of Palestinian civil and research centres in Europe has established, what could qualify as a parallel structure and institutions that provide social and economic contact points to sections of Palestinians in Europe. This network is equally active at the political level through close contact with MPs and Palestine support groups within Europe. The Annual Return conference organised by such networks filled an occupational gap resulted from the absence of traditional Palestinian institutions like the PNC and the rising sentiment among Palestinians in diaspora that they are side-lined from the Palestinian decision making process.

These alternative bodies and institutions that ascended during the years of division are not without political and ideological affiliation. Palestinian universities elections results during April and May 2012, proved the return of Fatah as the mainstream popular party. The call for elections at the municipal and national levels is called for by Fatah members and cadres. The Gaza

government model since the last PLC elections in 2006 and the fact that elections are overdue means that Palestinians in Gaza are particularly eager for new elections. The PNC elections, when they happen, will include Palestinian political trends and factions that were traditional subscribers to that historical democratic process. But what about those factions that were not members of that process before?

The idea of reviving the PNC is gaining momentum among young Palestinians worldwide. This is clear from the amount of discussion and debate visible to anyone with a twitter or Facebook accounts. This interest was well reflected in a meeting that took place in Amman on 4th June.

If the registrations process of the PNC elections manage to succeed in mobilising young Palestinians and past founders into engaging in the PNC revival, can that overcome the challenge presented by the years of division. Can the New/old PNC once elected encompass the parallel establishments created by groups and ultimately unify all Palestinians under one elected representative body? Furthermore, can the PNC elections by powers and trends that are centre and left of centre persuade the Palestinian factions to enter a PLO reform process based of representation and elections rather than the status quo balance of power?

This remains to be examined.

EU and the Palestinian State: What is *ST//L* going wrong?

By: Hadi Shebli - Brussels

Solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a fundamental European interest. Numerous European Union (EU) official statements indicated clearly the priority the EU attaches to the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), both politically and economically. In fact, The EU has defined its positions as regards the Middle East Peace Process in the Venice Declaration of 1980 and has developed it since then in various Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions, in December 2009, December 2010 and May 2011.

Whereas the European Role on the financial side is obvious (EU being the first donor to the Palestinian Authority –PA-budget- see box), many open questions remain when it comes to evaluating the impact of the EU role on the political front, and the potential that such role could achieve. These questions had been constantly raised by the region, and growingly by the European citizens themselves. However, the Arab Spring events and the importance it brought to the region made these questions more pressing.

Obviously, the Arab Spring events dominated the agendas of the EU-and all the major international political players-towards the Middle East region since the beginning of last year. The EU for its part has embarked on a comprehensive review of its Neighbourhood policy, which –in spite of the reservations it was received back by the main two countries of the Arab Spring, namely Egypt and Tunisia- emphasized mainly on focusing the attention to the legitimate democratic aspirations of the societies. However, for such policy to accede to the credibility arena, it has to be comprehensive. Freedom, independence, and dignity are values that could not be divided. Any segregation attempt is synonym of abandon. Unfortunately; Palestinians didn't feel

any difference in the EU policies. This has not only a direct negative impact on the EU so called 'new' policies toward the Southern Neighbourhood as such, it has also a direct negative consequence on the EU interests.

Unsurprisingly; the Israeli government seized the opportunity of the Arab Spring and expanded its policies that aim at diminishing the viability of the two State Solution. Whether it's in East Jerusalem, Area C, settlement activities; settler vio-

and the prevention of peaceful Palestinian cultural, economic, social or political activities.

The Israeli policies also resulted in the worsening living conditions of the Palestinian population in Area C and serious limitations for the Palestinian Authority to promote the economic development of Palestinian communities in Area C (main land reserves), as well as plans of forced transfer of the Bedouin communities, in particular

Box: Example of EU Financial Contribution to PA: State Building

In recent years, EU-PA relations have focused primarily on supporting PA's state-building efforts.

The Palestinian side has been working on an ambitious reform agenda making a strategic choice to anchor its socio-economic development with that of the EU. As the major and most predictable donor to the Palestinian people, the EU has responded and been instrumental in the successful institution-building effort of the Palestinian Authority.

In this regard the EU has concurred with the assessment of the World Bank and other international financing institutions that "if the Palestinian Authority maintains its current performance in institution building and delivery of public services, it is well positioned for the establishment of a State at any point in the near future". This assessment was reiterated by the donors at the AHLC meeting hosted by HRVP Ashton on 13 April 2011 in Brussels and once again in September 2011. On the basis of the reports of the UN, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the participants acknowledged that "the PA is above the threshold for a functioning state in the key sectors they studied, and that Palestinian institutions compare favorably with those in established states". The donors reconfirmed their assessment of the state readiness of the Palestinian Authority at the AHLC held on 21 March 2012 in Brussels

lence, withholding of PA financial resources, continuous closure on Gaza; the Israeli government has not spared any effort to kill peace.

A lot of these policies do contradict with universal moral values; in a way that make it not eligible to political debate. On top of them are the evictions in East Jerusalem and the house demolitions; changes to the residency status of Palestinians, the expansion of Givat Hamatos and Har Homa,

from the wider E1 area. In addition; Israel contributed through withholding PA revenues to jeopardise the major achievements of the PA in statebuilding. Such a risk continue to be alive as long as the current financial difficulties will not be addressed through Israeli cooperation with the PA.

So far, the main EU response to these Israeli practices could be summarized in the May 2012 Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) conclusions. Through it, the EU and

its Member States reaffirmed their commitment to fully and effectively implement existing EU legislation and the bilateral arrangements applicable to settlement products. The EU called upon Israel to meet its obligations regarding the living conditions of the Palestinian population in Area C, including by accelerated approval of Palestinian master plans, halting forced transfer of population and demolition of Palestinian housing and infrastructure, simplifying administrative procedures to obtain building permits, ensuring access to water and addressing humanitarian needs. The EU called upon Israel to work together with the P.A to allow more access and control of the P.A over Area C. The EU ensured it will continue to provide financial assistance for Palestinian development in Area C and expected such investment to be protected for future use. The EU assured that it will engage with the Government of Israel to work out improved mechanisms for the implementation of the donor funded projects for the benefit of the Palestinian population in Area C.

However; the EU failed to adopt concrete measures that could push Israel to seriously reconsider its destructive policies. To name a few examples, the EU could have banned the entry of extremist settlers to its territories, alike the recent decision taken by Denmark. It didn't. The EU could have also banned the import of Palestinian settlements products to its markets, like Great Britain did. Again; the EU didn't.

One could ask at this stage an additional question: If the main ingredients of the European Role in the MEPP are known, what is hampering its execution? The response is simple: All EU foreign policy measure are adopted by consensus. Unfortunately; a handful of States are hijacking the process, bringing down to the minimum any EU possible role. The day the European Public will realize that this hijacking is only serving Israel and harming the European Interests; things could start to change, and the potential role could be achieved.

The Palestinians and the “Piece” of the Process

By: Fadi Elhousseini - Istanbul

Since 1990, both Arabs and Palestinians from one side, and Israel from the other side, decided to go through a peace process- presumably-aiming that it would bring about peace and stability to the region, and to put an end for a 60-year-old conflict. Now, it has been almost 21 years since that decision, and the result is an abject failure. Alas, violence engulfed the region, and the Middle East appeared to be raven, suffering from wanderings, political polemics and withering woes that appeared to be a Sisyphean ordeal; started with the first Gulf war, to the second Gulf war, the second Intifada “Palestinian uprising II”, Lebanese and Palestinian internal clashes and assassinations, Israeli wars on Lebanon and Gaza Strip, bloodshed and atrocities in Iraq, and bombings in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Morocco and Algeria by Al-Qaida, and finally an unrest in the whole Middle East region, causing more spilled blood. The two leaders (Rabin & Arafat) who succeeded in signing the Oslo peace Accords in 1993 were killed; the first was assassinated by an Israeli extremist and the second in mysterious circumstances. What a success: an ominous process which was designed to end the Arab-Israeli conflict and bring about peace and stability to the region turns to indulge everyone in anything but peace or stability.

Amid this complex environment, and for Palestine and Israel, and after signing the Oslo Accords in 1993, they could succeed in signing a number of agreements, reach numerous understandings and attend countless peace conferences aiming to boost talks and negotiations. On every occasion when talks Stumble, the Quartet try to quench everyone and to call on both sides to resume

talks, and to eliminate any “preconditions” that may lead to a further delay in the peace process. But is there really a process?

What is the situation on the ground after 19 years of talks and negotiations?

For the Palestinians, they could have a Quasi- Autonomous- State called “the Palestinian National Authority- PNA”, controlling a tiny sieged Gaza Strip, and scattered cities in the West Bank, surrounded by a separation wall from one side, settlements and Israeli check points from the other side. No one can get from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank or visa-versa, except those who are blessed with Israeli Permits. In the Gaza Strip, which has been under stringent siege, nothing can get in or out unless Israel approves it, including food and humanitarian supplies, fuel, gas and construction materials. Blacklisted materials are countless and the sole and immediate Israeli explanation is: Hamas is there!!! In the West Bank, the Palestinians are living under different but still severe conditions. Whilst the West Bank is divided into areas A, B and C, the Clout of the Palestinian Authority is limited to areas A. Its police forces cannot enter other areas without Israeli permission, which gives the outlawed the opportunity to find shelter and escape off-Palestinian-shores. The PNA cannot provide any municipal or social services in areas B and C. People have to go through Israeli checkpoints on a daily basis, facing humiliating practices and spending hours and hours, aiming to reach areas controlled by their Authority. Despite the fact that the latter has a sort of control over areas A, Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) can patrol or storm these areas, whenever they wish, and even arrest Palestinian activists. Nevertheless, The Palestinian security forces spent strenuous

efforts and succeeded in enforcing law and order under such severe conditions.

On the other hand, and according to the agreements signed by the Palestinians and Israel, the PNA dismantled the infrastructure of Palestinian military groups in the West Bank and which lead to a drastic decline, if not disappearance, of attacks carried out by those groups on Israel. Accordingly, Israel could reap the advantage of stability and security, boost its economy, attract more investments, and increase the numbers of tourists year after year, not to mention the profits Israeli companies and factories gain as the Palestinian market remains one of the biggest for Israeli products and goods. The expansion and construction of settlements in the occupied territories of 1967 (West Bank and East Jerusalem) significantly amplified, confiscating more of the Palestinian lands drastically increased, the number of Palestinian homes demolished by Israeli forces mounted extremely and depriving Palestinian citizens of Jerusalem from their ID’s shockingly intensified. Israel continued controlling the sea, air, land, natural resources and borders, and its control over borders put Israel in the driver seat when it comes to collecting the money of taxes and customs for the PNA, and also obstructing the entry of any goods that may be a potential competitor to their national products.

Then, why to see a Palestinian State, while you have already everything?

Let’s keep talking!!!

In a letter sent by the Israeli deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Liberman on 22 February 2011, entitled “The Palestinian Authority’s Political Offensive against the State of

Palestine”, dismayed Liberman tried to convince his European counterparts that the Palestinians should not go to the U.N. “unilaterally” for the recognition of the State of Palestine, but rather underscoring the need to go back to the negotiations table. In that letter, there was not even a single time reference or indication to the word “peace”, neither explicitly nor implicitly, while it mentioned 13 times the word “negotiations”, one time the word “talks” and twice the word “discussions”. The letter stated clearly and willfully: “a need to renew negotiations”, but not to reach an agreement or to achieve peace. As a matter of fact, this letter has, with no doubt, reflected the real intentions of the Israeli government, which is having a “piece” of this process; negotiations and talks solely. While adeptly gaining more time and keep on talking and negotiating with the Palestinians, or blaming them for not negotiating, they keep on changing facts on the ground and eliminate more and more of the Palestinian identity in general and in the holy city of Jerusalem in particular.

It appears that finally this ploy does not work anymore on the Palestinian leadership, who decided not to go on with any further talks, on a decreasing land, eroded cities, and obliterated identity, and until Israel halts its construction of settlements and setting up a time table for negotiations, this “piece” of the process will be in limbo.

If you have book suggestions contact the editor at:

editor@thepalestianchronicle.com



Not All Israeli Citizens Are Equal

By Yousef Munayyer - Washington

I’M a Palestinian who was born in the Israeli town of Lod, and thus I am an Israeli citizen. My wife is not; she is a Palestinian from Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Despite our towns being just 30 miles apart, we met almost 6,000 miles away in Massachusetts, where we attended neighboring colleges.

A series of walls, checkpoints, settlements and soldiers fill the 30-mile gap between our hometowns, making it more likely for us to have met on the other side of the planet than in our own backyard.

Never is this reality more profound than on our trips home from our current residence outside Washington.

Tel Aviv’s Ben-Gurion International Airport is on the outskirts of Lod (Lydda in Arabic), but because my wife has a Palestinian ID, she cannot fly there; she is relegated to flying to Amman, Jordan. If we plan a trip together — an enjoyable task for most couples — we must prepare for a logistical nightmare that reminds us of our profound inequality before the law at every turn.

Even if we fly together to Amman, we are forced to take different bridges, two hours apart, and endure often humiliating waiting and questioning just to cross into Israel and the West Bank. The laws conspire to separate us.

If we lived in the region, I would have to forgo my residency, since Israeli law prevents my wife from living with me in Israel. This is to prevent what Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu once referred to as “demographic spillover.” Additional Palestinian babies in Israel are considered “demographic threats” by a state constantly battling to keep a Jewish majority. (Of course, Israelis who marry Americans or any non-Palestinian foreigners are not subjected to this treatment.)

Last week marked Israel’s 64th year of independence; it is also when Palestinians commemorate the Nakba, or “catastrophe,” during which many of Palestine’s native inhabitants were turned into refugees.

In 1948, the Israeli brigade commander Yitzhak Rabin helped expel Lydda’s Palestinian population. Some 19,000 of the town’s 20,000 native Palestinian inhabitants were forced out. My grandparents were among the 1,000 to remain.

They were fortunate to become only internally displaced and not refugees. Years later my grandfather was able to buy back his own home — a cruel absurdity, but a better fate than that imposed on most of his neighbors, who were never permitted to re-establish their lives in their hometowns.

Three decades later, in October 1979, this newspaper reported that Israel barred Rabin from detailing in his memoir what he conceded was the “expulsion” of the “civilian

population of Lod and Ramle, numbering some 50,000.” Rabin, who by then had served as prime minister, sought to describe how “it was essential to drive the inhabitants out.”

Two generations after the Nakba, the effect of discriminatory Israeli policies still reverberates. Israel still seeks to safeguard its image by claiming to be a bastion of democracy that treats its Palestinian citizens well, all the while continuing illiberal policies that target this very population. There is a long history of such discrimination.

In the 1950s new laws permitted the state to take control over Palestinians’ land by classifying them “absentees.” Of course, it was the state that made them absentees by either preventing refugees from returning to Israel or barring internally displaced Palestinians from having access to their land. This last group was ironically termed “present absentees” — able to see their land but not to reach it because of military restrictions that ultimately resulted in their watching the state confiscate it. Until 1966, Palestinian citizens were governed under martial law.

Today, a Jew from any country can move to Israel, while a Palestinian refugee, with a valid claim to property in Israel, cannot. And although Palestinians make up about 20 percent of Israel’s population, the 2012 budget allocates less than 7 percent for Palestinian citizens.

Tragically for Palestinians, Zionism requires the state to empower and maintain a Jewish majority even at the expense of its non-Jewish citizens, and the occupation of the West Bank is only one part of it. What exists today between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is therefore essentially one state, under Israeli control, where Palestinians have varying degrees of limited rights: 1.5 million are second-class citizens, and four million more are not citizens at all. If this is not apartheid, then whatever it is, it’s certainly not democracy.

The failure of Israeli and American leaders to grapple with this nondemocratic reality is not helping. Even if a two-state solution were achieved, which seems fanciful at this point, a fundamental contradiction would remain: more than 35 laws in ostensibly democratic Israel discriminate against Palestinians who are Israeli citizens.

For all the talk about shared values between Israel and the United States, democracy is sadly not one of them right now, and it will not be until Israel’s leaders are willing to recognize Palestinians as equals, not just in name, but in law.

Yousef Munayyer is executive director of the Jerusalem Fund.

OPINIONS

<https://www.facebook.com/ThePalestinianChronicle>

Suspend disbelief for 22 hours in Gaza

By Richard Burden MP - London

Along with other colleagues from the Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group I made, what turned out to be, a shorter than planned visit to Gaza in March.

We arrived at the Egypt side of the Rafah border crossing on Saturday 10 March. The previous day an Israeli air strike had hit and killed the Palestinian militant leader Zuhair al-Qaisy. The escalation of violence which followed meant we had to put our plans to enter Gaza on hold.

Over that weekend 25 Palestinians were killed and at least 80 wounded in a series of Israeli airstrikes. Around 110 rockets were fired into Southern Israel by militant groups, seriously wounding one Israeli. Seven other Israelis were also hurt by those rockets or incidents related to them.

The following morning we finally entered Gaza and spent the next 22 hours in the strip. As ever, Gaza was surreal. Things that logically could not sit side by side did so. To understand the place, you have to suspend disbelief. For the next 22 hours we did.

I had last been in Gaza almost exactly three years before – just a couple of weeks after the Israeli tanks had pulled out after Operation Cast Lead. Large areas had been left devastated and it was clear just looking around that the blockade was leaving acute shortages in a number of essentials, ranging from fuel to medical equipment and construction materials.

Three years on and Israel's blockade of Gaza has eased a bit, but not much. The UN reports imports are still less than 40% of their pre 2007 levels with exports from Gaza's shattered private business sectors even more massively restricted. When you pass a fuel station you still see long queues, both of vehicles and pedestrians, carrying jerry-cans.

So is Gaza 2012 a place where the shelves in the shops are bare, where there is no building going on and where a quick look suggests a people that are starving? No it isn't. There are stocks in the shops and in parts of the strip it looks like there is something of a building boom going on.

Tunnels under Gaza's border with Egypt's Sinai Peninsula bring huge quantities of supplies in. As we stopped near the

entrance of one of those tunnels, we saw truck after truck pass by carrying cement mix, pipework, car parts, food and an array of boxes carrying household goods. You see a fair number of newish cars in Gaza and an even greater number of new motor bikes. They haven't come in overland through the crossing that Israel directly controls or overland through the Rafah crossing with Egypt that is only for people, not freight. They don't come in by air; Gaza's airport was destroyed by Israel in an attack long before Hamas was in control. And they don't come in by sea. Israeli gunboats make sure of that patrolling as close as 3km off the coast. The truckloads we saw had come through the tunnels.

The tunnel economy is big business – for some. A few are making millions from it. You can get pretty well anything you want in that way – but only if you are able to pay. And prices are kept high by those who make money from the tunnel economy. So if you are poor, you have had it. Unemployment is over 25% and 38% of young people are without a job. For those in work, the average wage has declined by 20% in six years. The result is that 38% of Gazans now live in poverty, 54% are food insecure and 75% are dependent on food and other handouts, mainly from the UN.

We met Hamad who was born 73 years ago in Jaffa, near Tel Aviv. Nobody knows for sure whether his family were deliberately expelled when Israel was created in 1948 or whether – as most families with children would – they fled the fighting at that time. Either way, they have never been allowed back. Hamad, his children and grandchildren have lived as refugees in Gaza ever since.

Hamad has never been wealthy but Gaza is a narrow strip of land alongside the Mediterranean and for decades he and his family made a reasonable living from fishing. For the past six years though, Israeli gunboats have prevented Hamad and other Gaza fishermen from fishing more than 3km off shore. As a result, the waters close to the coast are now overfished as well as being polluted by 50 to 90 million litres of partially treated sewage which is pumped into the sea each from a sewage system that doesn't work.

Trouble is, it's hard to forget the history of the "Palestinian issue", because it dominates our life. 65 years after the foundation of Israel, half the news in our media concern this one issue, directly or indirectly.

Just now, the South African government has decreed that all products of the West Bank settlements sold there must be clearly marked. This measure, already in force in Europe, was roundly condemned by our Foreign Minister, Avidgor Lieberman, as "racist" (looks who's talking!). However, it joins a boycott initiated 15 years ago by my Israeli friends and me.

The new government coalition has declared that it will renew negotiations with the Palestinians (everybody knows that this is a hollow promise). A wave of murders and rapes is being attributed to Arabs (and African asylum seekers). All presidential candidates in Egypt promise to take up the fight for the Palestinians. Senior Israeli army officers have disclosed that 3500 Syrian and Iranian missiles, as well as tens of thousands in Hizbollah's South Lebanon, are ready to be launched against us because of Palestine. And so on, a daily list.



Hamad showed us his morning's catch. One box of fish about the size of sardines. He told us that before the blockade, they would have brought in over a hundred. What he will get from that box won't even cover the running costs of his boat. His family now survives on food aid from the UN.

Just off the quayside, though, there is a bustling wholesale fish market with traders bidding for boxes of fish of different shapes, sizes and breeds. The prices they will fetch are high. They have been brought in from Egypt via the tunnels.

Nobody knows exactly who the shadowy figures are that run the tunnel economy, but it is clear that Hamas get a sizeable cut from the operation. Hamad and his family can't afford most of the domestic goods which come in but those with more money probably can, including those involved in the trade itself, with a salary from the PA or one of the NGOs, or with a position in one of the armed groups.

Away from international scrutiny, armed groups can also get their weapons through the tunnels. It's a dangerous journey because collapses are frequent, but people can slip in and out as they like. We were told USD50 is the going rate.

Money made from, and materials brought in through, the tunnels are also fuelling a construction boom. But if you are the UN, you can't use the tunnels. They are illegal and their proceeds are used to fund groups accused of being responsible for terrorism. So you have to use the legitimate crossings to import the materials you need to help rebuild the homes still left shattered by Israeli airstrikes. To build more classrooms for the 85% of schools that are so overcrowded that they have to teach Gaza children in shifts. But those crossings are controlled by Israel and subject to blockade. You'll only get a fraction of what you need through and

115 years after the foundation of the Zionist movement, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict dominates our news.

THE FOUNDING FATHERS of Zionism adopted the slogan "a land without a people for a people without a land" (coined much earlier by a British Christian Zionist). They believed the Promised Land to be empty. They knew, of course, that there were some people in the country, but the Zionists were Europeans, and for Europeans at the end of the 19th century, the heyday of imperialism and colonialism, colored people – brown, black, yellow, red or whatever - did not count as people.

When Theodor Herzl put forward the idea of a Jewish State, he was not thinking about Palestine but about an area in Argentina. He intended to empty this area of all its native population – but only after they had killed all the snakes and dangerous beasts.

In his book "Der Judenstaat" there is no mention of Arabs - and not by accident. When Herzl wrote it, he was not yet thinking about this country. The country appears in the book only in a tiny chapter added at

you'll have particular problems with items that Israel deems could be diverted for terrorist purposes – like pipework for example. Probably a bit like the hundreds of pipes we saw coming in from the tunnels on the back of heavy trucks.

Even if the goods you need are approved by Israel for import, the chances are that procedure at the crossings will cause delay. The UN estimates that in Gaza today, in the legitimate economy, about one third of the items on the essential drug list are out of stock.

But all this is about what comes in and what the international community funds through aid. Why can't Gaza have a functioning economy of its own? Because fishermen like Hamad are not allowed by Israel to fish more than 3km off shore, because 35% of Gaza's agricultural land is designated restricted areas by Israel where those entering are liable to be shot on sight from watchtowers along the border and when virtually no exports can get through Israel-controlled crossings through to the rest of the internationally proposed Palestinian state in the West Bank.

So put together, if you are a Palestinian without money or influence with an armed group, or if you want to operate legitimately, Israel's blockade will collectively punish you in the name of combating terrorism. If you're not in any of those categories, you will probably get what you need through the tunnels. Of course, you may run the risk of being hit by one of Israel's targeted airstrikes. But if you are a Gazan who happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, you or your children could be hit by one of those anyway – as happened that weekend.

So go to Gaza and suspend disbelief. We were only there for 22 hours. But that was enough to understand that it's not suspension of disbelief that the people of Gaza need. It's the lifting of the blockade and of Israel's apparatus of occupation. It's what the people of Gaza have a right to expect the international community to insist on. And, by undermining the tunnel economy, it would further the cause of peace.

Richard Burden is Labour MP for Birmingham Northfield. He is a member of the International Development Committee of the House of Commons, chairs the Britain-Palestine All Party Parliamentary Group and is Vice Chair of Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East.

A Bird's Eye View

By: Uri Avnery
<http://www.avnery-news.co.il>

ON MAY 15, the anniversary of the founding of the State of Israel, its Arab citizens observed a day of mourning for the victims of the Naqba ("catastrophe") – the mass exodus of half the Palestinian people from the territory which became Israel.

Like every year, this aroused much fury. Tel Aviv University allowed Arab students to hold a meeting, which was attacked by ultra-right Jewish students. Haifa University forbade the meeting altogether. Some years ago the Knesset debated a "Naqba Law" that would have sent commemorators to prison for three years. This was later moderated to the withdrawal of government funds from institutions that mention the Naqba.

The Only Democracy in the Middle East may well be the only democracy in the world that forbids its citizens to remember a historical event. Forgetting is a national duty.

the last moment, titled "Palestine or Argentina?"

Therefore Herzl did not speak about evicting the Palestinian population. This would have been impossible anyway, since Herzl was asking the Ottoman sultan for a charter for Palestine. The Sultan was a Caliph, the spiritual head of all the world's Muslims. Herzl was too cautious to bring this subject up.

This explains the otherwise curious fact: the Zionist movement has never given a clear answer to its most basic question: how to create a Jewish state in a country inhabited by another people. This question has remained unresolved to this very day.

But only seemingly. Hidden somewhere underneath it all, on the fringes of the collective consciousness, Zionism always had an answer. It is so self-evident, that there was no need to think about it. Only few had the courage to express it openly. It is imprinted on the "genetic code" of the Zionist movement, so to speak, and its daughter, the State of Israel.

This code says: a Jewish State in all the Land of Israel. And therefore: total opposition to the creation of a Palestinian state

Britain's historical obligation towards Palestine: Salvaging the Two-State Solution

Ambassador Hassassian - London

Whilst the Arab spring has witnessed a regime change on a momentous scale which has ushered change and renewed hope in the Middle East region, the Arab Spring has also diverted the international attention from the Palestinian issue which is also a revolt against oppression and towards freedom. Subsequently more focus was given to the Arab awakening whilst allowing the situation in Palestine to deteriorate – resulting in more settlements building, illegal annexation, increased settler violence and deviating attention from the Palestinian UN bid for statehood last September.

For the last twenty years Palestinians had to endure a failed peace process supported by an impotent international community and a Quartet that cannot enforce or implement international law or United Nations (UN) resolutions. The international community's silence has provided Israel with a climate of impunity where it can act as a pariah state.

At the core of all the Israeli violations of international law, international humanitarian law, human rights and the Geneva Convention is Israel's policy of land grab. Settlement expansion has destroyed local communities and fragmented the Palestinian society, eventually encapsulating Palestinian areas into enclaves which are cut-off from its surroundings. The process of establishing Israeli presence and land acquisition developed a political architecture of separation and denial in Israeli settlements. The continued settlement expansion and de-population of the indigenous Palestinian population has become today's Nakba – a modern form of ethnic cleansing which continues today despite international demands and objections against the Israeli occupation forces. Currently there are over some 498,000 settlers living in the West Bank: 186,646 in neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem and 311,431 in the rest of the West Bank. This has had a negative impact on the Palestinian Christian community.

The percentage of the Palestinian Christian population within Jerusalem nowadays is 1.9%, as compared to 19% in 1946, during

– at any time, anywhere in the country, at all costs.

WHEN A strategist plans a war, he first of all defines its aim. That is the Main Effort. Every other effort must be considered accordingly. If it supports the main effort, it is acceptable. If it hurts the main effort, it must be rejected.

The Main Effort of the Zionist/Israeli movement is to achieve a Jewish State in all of Eretz Israel - the territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. In other words: the prevention of an Arab Palestinian state.

When one grasps this, all the events of the last 115 years make sense. All the twists and turns, all the seeming contradictions and deviations, all the curious-looking decisions make perfect sense.

In a bird's eye view, the Zionist-Israeli policy looks like a river striving towards the sea. When it meets an obstacle, it goes around it. The path deviates to the right and to the left, sometimes even going backwards. But it perseveres with a wondrous determination towards its goal.

The guiding principle was to accept every compromise that gives us what we can get

the latter days of the British Mandate. In absolute figures, the number of Christians in Jerusalem decreased from 31,300 in 1946 to 14,600 at close of 2010.

When Israel's construction of the Annexation Wall began in 2002, it quickly became apparent that the planned route did not follow the 1967 'Green Line', and that its purpose was to illegally annex areas of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. In 2004, the International Court of Justice confirmed the illegality of this policy.

Furthermore, Israel has denied Palestinians freedom of movement, access to water sources and holy sites, the right to education, residency and equal citizenship. Israel has not only sought to shift the demographic balance in favour of the Jewish population but to also Judaize the land and culture – a process of denial and re-characterisation since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948.

Israel's widespread practice of administrative detention, an emergency law inherited from the British mandate, constitutes a serious breach of international humanitarian and human rights law. While administrative detention is allowed under international humanitarian law, it must be used only under exceptional circumstances as it infringes upon basic human rights, including right to a fair trial. According to 'Addameer', a Palestinian Human Rights organisation dealing with Palestinian prisoners, in April 2012 Israel had 322 Palestinian under Administrative Detention, of which the majority (203) are in fact children. The plight of these political 'prisoners of war' demanded through tenuous hunger strikes has raised the voices of their suffering and sparked international campaigns for the freedom to live, be heard and to demand basic human rights for fair, representative and dignified treatment.

The above mentioned are few amongst many unrelenting Israeli measures practiced against Palestinian civilians. In light of these violations, the absence of an honest broker of peace, the silence of the international community and most importantly the waning support for the two-state solution a question raises itself; what should the

at any stage, but never let the final aim out of our sight.

This policy allows us to compromise about everything, except one: an Arab Palestinian state that would confirm the existence of an Arab Palestinian people.

All Israeli governments have fought this idea with all available means. In this respect there was no difference between David Ben-Gurion, who had a secret agreement with King Abdullah of Jordan to obstruct the setting up of the Palestinian state decreed by the UN General Assembly's 1947 resolution, and Menachem Begin, who made a separate peace with Anwar Sadat in order to get Egypt out of the Israeli-Palestinian war. Not to mention Golda Meir's famous dictum: "There is no such thing as a Palestinian people". Thousands of other decisions by successive Israeli governments have followed the same logic.

The only exception may be the Oslo agreement – which also did not mention a Palestinian state. After signing it, Yitzhak Rabin did not rush forwards to create such a state. Instead, he stopped in his tracks as if stunned by his own audacity. He hesitated, dithered, until the inevitable Zionist

British government's role be in salvaging the two-state solution?

The British government has a moral and ethical obligation towards the Palestinian people since Britain played a prominent role in laying the foundations of the Palestinian tragedy through its famous Balfour Declaration through to the present day British government policies that support Israel through military and trade relations. The British government should shoulder its moral and historic obligations towards the Palestinians, as it has created a national home for the Jews on Palestinian soil, it has to support and bring to reality a Palestinian State albeit the Palestinians have already consented to a truncated one. Britain should impose more diplomatic pressure on Israel to face the current reality that there is no military solution and Israel cannot retain the land and ask for peace and security at the same time.

Britain has been a staunch supporter of the two-state solution, however last September when the implementation of the two-state solution was put to test during the Palestinian bid for statehood at the United Nations and our request for membership at the UNESCO, the British government chose to sit on the fence and abstained. Our people have struggled to achieve their rights for sixty four years and Britain despite its historic role and moral responsibility has let them down while Israel has continued its policy of creating facts on ground by annexing more land; expanding settlements; Judaizing east Jerusalem; demolishing houses; and arresting Palestinians rendering a viable future Palestinian implausible.

To this day, the Palestinians fail to understand why the British government abstained in spite of its support for the two-state solution and its plausible criticism for the illegal settlements in the occupied territory. In several speeches President Abbas assured the international community that the final status issues would have to be negotiated with Israel before a peace treaty is signed. The decision to abstain by the British government establishes to the Palestinian people that their right to self-determination and independence and the historical compromise made by their leadership are insignificant and unimportant.

Nevertheless, the decision of the Labour Party along with the British civil society to support the statehood bid was highly appreciated by the Palestinian leadership and

counter-attack gathered momentum and put an end to his effort - and his life

THE PRESENT struggle over the settlements is an integral part of this process. The main aim of the settlers is to make a Palestinian state impossible. All Israeli governments have supported them, openly or covertly. They are, of course, illegal under international law, but many of them are also illegal under Israeli law. These are variously called "illegal", "unlawful", "unpermitted" and so forth. Israel's august Supreme Court has ordered the removal of several of them and seen its rulings ignored by the government.

The settlers assert that not a single settlement has been set up without secret government consent. And indeed, all the "unlawful" settlements have been connected at once to the water and electricity grids, special new roads have been built for them and the army has rushed to defend them – indeed the Israel Defense Forces have long ago become the Settlements Defense Forces. Lawyers and shysters galore have been employed to expropriate huge tracts of Palestinian land. One famous woman lawyer discovered a forgotten Ottoman law which says that if you shout from the edge of a

government. The role of the British civil society in supporting the Palestinian people and advancing the Palestinian cause has been heroic leading the British solidarity groups to be at the forefront of the international solidarity movements with Palestine.

The situation today is not perfect and will never be. We need the help of the international community, so we encourage the British government to have a more proactive role and support the Palestinian leadership should the current stalled talks continue and the Palestinian leadership decide to head to the United Nations for a second time this year. Britain has played a very influential role in the Arab awakening by supporting the quest of the Arab peoples for freedom and self-determination so we hope it will support the Palestinian people fulfil these same aspirations.

village, all the land where the shout cannot be heard belongs to the Sultan. Since the Israeli government is the heir of the Jordanian government, which was the heir of the Sultan, this land belongs to the Israeli government, which turns it over to the settlers. (This is not a joke!)

While the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems in abeyance and "nothing happens", it is really going on with full force in the only battlefield that matters: the settlement enterprise. Everything else is marginal, like the awesome prospect of an Israeli attack on Iran. As I have been saying all along: that will never happen. It is a part of the effort to divert attention from the Two-State Solution, the only peaceful solution there is.

WHERE IS the negation of the Palestinian state leading to?

Logically, it can only lead to an apartheid state in the entire country between the Mediterranean and the Jordan. In the long run, that would be untenable, leading to an Arab-majority "bi-national" state, which would be totally unacceptable to almost all Israeli Jews. So what is left?

The only conceivable solution would be transfer of all the Arabs to the other side of the Jordan. In some ultra-right circles, this is openly talked about. The Jordanian monarch is deadly afraid of it.

Population transfer already happened in 1948. It is still a point of debate whether this was done deliberately. In the first part of the war, it was clearly a military necessity (and practiced by both sides). Later on, it became more deliberate. But the main point is that the refugees were not allowed back when the hostilities were over. On the contrary, some villages were emptied and destroyed even later. Everybody acted under the invisible directive of the Main Effort, a direction so deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness, that it did not need any specific order.

But 1948 is long gone. The world has changed. What was tolerated from post-Holocaust brave little Israel would not be tolerated tomorrow from mighty, arrogant Israel. Today It is a pipe-dream - like similar dreams on the other side that Israel would somehow disappear from the map.

This means that ethnic cleansing, the only alternative to the Two-State solution, is impossible. The Main Effort has run into a dead end.

IT HAS often been said that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a clash between an unstoppable force and an immovable object. This will dominate our lives and the lives of generations to come.

Unless we do something that looks almost impossible: to change the Main Effort, the historic direction of our state. Substitute for it a new national aim: peace and co-existence, reconciliation between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine.

SPECIAL REPORT

Running the Gaza Marathon

Del & Komal from Labour Friends of Palestine & the Middle East (www.lfpme.org) took part in the second UNRWA Gaza Marathon in March 2012. In appalling weather conditions - (with gale force winds, rain and freezing temperatures) - Del completed his first ever full marathon running 42 kilometres from Beit Hanoun to Rafah and Komal completed her first 10km run. Del writes



In the first few kilometres we passed through the Jabaliya refugee camp where 110,000 Palestinian refugees live in cramped and pitiful conditions in 1.4 square kilometres of land. Their daily existence had been made even bleaker over the last several weeks due to the absence of electricity. The overcast conditions added a further sense of gloom.

Shortly afterwards we reached the exposed coastal road where we faced the full force of the turbulent weather conditions with powerful head winds pummeling into us. It often felt like you were going through the motions of running without actually moving forward. The gales were so strong, at times; they forced your legs to kick into you as you took strides forward. I was however left flabbergasted and amused when two children managed to glide through the gales and pass me.

As I ran by the rubbish skips alongside the Al-Shati refugee camp, the strong winds were joined by rain and I was accompanied by an elderly passer-by. He held onto his headscarf and I held on to my cap as we ran together against the harsh weather. I understood very little of his Arabic and he my English, but our hand signals, smiles and laughter at the surreal situation made it all the more meaningful. After a short while he stopped to catch his breath.

We shared some water as he gestured to the heavens, gave me a hug and wished me well.

Reaching the 10km mark was sheer relief. The BBC crew who interviewed me earlier gave us the thumbs up, looking pleasantly surprised that a few of us had survived the conditions to get this far. Shortly afterwards I passed by the deserted Gaza Port and through Gaza city and was relieved the built up area offered some protection from the weather.

At the 20km mark I took a breather at the water station and I felt I could not carry on too much further. The police officers stationed there excitedly reeled off the names of Bollywood actors when they realised I was of Indian origin. I in return also name dropped the few famous actors I knew off, much to their delight. Then, like a Bollywood action hero I decided to keep going.

At this stage I was relying on mental strength and sheer willpower. It was tough, especially dealing with the gale force winds which were now blasting sand into our faces and bare legs. Plenty of water was required to repeatedly wash sand out of my mouth and I had to walk backgrounds into the

storm just to shield my body in order to progress forward. You knew the weather was really bad as you could not even see the usual menacing sight of Israeli warships on the water's horizon.

Another runner from the US who had several marathons under his belt also struggled alongside me. As we shivered with the cold and wet conditions, we spoke about quitting but managed to encourage each other to go a little further and reached the 32km mark. There we decided we should try and get to the end even if we had to crawl.

It was on the 10km stretch my feet got sore, my hands froze and a few other painful niggles began to surface. But as I was flagging badly, the legendary Palestinian hospitality came to my aid, helping raise my spirits and making me laugh. A Palestinian man jogged alongside me to offer me a cigarette as a way to warm up which I laughingly declined. A little later, a farmer tending a strip of cultivated land alongside the beach enthusiastically waved and offered me a huge cabbage. I was barely able to carry myself and had to apologise that I could not take it with me. Their offers served to remind me that I should have smoked less and eaten more greens in the weeks leading up to the marathon.

I also had to decline a kind offer of a lift from a family even after they winked and laughingly assured me it would be kept a secret. I did however, regret not taking up the offer of a ride from a man with a donkey and cart when shortly afterwards I found myself having to navigate a reservoir of a puddle and managed to sink my feet in deep mud.

I had to keep telling myself that my little pain and struggle paled into insignificance with what the Palestinians in Gaza go through and that helped me continue. I actually managed to run the last 4 kilometres at some pace and got to the finish in just under 5 hours. I was hoping to do it in 4 hours. Maybe next year? The winner, Nader, was at the finish and applauded me in. He had won the first Gaza marathon in 2011 but this year his time was also affected by the weather, taking him 45 minutes more (at 3 hours 15 minutes).

My colleague Komal was at the finishing line - having

valiantly completed her 10km run and we were both just so happy that we got to the finish. It was an enthralling experience and a real honour to play a small part in bringing a little normality to Gaza, even if only for a few hours. The children were so happy with their achievement as were we and we all proudly showed off our medals.

This day of joy was shattered a few days later when Israel launched military attacks on Gaza, leaving many people dead and injured, including children.

Komal and Del managed to raise £7000 through sponsorship. That money will help support UNRWA provide services to vulnerable children in Gaza as well as support LFPME to continue to raise awareness in the UK about the situation in Palestine.

@DelDSingh

@lfpme

www.lfpme.org

about the experience.

It was an unexpectedly cold and stormy morning in Beit Hanoun as we limbered up before the start of the second UNRWA Gaza Marathon.

I had never run any kind of race before and worryingly had only managed to fit in four weeks of training before the big day. I nonetheless joked in a BBC World radio interview that my tactic would be to keep up with the race favourite Nader al-Masri. In the event, it was no more than 100 metres after the start that Nader zipped past me and disappeared into the stormy distance. I settled for just trying to get to the finish.

My fellow marathon runners included Gazan athletes, some internationals, as well as nearly 2000 children who were running 1km relays along the length of the marathon. As you ran together the children asked you your name and where you were from and shook your hand to welcome you. Other children lining the streets smiled, waved and gave you 'high fives' as you went by, whilst UN vehicles and camera crews jostled to photograph the participants.



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A welcome addition to the literature written on the Peace Process. It is formidable in its eloquence, humanity and the description of his hopes for a just peace for all Palestinians.' Judge Eugene Cotran

The Peace Process: From Breakthrough to Breakdown

by Afif Safieh

Review by: Yousef Munayyer
executive director of the Jerusalem Fund

Many of us have read books by popular authors. Some authors have been important parts of our lives, some have been celebrities and still others we have come to know through endless television interviews and programs. When reading their work, it's as though you can see and hear them in their writing. Few books I have read, however, so perfectly capture the unique linguistic mannerisms of the author as Ambassador Afif Safieh's recent book, *The Peace Process: From Breakthrough to Breakdown*.

This is not simply because I, like many Palestinians in America or England came to know Ambassador Safieh over time, but rather because Safieh's personable style connects, even with strangers, in a way that only a long and storied companionship would allow. This is precisely what makes him the most effective representative of the Palestinian people I have come to know.

Through the pages of this collection of lectures, Safieh strikes the perfect balance of humility and intellect - a rare but invaluable tool in the hands of a diplomat. The book covers an important and interesting period (1981-2005) when Safieh held different posts at academic institutions, as well as diplomatic responsibilities in the Netherlands, London and the Vatican. During this period, of course, the Palestine Liberation Organization experienced tragic ups and downs including the devastation of Lebanon, the declaration of independence, recognition in negotiations, Madrid, Oslo, the return to Palestine, the failure of Oslo and so on. The commentaries given by Safieh over time provide a Palestinian insight into all that transpired in a way that is enlightening to Palestinians and non-Palestinians alike.

This important and quite prescient passage, delivered as part of a lecture in England in 2001, is a typical representation of the wisdom in Safieh's book:

The United States remains a decisive player and I for one believe that the battle for Washington is winnable. A serious strategic debate will inevitably soon surface in Washington on the nature of the American-Israeli relationship. Is Israel still a strategic asset or is it gradually becoming a strategic burden and liability? Today, after the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of Arab militant regimes, the Arab regional system is profoundly conservative and pro-Western. Israel, by its insatiably territorial appetite, is defying, de-legitimizing and destabilizing the network of friendship

America enjoys in the region. Arab public opinion, from Morocco to Muscat is boiling. Islamic public opinion, from Nigeria to Malaysia, is angry at the perceived American complacency over and complicity with Israel's endless occupation of Palestinian territory. Israeli regional expansion, if perpetuated, can disrupt and endanger American global interests.

Given the current and evolving debate in America today about the American-Israeli relationship, one that has catapulted forward in recent years and some would even say recent months, Safieh was remarkably accurate a decade ago observing Washington from across the pond.

This book does however leave something to be desired. Published in 2010, *The Peace Process: From Breakthrough to Breakdown* provides Safieh's thoughts and commentary only through 2005. The five years since have been transformative. The election of Hamas, the PA in the post-Arafat era, the bombardment of Lebanon in 2006, the siege and attacks on Gaza, the inter-Palestinian division, and the practically simultaneous rise of new players like Barack Obama and Benjamin Netanyahu's extreme right-wing government, are all critical developments that leave the reader looking for more pages as they approach the back cover.

Perhaps Safieh's views on this period and more will be included in his next book. I, for one, look forward to reading them.

[An] intellectually powerful, articulate and eloquent spokesmen. His book makes a vital contribution to our understanding of the cause that he has served with dignity and distinction for over three decades. It deserves the widest possible readership.'
Avi Shlaim, Oxford University

Review by: Caelum Moffat
PhD candidate at Durham University

At a time when the Peace Process appears indeterminately on hiatus, rendering discussions of a two-state solution virtually obsolete, Palestinian diplomat Afif Safieh has published a collection of essays, speeches and interviews that provide an invaluable insider's account into the transition 'from breakthrough to breakdown' and illuminate the often shadowed causes of the chronic impasse.

Aside from its undeniable relevance, one of the definitive aspects of this book is Ambassador Safieh's first-hand experience and overwhelming knowledge of one of the most complex conflicts in International Politics. On entries explicitly dealing the Peace Process - from his contextualisation of the Madrid process to his deftly-crafted letter to Tony Blair in 2003 regarding the inherent limitations of the Road Map - Safieh's explanatory style combines the rigorous and systematic analysis of an erudite scholar with the presentational delivery of a journalist to produce a digestible assessment into the reasons behind the repetitious and intractable nature of negotiations. One of the most impressive chapters is a lecture delivered to MIT in 1986 entitled 'Dead ends?' in which Safieh, almost prophetically, explores the possible strategies available for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

However, Safieh is not content with just adhering to conventional lines of argument. Another notable characteristic of

this book is his honesty - a trait unrecognisable amongst most modern emissaries. Speaking on the sources of Lebanese/Palestinian tensions, Safieh boldly deviates from popular notions that depict Syria as consistently and unequivocally behind the Palestinian cause. Controversially, Safieh declares that former Syrian President Hafez Assad's 'interpretation and version of Pan-Arabism converged strangely with Israeli desideratas' and questions whether Assad was an 'Arab Bismarck - a federator of a fragmented Arab nation - or whether he is a disintegrator of an already Balkanised Arab world'.

Herein lies one of Safieh's unique abilities: his Foucauldian approach in critically examining and dissecting preconceived discourses of power that are assumed to be 'truthful' and subsequently reproduced by political actors as justifications for their policies. Examples of this deconstruction of political language are evident throughout the book, particularly when he evaluates traditional Israeli postures towards negotiations and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

A review of this book is not complete without mention of Safieh's charming wit. The tri-lingual diplomat has an artistic command of English and an articulacy that allows him to deploy attractive wordplays. For example, Safieh refers to the 'orient as disorientated'; the Palestinian stance at Madrid as 'unreasonably reasonable'; speaks of the U.S./Israeli relationship in terms of an 'American Israel' or an 'Israeli America'; postulates that the Middle East 'have either one people too many, or one state less than what is needed'; and claims that Palestinians deserve third-party

involvement because 'we too happen to have oil: olive oil'.

Despite his qualities and extensive service to diplomacy, even Safieh humbly admitted in 1997 that as 'a diplomat, I have to confess that I increasingly find the diplomatic avenue of the peace process to be an unamusing farce'. Safieh should be commended for his commitment to upholding the rich legacy of his forebearers for he is an orator, in the Aristotelian sense, and a true master of his profession.

Afif Safieh is not just respected for his work as Head of Mission in London, Washington DC and Moscow or his staunch advocacy for the establishment of a Palestinian state through increased third-party involvement, pan-Arab cooperation, and a 'confrontational strategy of popular non-violent resistance'. In a region generally perceived as innately Manichean, Safieh represents the embodiment of balance: between optimism and pragmatism; emotion and reason; charm and substance. The result is an informative and insightful book by one of the world's most inspiring intellectuals.

If you have book suggestions contact the editor at:

editor@thepalestinianchronicle.com



'These brilliant essays are essential reading' Eugene Rogan

The PEACE PROCESS

From Breakthrough to Breakdown

Afif Safieh



FROM THE UK

<https://www.facebook.com/ThePalestinianChronicle>

WELCOME TO LONDON, Mrs Livni, and WELCOME TO PRISON?

A Lib Dem speaks...

By: John McHugo - London

Remember universal jurisdiction? This is jurisdiction for war crimes allegedly committed outside the normal territorial reach of the British courts. Before the last election, politicians seemed to be falling over backwards to make pledges to Israel that, if elected, they would change the law so that Tzipi Livni, the Israeli leader of the opposition, could visit Britain without fear of arrest for allegations of war crimes.

She, it will be recalled, was Israeli minister of foreign affairs at the time of Operation Cast lead. She was the one who said she hoped the Israeli army would “go wild” in Gaza. Charming. According to B’Tselem, 1,385 Palestinians were killed in the conflict, of whom 716 did not take part in it and 318 were minors under the age of 18. Had she committed a war crime because of her role in organising the Israeli military operation, or perhaps by incitement? We do not know. No court has looked at this question, and Israel’s lobbying to change the law in this country, which was backed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, appeared to be successful.

It seemed to many people that the Liberal Democrats, once they were in the Coalition Government, caved in to Israeli pressure and joined the Tories and Labour on this issue. All three parties united to push the change to the law through Parliament in what has to become Section 153 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act which received the Royal Assent on 15 September last year. Within weeks, Livni came to London for official talks. A private application for an arrest warrant was made for her. Because of the change to the law, it was widely expected to be rejected. But, to the amazement of some, the District Judge looking at the application did not do so. Instead, he stopped examining it. This was because he had been presented with an unprecedented and retroactive certificate stating that she was here on a “special mission”. This was issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and his hands were tied.

What had happened?

A little known compromise on the change to the law was reached between Nick Clegg and David Cameron before the legislation went through Parliament. The original proposal had been to change the law so as to require the consent of the Attorney General before an arrest warrant could be issued. The Attorney General is a politician as well as a lawyer, and sits in the Cabinet. In reality, the consent would never have been given without cabinet approval. But Nick Clegg insisted the consent should come from the Director of Public Prosecutions, not the Attorney General.

The Director of Public Prosecutions has to act independently - although he is under the “superintendence” of the Attorney General and reports to him at least once a week. Hmm. A grey area if ever there was one. How would it pan out when tested? Well, when the application to arrest Livni reached the Director of Public Prosecutions, he duly consulted with the Attorney General. We don’t know what they said to each other, but their conversation took place before the “special mission” certificate was issued. This can only suggest that there was a perceived risk that, on the basis of the Director’s independent judgement, the evidence was sufficient for him to consider issuing an arrest warrant for Livni, despite the change in legislation, and that he would go ahead and do so. The Government acted quickly to prevent that happening.

Will a similar certificate be issued if she visits us again, now that she is no longer leader of the opposition and, therefore, a less necessary person for our diplomats and politicians to talk to? Or what if another retired Israeli politician, civil servant or military figure against whom there are credible allegations of war crimes decides to come here? It would be hard to argue that such individuals should be given the protection of a “special mission” certificate, since there would be no reason of state to justify it. The new law is untested, but if a retired individual against whom there are credible war crimes allegations is prosecuted at the Old Bailey one day, and his (or her) victims get justice, they will owe it in part to Nick Clegg’s agreement with David Cameron. The change in the law was a victory for Israel’s lobby in this country, but perhaps not quite the comprehensive victory they had hoped for.

(John McHugo is chair of the Liberal Democrat Friends of Palestine, a member of the board of CAABU and the author of “A Concise History of the Arabs”, to be published in 2013 by Saqi Books)

Upcoming Events

Courtesy of the Arab British Centre

Calligraphy course

Organisation: The Arab British Centre

Time: 05 September 2012 4:00pm
- 21 November 2012 6:00pm

Place: The Arab British Centre, 1 Gough Square, London EC4A 3DE

WEDNESDAYS, 16:00 - 18:00
5 SEPTEMBER - 21 NOVEMBER 2012
COURSE COST: £200

The Arab British Centre is delighted to be hosting a twelve week Calligraphy course taught by Mustafa Ja’far. Knowledge of the Arabic language is not required. The courses will teach the Naskh script of Arabic calligraphy, explain the development of Arabic writing and give an overview of this diverse art form. You will be advised of equipment required for the course at the first session.

For booking or further information:

E: info@arabbritishcentre.org.uk
T: 020 7832 1310

Macbeth: Leila and Ben
A Bloody History

Organisation: The World Shakespeare Festival/LIFT

Time: 04 July 2012 8:00pm - 07 July 2012 11:00pm

Place: Riverside Studios, Crisp Road, London W6

Artistes Producteurs Associés look to the Scottish play for a new perspective on the seismic events that played out on the streets of Tunis and across the Arab world.

Tunisia has changed irreversibly since French-Tunisian theatre group Artistes Producteurs Associés presented Hobb Story: Instructions for Arab Love at LIFT 2010. Yet whilst the rest of Tunisia looks forward to a hopefully brighter future following the Arab Spring, Artistes Producteurs Associés look to Macbeth for a new perspective on the seismic events that played out on the streets of Tunis and across the Arab world.

Macbeth: Leila and Ben – A Bloody History makes Shakespeare’s text startlingly and shockingly relevant to today, blending the company’s trademark multimedia techniques with TV reportage to portray deposed Tunisian dictator President

Zine El Abadine Ben Ali and his wife Leïla as the North African equivalents of Shakespeare’s infamous King and Queen. Their determination to keep their grip on power shows that Macbeth’s story of brutality, backstabbing and blind ambition remains chillingly current.

4 - 7 July 2012 | 20:00
Post Show Talk: 5 July

Riverside Studios
Crisp Road
London
W6 9RL

Tickets: £17.50-£22.50 | Book online or call 020 8237 1111

THE LANGUAGE OF REALITY

Organisation: Southbank Centre

Time: 30 June 2012 2:00pm -

Place: Hayward Lecture Theatre, Southbank Centre, London SE1

A talk by Bouchra Khalili with Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Muller. Bouchra Khalili, in collaboration with Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Muller, explores deliberate inaccuracies in the representation of Arab languages and dialects through contemporary Western cinema, with a special focus on *The Source* (2011), a Franco-Moroccan-Italian co-production directed by Radu Mihaileanu. Set in a remote village in Morocco, it tells the story of women who go on a sex strike in protest at their duties and living conditions. The film includes a trans-Arab cast, with Palestinian, Algerian and French actresses of Tunisian and Algerian descent. In this social comedy, each of the actors speaks Moroccan Arabic in the accent of their own country.

The second part of the class focuses on Italian and Chinese cinema in which local dialects are mostly absent, which in the case of Chinese cinema is for political reasons.

Approximate duration: up to three hours

Part of the Southbank Centre’s Festival of the World.

Bouchra Khalili (b.1975, Casablanca, Morocco) Bouchra Khalili’s videos and installations focus on displacement and migration, and the relationships between physical and psychological geographies. She has mapped the tortuous and clandestine travels of illegal immigrants, asylum seekers and

nomads across straits and borders in search of freedom, refuge, work, a better life, or escape from repression. In recreating these journeys, image and sound take different routes; as Khalili explains: ‘in my work, the sound is the opposite of the voice-over; the sound does not explain the image, it participates in the making of the image.’ She places great importance on documenting refugees’ specific languages; their individual narratives of exile and loss are told in their mother tongues. As well as making her own work, Khalili is committed to promoting Arab and innovative international cinema. She is the co-founder of La Cinémathèque de Tanger, whose mission is to develop film culture in Morocco. Khalili’s own films have been shown at festivals galleries and museums worldwide, including the Sharjah Biennial in 2010 and New York’s Museum of Modern Art in 2011.

French film critic and curator Marie-Pierre Duhamel-Muller is the former director of the Cinéma du Réel Festival at the Pompidou Centre in Paris and a member of the selection committee for the Venice Film Festival. She writes, translates, teaches and programmes both in France and Italy and has also worked for television as a producer.

Tickets: £10/£5conc | book online or call 0844 875 0073.



The General Union of Palestinian Students

Address: Office 38, 203-205 The Vale, Acton, London, W3 7QS
Tel: +44-(0) - 7519620944

GUPS-UK new elected steering committee is taking the initiative to revamp and revive union body. One of the latest achievements for the new committee is reinstating the unions’ membership at the National Union of Students (NUS) and hence being granted full membership status as delegates to Palestine.

GUPS provides Palestinian students with access to many services including:

- Website with support information and advice
- Arrange to meet for advice service
- Sharing education experience between students
- Advice on immigration procedures
- Provide a venue for Palestinian students to communicate
- Raise awareness about the illegal occupation and the Palestinian cause

The union’s commitment to creating a vibrant and sustainable community for students was underlined at the event to mark the official opening of a new office and headquarters in London. The objective of this will be to create a regular meeting point for all students who are interested in beginning future solidarity campaigns and ventures.

ARABIC POETRY & TRANSLATION

Organisation: Southbank Centre

Time: 28 June 2012 11:00am -

Place: The Front Room at QEH, Southbank Centre, London SE1

Literature Across Frontiers

How do two different poetic traditions speak to each other through translation? What is lost and what is gained in the process of translating poetry and does the poet-translator's voice reshape the intentions of the original poem? These and other questions are discussed by poets and translators Dhabiya Khamis (Qatar), Khaled Mattawa (Libya) and Iman Mersal (Egypt). Hosted by Alexandra Büchler.

In Partnership with Literature Across Frontiers

Part of the Southbank Centre's Poetry Par-nassus and Festival of the World.

Thursday 28 June 2012 | 11:00

The Front Room
Queen Elizabeth Hall
Southbank Centre
Belvedere Road
London
SE1 8XX

Free event

Alternative Geographies

Organisation: Southbank Centre

Time: 27 June 2012 7:30pm -

Place: Weston Roof Pavilion, Southbank Centre, London SE1

Southbank Centre in partnership with the British Council Presents Arabic and Francophone Poetry from the Middle East, Africa and Europe In this rare event, leading contemporary poets from the Middle East, Africa and Europe present an evening of poetry in Arabic and French. Settle in with a cup of steaming Moroccan mint tea and watch the sunset over the Thames whilst listening to poetry in two of the most beautiful languages.

The Event will be in Arabic, English and French.

In Partnership with The British Council

Weston Roof Pavilion
Royal Festival Hall
Southbank Centre
Belvedere Road
London
SE1 8XX

Tickets £8\50%off conc | Book online or call 0844 875 0073

Sarah, Arwad and Nour Khalifeh will be representing their homeland Palestine, at a carnival in Hertford, Hertfordshire. Hertford is a small, mainly White and middle-class town, where the sisters have been residing for the past 11 years.

This is the first time the carnival will be taking place after ten years of absence. The theme they have chosen for the carnival is "Palestinian Wedding," where the bride and groom will be dressed in traditional authentic Bethlehem wedding outfits.

The sisters will be accompanied by Al Ashbal Dabkeh group who will perform to carnival attendees; meanwhile a fashion show showcasing traditional Palestinian costumes will take place.

Other activities the sisters will be running, alongside their mother, will be storytelling, Arabic food/drink tasting, Henna tattoos, educational workshops for children, and exhibiting Palestinian artefacts and jewellery.

Three awards will be given out on the day, and the sisters are hoping to win at least one of them.

Hertford Town Council
The Castle
Hertford
SG14 1HR

Entry is free and everyone is welcome to attend the cultural family-friendly event.

Five Broken Cameras

Organisation: Frontline Club

Time: 22 June 2012 7:00pm

Place: Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, London W2

Frontline Club Presents
A Film by Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi
For the birth of his fourth son, Palestinian villager Emad Burnat bought his first camera. This is also the moment a separation wall is being built in his village Bil'in. The self-taught cameraman begins filming the events around him - and ends up with five broken video cameras. The footage of each of them tells a different part of the story of his village's non-violent resistance to the Israeli army.

Despite the pleas from his wife who fears reprisals, Emad keeps on filming. The result is an intensely powerful, first-hand and deeply personal document about one village's struggle against violence and oppression.

The screening will be followed by a Q&A with directors Emad Burnat and Guy Davidi.

Frontline Club
13 Norfolk Place
London
W2 1QJ

Tickets: £10\£8conc | Book online or call 020 7479 8940

HOME: CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURAL INTERPRETATIONS OF THE HOME IN THE ARAB WORLD

Organisation: Museum of Architecture/Mosaic Rooms

Time: 21 June 2012 11:00am - 07 July 2012 6:00pm

Place: Mosaic Rooms, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW

Museum of Architecture (MoA) Presents:

The Mosaic Rooms presents its first architecture exhibition by the Museum of Architecture as part of the British Council International

Architecture and Design Showcase 2012 and the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad.

Home is an exhibition that picks apart the very fabric of what makes up the home in the Arab world. The notion of home is explored through visual conception, materials and forms that reference traditional typologies and environmental contexts that are uniquely Arab.

The exhibition will explore and challenges traditional identities by engaging and presenting contemporary Arab Architecture that seeks to redefine or reconfirm each country's unique interpretation. Working with Architects and collaboratives from Bahrain, Egypt (Shahira Fahmy Architects, in collaboration with artist Hala Elkoussy), Iraq (AMBS Architects), Lebanon (design collective LEFT), Morocco (Kilo Architecture), Qatar and Yemen (The Daw'an Mud Brick Architecture Foundation, led by Salma Samar Damluji), the exhibition will inform visitors of contemporary practice within architecture in the Middle East and North Africa region.

Free entrance

The Mosaic Rooms, 226 Cromwell Road, London SW5 0SW

66 Minutes in Damascus

Organisation: LIFT/Shoreditch Town Hall

Time: 19 June 2012 5:30pm - 24 June 2012 10:30pm

Place: Shoreditch Town Hall, 380 Old Street, London EC1

The audience are placed as a group of tourists visiting the Syrian capital only to be arrested by the Syrian secret service. Lebanese film-maker and theatre director Lucien Bourjeily brings the Syrian revolution disturbingly close to London in his new work.

The artist who brought improvised theatre to the streets of Beirut during the political turmoil of 2008, Lebanese film-maker and theatre director Lucien Bourjeily, now brings the Syrian revolution disturbingly close to London in his new work 66 Minutes in Damascus.

Inspired by the descriptions of Syrian detention centres from foreign journalists and local activists arbitrarily incarcerated by the autocratic regime, 66 Minutes in Damascus puts the audience in the place of a group of tourists who visit the Syrian capital, only to be arrested by the Syrian secret service.

Trapped in a web of intrigue and fear, the audience becomes similarly entangled in the strands of immersive, site-specific interactive theatre which Bourjeily has woven together throughout his career.

Disclaimer: 66 Minutes in Damascus is a physical, interactive experience and contains scenes that some may find disturbing. Participants will be required to stand for periods of time and are advised to wear flat shoes. The performance is not suitable for those with claustrophobia.

Commissioned by LIFT and presented in association with Shoreditch Town Hall

Shoreditch Town Hall
380 Old Street
London
EC1V 9LT

Tickets: £15 | Book online or call 020 7613 7498

If you want to list your event here contact us at:

advertise@thepalestinianchronicle.com



**Labour Friends
of Palestine
& the Middle East**

**Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East
GALA DINNER 2012
Guests of Honours: Rt. Hon Ed Miliband MP &
H.E. Manuel Hassassian the Palestinian Ambassador**



Date: Wednesday 27th June Time: 18.45 – 22.15

Venue: Lincoln's Inn, London, WC2A 3TL

Tickets: £150 (Early-bird £100 until May 25th)

The event will include a drinks reception, 3 course meal, and entertainment.

For more information please contact LFPME on

E: Info@lfpme.org T: 07872 483547

www.lfpme.org/orders

FROM THE UK

<https://www.facebook.com/ThePalestinianChronicle>



Labour2Palestine, one way to see Palestine and more

By: Martin Linton - London

Have you ever wondered why so many British MPs seem reluctant to speak up about the obvious injustices suffered by the Palestinian people?

One of the answers to this question can be found on the Electoral Commission's website which lists over 100 MPs who have visited Israel as guests of Conservative Friends of Israel or Labour Friends of Israel.

Nowadays the MPs usually insist that the visit must include at least half a day in Ramallah, but they don't get to see or hear about what life is really like for Palestinians.

The website also has a list of MPs who have visited the West Bank and Gaza as guests of Palestine-friendly organisations. This list is, sadly, much shorter.

However, the MPs come back from these visits fired up with anger about the indignities and injustices imposed on Palestinians by the occupation and keen to raise questions and speak in Parliament.

I went on one of these parliamentary delegations in 2007, accompanied by my wife. This opened our eyes to the full extent of injustice and made us determined to campaign for change, but more importantly, to encourage others to find out about Palestine and visit themselves.

We helped to set up Labour Friends of Palestine & the Middle East in 2009 and then in 2011 we set up Labour2Palestine to organise visits to the West Bank and Gaza.

So far we have organised three delegations of Labour councillors and members and we are planning two delegations of Labour researchers who work in MPs' offices for later this year.

These are self-financed visits where the participants have to pay their fares and hotel bills, but a lot of people in the Labour Party are prepared to pay because the visits offer the opportunity to find out far more than they could do independently.

On recent visits we walked through the rubble of demolished homes in Anata, we had a brush with the Israeli army at Al Wallaja, we were harangued by angry settlers in Hebron, we spoke to villagers protesting over the blocking of their road at Kafr Qaddum and we met prisoners who had just come out of jail. We even saw the stuffed giraffe at Qalqilia Zoo.

All the participants are involved in politics – as councillors, researchers or party members – so we take advantage of our good relations with Fatah, as Labour and Fatah are sister parties, to meet politicians and party members. We also talk to Israeli activists against the occupation.

Often the participants do not start out with any fixed views about the conflict. They just want to see for themselves. But they have all found the visit a life-changing experience and have come back ready to help in any way. Everyone who has responded to our post-visit survey has said they are likely to recommend the visit to a friend or colleague.

You don't have to take it from me – you can read their blogs and video-clips talking about the visit on <http://labour2palestine.com/>.

Just recently there has been a noticeable change in tone on parliamentary occasions such as Foreign Office questions and

Queen's Speech debates when MPs are able to raise international issues. They are no longer dominated by MPs reading out set scripts from Conservative Friends of Israel or Labour Friends of Israel.

On the last few occasions they have been dominated by MPs talking about their recent visits to the West Bank or Gaza and quoting statistics from the United Nations about the rise in house demolitions or settler violence. This demonstrates the value of delegations.

But there is still a long way to go before MPs are half as critical as they need to be to spur the British government into action.

If we had unlimited money, we would certainly take MPs on visits to the West Bank and Gaza. They would come back shocked by what they see and ask questions and raise issues. But most of them won't keep their focus on Palestine forever. They are pulled in too many directions.

That is why it is valuable to bring the local councillors and party members that MPs rely on and the researchers that work in their offices, because they will make sure the MP keeps up the pressure.

MPs always give priority to the views of their constituents, especially local party members, so that is where we need people with a strong commitment to justice for the Palestinians. We need to embed the issue in their local parties.

Although we are working on Labour Party delegations at the moment, there is no reason why there should not be similar visits for other parties in the future.

If you know anyone who would like to visit Jerusalem and the West Bank, please ask them to email martin@labour2palestine.com or register on <http://labour2palestine.com/>.

The Co-Op and Israel: Are you a PIP or a PEP?

Originally published on cabbu.org on 14th May 2012

By Seph Brown – London

On the centre-left of US politics a turn of phrase has emerged to describe the sort of liberal who is typically pro-gay marriage, pro-abortion rights, anti-war, pro-welfare state and so on, but may take a more hawkish line in response to any criticism of Israel. These people are either 'Progressives Including Palestine' (the PIPs) or 'Progressives Except Palestine' (the PEPs).

In the UK there are few better mechanisms to describe the left's response to the news that the Cooperative Group decided at the end of last month to strengthen its position against Israel's illegal settlement programme on the West Bank.

On April 28, the Co-op announced that it will be ending contracts worth £350,000 to four of Israel's largest export companies known to operate in and profit from the occupation of the West Bank. The Group has not stocked goods sourced from West Bank settlements or the occupied Golan Heights since 2009 and have emphasised that this is not a boycott of Israel, saying:

“the Group will continue to trade with Israeli suppliers that do not source from the settlements, and currently has supply agreements with some twenty Israeli businesses, a number of which may benefit from a transfer of trade.”

Most reports have named the four companies involved, but not outlined just how integrated they are with Israel's settler economy. Adafresh exports settler produce

from the occupied Jordan Valley, including Eitan and Inon Herbs and herbs from Aroma Na'ama. Arava Export Growers meanwhile openly maps out on its website where its produce originates in the Jordan Valley.

Mehadrin Group and its subsidiary, MText, has exported Medjoul dates and grapes, which are grown in the occupied Jordan Valley and originate from settlements including Beqa'ot. The Mehadrin Group also holds 50% of Miriam Shoham which owns a packing house for mangos in the occupied Golan Heights.

Agrexco, according to 2006 court testimony from their British manager, Amos Orr, is responsible for marketing 60-70% of the agricultural produce grown in Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. These settlement products account for about 5% of Agrexco's total turnover (approximately €33million on 2007 figures). The company has a regional office in the Jordan Valley and also owns packing houses situated in the settlements in the West Bank such as Tomer, Massua, Ro'I, Netiv Hagdud and Mehola.

These are four companies integrated into the settler economy, but there are dozens of others with direct links to the United Kingdom. These ties are of vital importance when analysing the prospects for peace between Israel and Palestine because it is international inability to tackle Israel's settlement programme which is a key obstacle to any negotiations.

With financial and political support from the Israeli government, the settler population of the West Bank increased by 4.3% over 2011 and has devastated prospects for peace. A poll conducted by Near East Consulting in October 2010 showed that 70% of Palestinians will support negotiations if Israel ceases its settlement program. Only 27% of Palestinians support direct negotiations with Israel under any circumstance.

In the same month YouGov Siraj polling showed that an overwhelming 90% of Palestinians would not support the negotiations as settlement construction continued. And it is easy to understand why:

A 2011 report from the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ) and the Palestinian Ministry of Economy detailed how the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza saps nearly 85% of GDP from the Palestinian economy (nearly \$7 billion) a year. Furthermore, “over USD 4.5 billion per year, a full 56% of GDP, is the cost (in terms of both foregone revenues and higher costs of raw materials) for the Palestinians for not being able to access their own resources.”

The cost of the settlement enterprise, and the occupation built around it, is astronomical, but increasing settler violence is another vital reason to begin to put pressure on its economic underpinning.

According to mapping by the UN, the weekly average of settler attacks resulting in Palestinian casualties and property damage increased by 32% in 2011 compared to 2010, and by over 144% compared to 2009. Research from Israeli NGO Yesh Din shows that over 90% of monitored complaints regarding settler violence filed by Palestinians with the Israeli police in recent years have never led to prosecution.

However, even looking at the facts on the ground, the Co-op's most recent policy expansion has caused a debate amongst the progressive political community, many who believe it to be a step too far.

The Labour Friends of Israel and Progress have both promoted an article by Eric Lee, which accuses the Cooperative Group of “demonising Israel” and suggests that any move away from economic ties with Israeli companies who directly support the settlement enterprise is a “slippery slope” towards a complete boycott of Israel.

Neither organisation has offered any rationale behind that claim. Lee's only argument against the move appears to be that the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the Guardian have welcomed it. Lee even admits that:

“For those of us who support a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine and who oppose the building of settlements in the occupied West Bank, it is easy to dismiss this as irrelevant. After all, it's not like the Co-op voted to ban all Israeli products. In fact the Co-op went out of their way to say precisely that. They're not boycotting Israel. They're just boycotting companies that profit from the occupation.”

That is where a truly progressive article should have ended. The reality is that the United States, European Union and the Quartet have so far failed to prevent the on-going, and accelerating, expansion of Israel's illegal settlement programme. Meanwhile, the Cooperative Group have taken a measured, sensible and practical step towards ending the economic stranglehold the occupation imposes on the West Bank by refusing to be complicit in it.

If we support a two-state solution, as both Progress and LFI claim to, then it is incumbent upon us to speak out against settlement construction and support activity aimed towards the creation of a viable Palestinian State. Now we must ask why other retailers maintain their unethical economic relationship with Israel's settlement programme and pressure them to follow the Co-op's example.

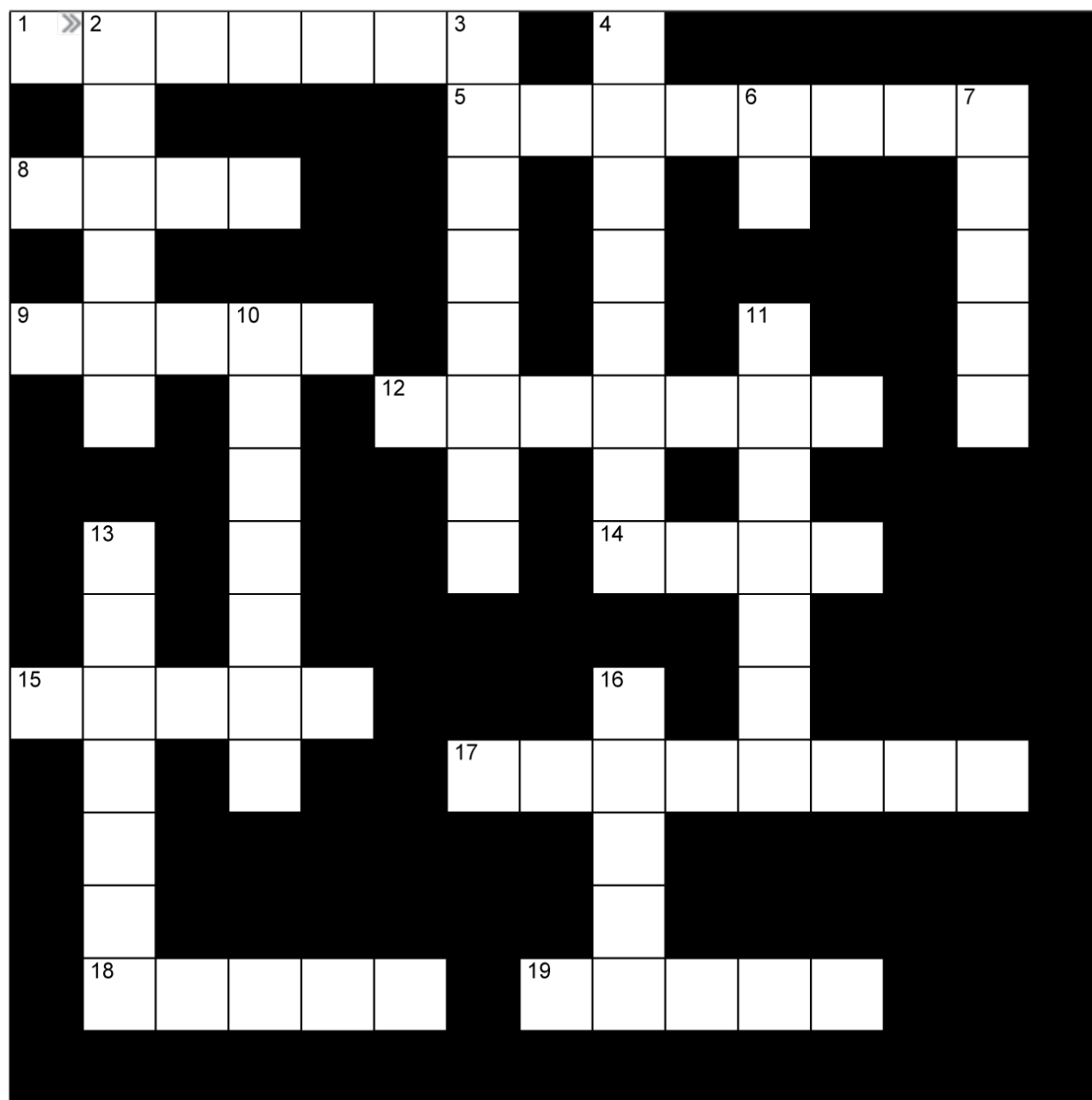
We can only hope that the PEPs come to their senses and join the PIPs in working together towards a genuine and achievable two-state solution.

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1. UK Prime Minister (7)
5. From the states (8)
8. City on the Mediterranean (4)
9. A Lebanese singer; A city (5)
12. The first settlement (7)
14. Royalty (4)
15. Horse fly with gravity (5)
17. Prince (8)
18. Original name of Lod (5)
19. A founder of a political movement (5)

Down

2. Charismatic leader (6)
3. - Bonaparte (8)
4. West of the River (8)
6. The ego and the - (2)
7. Catastrophe (5)
10. Alien (7)
11. An extreme ideology (7)
13. Savoury (7)
16. A lost city (5)

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Palestinian Khadra with Chicken



Courtesy of

Ingredients

- One whole chicken cut into four or six pieces
- 1 Kg Basmati Rice
- 2x fresh tomatoes
- 2x chilli
- 200 gr cooked chickpeas
- 2x chopped onions
- 5x pieces fresh garlic
- 1/5 spoon cardamom
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon mixed spices
- 1 tablespoon salt
- Half cup of vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon turmeric

How to cook it

Place the pieces of chicken into a large pot with half cup of vegetable oil along the chopped onions and stir fry it for 5 minutes. Add the chopped fresh tomatoes, chickpeas, chilli and garlic and keep mixing it for another 2 minutes. Add the salt, cardamom, mixed spices and turmeric and 2 litres of water and leave the chicken cook halfway through. Then, use a sieve to separate the chicken and vegetables from the sauce.



Traditionally, in Palestine the rice is placed together with the sauce of the chicken and the cooked vegetables in a terracotta cooking pot and kept in the oven at 200°C for 30-35 minutes. If you do not have a terracotta pot you can replace it with a regular

cooking pot and cook the rice, sauce and vegetables on a low heat gas until all the water is absorbed and the rice is cooked. Khadra is traditionally served with fresh salad and yogurt.

SPORTS

Palestine at the Olympics

Palestinian participation in the London 2012 Olympics took the spotlight once more when the official London Olympics website removed the detailed information of participating states from its pages. Various media sources confirmed that this step was a consequence of the Israeli Olympics committee's objection to listing Al-Quds/Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Palestine.

The official Olympics website confirmed the participation of Palestine in the 2012 Olympics hosted by London and scheduled to begin on 27th July. The old listing included information and statistics about Palestine that included the population, area and stated that the currency used in Palestine is the US dollar. The omitted listing also referred to the Palestinian national anthem 'FEDAEE'. In this respect, the information provided by the website was more in line with the official position that recognises the state of Palestine as a country under occupation.

Removing the statistics and introductory information from all states' identity cards on the website confirms that listing the correct information about Palestine was no mistake as one Israeli newspaper asked. However, this step by the Olympic committee shows that they are not prepared to misinform the public or subscribe to the misperception of calling the Palestinian territories 'disputed'.

Busy season for football

Source: wattan.tv

The Palestinian national football team is getting ready for the Arab football cup championship planned to take place in Saudi-Arabia from 22nd June until 6th July 2012.

The young team continues to prepare for the forthcoming Asian Nations Championship, also scheduled to take place in Riyadh parallel to the Arab Cup.

The team came is competing in the first group alongside Saudi-Arabia and Kuwait in the Arab Cup while competing in the second group against Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka, Syria and the host country, Saudi-Arabia, in the Asian Nations Championship.

The team will be leaving its training camp in Palestine for the Yemen capital Sana'a on 14th June before heading to Saudi-Arabia.

Majed Abu-Mrahil, the first Palestinian Olympian returns as a coach

Source: alkass.net

For over two months now, the team of Palestinian athletes has been preparing

for the summer competitions in London. The two athletes Bahaa Al-Fara (competing in the 400 meter men) and Woroud Sawalha (competing in the 800 meter women), along with their coach Majed, have been attending a preparation camp in Doha.

Majed was the first to represent Palestine in Atlanta 1996 by competing in the 10K race. Since then, Palestine has participated in all consecutive Olympics: Sydney 2000, Athens 2004 and Beijing 2008.

The team intends to challenge the common perception that considers the Palestinian participation in the Olympics an honorary one by delivering a real competitive performance. The team believes that their high spirit and determination will compensate for the short preparation time.

Eyes on London

By: Fady Abusidu - London

London is once again becoming the centre of attention for everyone. The recent jubilee celebrations with the majestic flotilla and beautiful decorations are

not the only reason. The Olympics are almost here. While this might mean more traffic and congestion for the Londoners, its prospective competitors and participating states view London as the venue where their years long preparation will ultimately prove fruitful.

British consulate and diplomatic missions everywhere have an active role in making sure that London 2012 is well attended. One of those missions is the British consulate in Jerusalem. On 21st May 2010, the British consulate hosted the Palestinian Olympic Committee for Special Needs and the Palestinian Olympic team competing in London. The event was part of the preparation campaign for the Olympics and was aimed at familiarising everyone with the procedures and requirements for all participating members.

The Palestinian Olympic participation in previous tournaments has not been without complications. Since Palestinian athletes have to travel from three continuous yet divided geographical areas, they usual face extra logistical problems due to the need for extra coordination. Furthermore, Palestinians need to acquire additional permits from Israel to travel to and from one area in Palestine

to another, especially those who reside in Al-Quds/Jerusalem. This adds one more challenge to team-building that coaches and organisers work to overcome.

The Palestinian participation in London 2012 is also an important symbolic exercise. Palestine has participated in many international sports events over the decades. Watching the Palestinian flag held high by Palestinian athletes has been recognised as a symbol of defiance and the ability to survive and compete in spite of all the challenges.

This year, London will be the place that Palestinians worldwide look to in search online and on their TV sets to gain a sense of pride once more.

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