

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2005



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Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations

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**Al-Zaytouna Centre
For Studies & Consultations**

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The views expressed in this book are those of the authors alone. They do not necessarily reflect views of al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations.

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The Palestinian Strategic Report 2005

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List of Abbreviations

GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GS	Gaza Strip
ICBS	Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics
OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PECDAR	Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
QIZ	Qualified Industrial Zone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
WB	West Bank

Foreword

Al-Zaytouna Centre is an independent institution for research and consultation that was founded in Beirut in mid 2004. The Centre is mainly concerned with strategic studies and futuristic scenarios in the Arab and Muslim worlds. It focuses on the Palestinian issue with all its relevant scenarios worldwide, and within the Arab and Muslim world. Furthermore, the Centre is keen to secure the cooperation of scholars, experts and specialists, and to publish serious and specialized scientific researches and studies, that should be based on objective methodology, precise data and thorough analysis. The Centre seeks to maintain transparency, as well as cooperation and integration with related centres and associations, and takes note of all ideologies, new issues, and intellectual/political trends worldwide.

This strategic report is a product of a massive team-work exerted by a group of affiliated researchers and specialists, for whom al-Zaytouna Centre is indebted and grateful. The Centre wishes to extend its thanks to Dr. Basheer Nafi', who devoted much of his time to write and edit this report. Thanks are, also, due to our colleagues Prof. Ahmad Sa'id Nawfal, Dr. 'Amr Sa'dawi, Dr. Ra'id Nu'ayrat, Dr. Salman Abu Sitta, Dr. Muhammad Miqdad and Dr. Ibrahim Abu Jabir, for their scholarly contributions in this respect.

Our special thanks, also, go to the consultative editors: Prof. Anis al-Sayigh, Prof. 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Misiri and Mr. Munir Shafiq, whose guidance and advice provided an invaluable resource for the development of this report. Besides we thank Ahmad Khalifah (Editor of the Arabic quarterly: Journal of Palestine Studies) and Walid Muhammad 'Ali (Director of the Baheth Center for Studies) for their generous contributions and remarks. Finally, we do convey our great appreciation to the staff of al-Zaytouna Centre, especially Wa'il Sa'd, Muhammad Qaddoura, and Ghina Jamal al-Din, for their effort in collecting the required data and setting the format of this work.

We humbly hope that this report will make a serious step towards further scientific works in the field of Palestinian studies.

General Manager
Dr. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh

Introduction

The idea of writing this report came to our attention immediately after the establishment of al-Zaytouna Centre. However, it did not materialize until early autumn 2005. Indeed, the primary objective of this work is to assess the Palestinian situation on a regular basis through a rigorous study of its various aspects, and to highlight the living conditions of the people involved, i.e., the Palestinians.

This annual report is based on observations, investigations, and thorough analysis of the various aspects of the Palestinian issue: internal political affairs, economic development, the educational system, demographic indicators, the Arab-Islamic and international positions and the Israeli attitudes and policies. This is just the beginning of this venture, but we are aware that the framework of this report will have to undergo some amendments, either by way of omissions or additions, in the light of the expected feedback and responses to this very first report, as well as the ongoing developments in Palestine. Now, we are just initiating the project that we expect to progressively develop, thanks to the diligent work and dynamic reactions to the events.

The Palestinian Issue occupies a central position in the Arab and Islamic worlds. Moreover, it is justifiably regarded as the oldest and most complicated issue in the international arena. A great effort and dedication is needed to analyze and read the ongoing developments in the Middle East, like the invasion of Iraq, recent escalations in Lebanese – Syrian relations and the Iranian nuclear crisis, apart from the developments that are taking place in the Palestinian scene itself. It could be safely argued that the Palestinian Issue has been the prime mover of escalations in the Middle East since the rise of the Zionist project and, certainly, the establishment of Israel in 1948.

Due to the Palestinian Issue, new boundaries have been drawn, coups erupted, alliances formed, wars broke out, and some new regimes emerged while others were toppled. Moreover, the Palestinian Issue has affected the process of development in a considerable number of Arab countries, and has its impact on the relations of the Arab-Islamic countries with Western powers, especially the United States of America (USA). More important, is the fact that the Palestinian Issue is a living issue for all Palestinians of whom many have been forced to

leave their homeland and live in the Diaspora. Actually, this is what gives this report tremendous importance.

We at the Centre felt the importance of commissioning this academic exercise to distinguished specialists. Each participant submitted a chapter in his area of expertise. Then, the two editors, with the help of the researchers in the Centre, edited the texts and incorporated what may have been overlooked. Subsequently, these chapters were submitted to further scrutiny by another high caliber specialist in the Palestinian Issue, whose main task was to provide the editors with their comments and feedback. All these factors worked together to lead to the publication of this report. However, due to our shortcomings and appreciation of the heavy responsibility entrusted to us, we admit that there may be some errors, particularly so because of time constrain and our limited experience in this respect. However, we will do our best to avoid any shortcomings in future publications.

It is important to note that this project is essentially a product of team work. Moreover, some chapters have gone through several amendments made by the editors, which also reflects the collective nature of the work.

This report explains, discusses and analyses the events that took place during 2005, and pursues their developments. Being the first attempt in the field, and as is the case with similar scientific ventures, it was necessary for this first report to shed sufficient light on the background of the related issues. Hence, a rather lengthy introduction was provided in the opening part of the report. This may not be necessary in subsequent reports, unless there will be a dire need for it in one way or another.

The goal of this project is not only to pursue the annual developments of the Palestinian Issue, but also to provide the ground for serious academic research, as we are concerned with both the content and the form. Both editors were keen to draw the attention of the participants to the importance of being as objective and meticulous as possible in the choice of their references and resources. Furthermore, they have been advised to pay special care and attention to the verification of events, personalities and dates. As is the case with all scientific ventures, the report is not only concerned with recording events, but also with analyzing and assessing developments, and scrutinizing the texts involved. It also strives to investigate the wider context of the relevant events, developments, and scenarios.

Finally, we hope that this report will, somehow, significantly enrich the intellectual and scientific debate on the issues discussed. Moreover, we look forward to the comments of our readers and the critique of the specialists in the field to improve our future publications.

The Editors
Beirut – April 2006*

* The English translation was prepared by the end of November 2006.

Chapter One

The Internal Palestinian Scene: Change and the Quest for Consensus

The Internal Palestinian Scene: Change and the Quest for Consensus¹

Introduction: The year 2005 was an eventful year for Palestine not only because of a number of changes in the regional and international scenes that affected the *Intifadah* and the whole Palestinian issue, but also because of some important changes in the internal Palestinian setting. These started with the mysterious death of President ‘Arafat in November 2004, and reached an important watershed with the Palestinian legislative elections in January 2006. All this had, no doubt, made the year 2005 a long and agonizing year that was mainly characterized by the quest for new national initiatives, and the consistent drive towards unity and consensus.

The year 2005 was also a year of anticipation in the region as the American occupation of Iraq has faced tremendous difficulties, either from the political forces that strove to control the post occupation government, or from the Iraqi resistance that the Americans failed to defeat and establish a loyal regime in the country. Besides, was the acceleration of the Franco-American pressure on Syria and Lebanon, and the aggravation of the Euro-American conflict with Iran over the latter’s increasing nuclear activities. Due to the close interlink between these three issues and the Palestinian question, the Palestinian political scene had, thus, been in a state of covert anticipation towards the developments in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Iran.

The Palestinian political scene is characterized by excessive plurality that had rarely been experienced before by a movement of national liberation. Besides the impact of this plurality, the Palestinian internal scene is overwhelmed with the legacy of the national cause, particularly with regard to aspects related to the formation of the political forces, their inter relations and the role played by each in the national struggle. But this kind of impact is mainly covert than overt, while the direct influences were motivated by some important developments, and the manner by which the various political forces responded to them. However, it is difficult to isolate these developments and impacts, or their consequences, from each other.

Fatah and the Collapse of the National Consensus: The year 2005 should always be viewed as the year of formidable challenges, to the leadership of Fatah (*The Palestinian*

National Liberation Movement), be it on the internal organizational level or the national level. Admittedly, the Organization had previously faced challenges but they were certainly not as extensive and serious as those of 2005, nor had the Organization itself been in such a profound state of disintegration and dissention. The fundamental factor for the crisis of Fatah, which negatively reflected on the entire Palestinian affairs, is the collapse of the national consensus after Oslo Accords, and the serious repercussions of the changes introduced by the Palestinian Authority (PA) on the structure of the ruling organization. In addition, are reasons related to the diversified political orientation of the Palestinians, and Fatah's failure to achieve any tangible successes, not even the mere start of negotiations, throughout the year 2005.

Fatah came into existence in the late 1950's at the hands of a group of Palestinian youth, who were known for their allegiance to the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood in Gaza Strip (Khalil al-Wazir, Kamal 'Udwan, Muhammad Yusuf al-Najjar, Salah Khalaf, Mamduh Saydam and others). By that time, the Movement of the Muslim Brotherhood, be it in Palestine or elsewhere in the Arab world, was seriously suffering from its bitter confrontation with Nasser's regime in Egypt. Under the influence of the then Algerian Movement for National Liberation, the pioneers of Fatah felt it absolutely necessary to restructure the Palestinian movement into a united political front that would totally detach itself from ideological concerns, and be solely concerned with the goal of liberation. Within few years of the initiation of this idea, these pioneers succeeded to recruit some activists from the West Bank (Faruq Qaddumi), and from among Palestinian refugees in Syria (Khalid al-Hassan and Khalid al-Yashruti). The latter were either members of the Ba'ath Party, the Muslim Brotherhood or the Liberation Party.²

The great national agitation that accompanied the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Nasser's support to it in mid 1960's constituted a huge challenge to Fatah. Nonetheless, the initiation of the military struggle, though modestly, in 1965, the Syrian support to the Palestinian military activities and the failure of the Arabs plan to divert the course of the Jordan river, that was planned as a retaliation to the Israeli water projects, helped Fatah to survive. The defeat of the Arab regimes in the June 1967 war and Fatah's early resistance of the occupation had, moreover, paved the way for Fatah's consistent rise to prominence, particularly so after *al-Karama* battle. The Arab and Palestinian masses rallied behind PLO, and it was concurrently welcomed in Cairo and Riyadh. Meanwhile, in February 1969, Yasir 'Arafat became the leader of the PLO, and during the years

1968 and 1969 the PLO became a centre for Palestinian popular and resistance organizations. Fatah and its sympathizers controlled most the seats in the National Assembly, as well as in the leading institutions of the PLO.³

However, Fatah's leadership of the PLO and the Palestinian national movement had not always been smooth. While the Palestinian issue was a source of tense competition between Arab states, the Palestinian resistance was compelled to fight some major battles during the 1970's and 1980's. Nonetheless, Fatah's total commitment to the liberation and the preservation of the national identity, as well as its immense ideological and organizational flexibility, attracted different trends and shades of opinions, and made the Organization the center of national Palestinian consensus, which, however, had gradually faded since the mid 1970's.

The Muslim Brotherhood background of most Fatah's founders stimulated throughout the 1960's close relations between the Organization and the Islamic trend in the Arab region, even after the defeat of 1967. Being the major force for Palestinian resistance, Fatah attracted sizeable number of the Muslim Brotherhood to its military camps, particularly from Jordan. But this cordial relations between Fatah and the Muslim Brotherhood had considerably weakened during the 1970's as many anti-Islamist leftist made it to the Organization's top leadership. Moreover, by then, Fatah had strengthened its relations with the Soviet Union and associated itself with its Middle Eastern strategy, followed by its adoption of the ten-point program of the 1974. Soon, the Palestinian resistance became gradually, but heavily, involved in the Lebanon civil war, hence its role in occupied Palestine declined. Meanwhile the Palestinian Islamic trend was rising at that time, when Islamic resurgence had, anyhow, become phenomenal in all the Arab region, especially in Egypt. On the departure in 1982 of the PLO, as well as most of its institutions and military forces, from Lebanon, the historical Palestinian leadership distanced itself from the occupied motherland, while the activities of the Islamic Palestinian trend continuously grew. By the outbreak of the *Intifadah* in late 1987, it, represented by Hamas (*The Islamic Resistance Movement*) and Islamic Jihad Movement (*al-Jihad al-Islami fi Filastin*), became a major force that was heavily engaged in the organization of the resistance, as well as in the welfare of all sectors of the community. In an attempt to place the resistance under the Diaspora leadership, Fatah, with other PLO factions, formed the "National United Leadership", but this failed to weaken the Islamic trend.⁴

The *Intifadah* provided a great opportunity to restructure the national consensus, as all Palestinian forces were committed to the struggle for freedom and the defeat

of the occupation. But this did not materialize as the national Palestinian leadership did not view the *Intifadah* essentially as a struggle for national liberation, but simply a means to pressurize the USA and Israel to recognize the PLO and negotiate a partial solution of the Palestinian issue. This, coupled with the collapse of the Soviet block, the end of the cold war, and the Kuwait crisis that culminated in the first Gulf War, imposed a completely new balance of power in the region.⁵ Having lost much of its drive for resistance against Israel, Fatah concluded in September 1993 the Oslo Accords that established a PA on parts of Gaza Strip (GS) and the West Bank (WB). But this led to an unprecedented disarray within the Palestinian camp. The Islamists, a sector of the PLO leaders, Fatah and other non-Islamist organizations opposed the treaty as a complete sell out in return for meager, insignificant and obscure gains.

The Palestinian people had given Oslo Agreement and its architect the national leadership ample time to reach to a just settlement, and many observers felt that the treaty and the establishment of self-government rule would ultimately lead to the decline of the Islamists. But the sequence of events during the crucial six years between Oslo and the second *Intifadah* demonstrated that this was a gross misjudgment. On the contrary, the influence and prestige of the Islamists, particularly Hamas, accelerated. The evils that accompany power had further weakened Fatah, and the popularity of all other Palestinian organizations had also subsidized. Being the spearhead of the negotiation, Fatah naturally dominated the institutions and policies of the PA. Since the delegation of the issue of security in GS and the WB to the self-rule authority was one of the major objectives of Oslo, the latter had naturally become excessively security conscious. It committed serious legal or judicial violations, and its suppressive campaign reached its peak in 1995 – 1996 when the security organs masterminded an ugly campaign of arrest and torture against Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Besides, corruption prevailed within the institutions and ministries of the PA. Hence, notwithstanding the Israeli partial withdrawal from GS and the WB, the Palestinian conditions sharply worsened.

But the Authority's most formidable predicament was its over optimistic expectations from Oslo. Once the ceremonial environment that accompanied the signature of the treaty vanished, it become clear that the Israeli vision of the treaty was dramatically different from the Palestinian expectations. Since Oslo was just a general framework, subsequent partial agreements were concluded under tremendous Arab-American pressure, and with further Palestinian concessions. By the time the two parties were called for the Summer 2000 Camp David negotiations for a final

settlement, the Palestinian people were fed up, and the option of resistance regained momentum, thanks to the Lebanese victory and the resulting Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon in May 2000. Meanwhile, Camp David negotiations failed because what was offered to the Palestinian President did not meet the minimum Palestinian demands, hence a bloody confrontation was on the air. However, the spark that ignited the fire was Sharon's defiant visit to the Holy Shrine of *al-Aqsa* on 28 September 2000, which led to violent Palestinian protest, in which six were killed at the hands of the Israeli security.

It may be interesting to note that at this juncture of escalation in the national struggle, a large measure of national unity was achieved, exactly as had been the case in similar circumstances before. Large sectors of the community in GS and the WB, as well as most of the political forces, including many of Fatah activists, joined the *Intifadah*. The inclination of President 'Arafat to the *Intifadah* encouraged an increasing number of the Palestinian security to defend the people against the frequent Israeli aggression. However, unity around, and during, the *Intifadah* was only proportionate. Since the Palestinian leadership was a prisoner of Oslo Agreement, it was not possible to achieve a fundamental change in the Palestinian political vision, hence the *Intifadah* was viewed just as a means to secure a better deal in the final settlement. Moreover, the *Intifadah* revealed a deep split within the rank of the national leadership, particularly that of Fatah. Some of its leading members, from Abu Mazin to Muhammad Dahlan, openly opposed the *Intifadah* and 'Arafat's way of leadership.

At the initial stage of the *Intifadah*, the Palestinian side was in a better position than its Israeli counterpart. Official and Popular Arab support to the Palestinian cause was as strong as ever, and the international community viewed Sharon's provocation as the direct factor for igniting the *Intifadah*, and held Israel's heavy handedness responsible for the increasing number of victims.

But the assumption of Bush and Sharon to the American presidency and the Israeli premiership respectively, coupled with the incidents of 11 September 2001, placed the second *Intifadah* in a critical situation. The countries of the central Arab axis (Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia) were no longer able to provide a cover to the Palestinian resistance of the occupation, especially the "self-immolation"⁶ operations in 2002, which developed from a deterrent means to something similar to a strategic method. However, the failure of the project of the final solution blurred the political vision of the Palestinian leadership. Moreover, notwithstanding its criticism of the increased operations of Sharon's government against the Palestinians, Bush administration essentially remained an ardent supporter of Israel.

The increasing American-Israeli pressure had progressively widened the rift within the national leadership. Abu Mazin first government collapsed in 2003 due to the inability of the American administration to compel the Israeli government to surrender sufficient concessions to the Palestinian premier, though America was then, i.e., after its spectacular conquest of Iraq, in its best form. However, Abu Mazin openly expressed his disappointment of 'Arafat, and, through his close associates, held him directly responsible for the collapse of his ministry. 'Arafat's long siege in his headquarters in Ramallah had contributed in his isolation from the bulk of the Palestinian leadership, as well as from the Arab world and the international community at large. Nonetheless, during the Summer of 2004, 'Arafat continued to be highly regarded by the people, and had the sympathy of the mainstream Islamic trend as well as Fatah activists. But Fatah's political strength was on the wane, and it was about to spilt into conflicting and hostile groups.

During the Summer of 2004, 'Arafat faced a noisy challenge from Muhammad Dahlan, the former leader of the security apparatus, who incited hundreds of his supporters to demonstrate in the streets of the major cities of GS demanding reform. Dahlan seemed to have been supported by some of Fatah leaders, at least the security leaders in GS. Interestingly, Abu Mazin refused to condemn Dahlan's move, or to deny the rumours of an alliance between them. However, Dahlan's major support came from America and the European Union, while the Arab boycott had further weakened 'Arafat and made him vulnerable to the intrigues of some aspirants in his position. Though Hamas and Islamic Jihad stood beside the President, who was enthusiastically supported by large sectors of the Palestinian people and many of Fatah activists, it was evident that by 2005 Fatah had gone in disarray, notwithstanding the appearance of unity that accompanied the President's death.

The year 2005 was indeed very crucial to the Palestinian political path and direction. By then, it was obvious that Fatah lost its command, and was placed in a dilemma. While unable to discard Oslo Accords that gave it the authority of self-rule, Fatah has become increasingly aware that there is no light at the end of the tunnel. A whole decade had passed since Oslo without a final solution, and six years elapsed after the deadline for the end of the interim period. Moreover, Fatah was not in a position to formulate a social program around which the Palestinian people could rally, and it lacked any futuristic plan or vision. Its disarray triggered political unrest and uncertainty in the entire Palestinian scene. While Fatah had lost its traditional and unique leadership of the national movement, its main competitor, Hamas, had, however, thus far been unable to secure a Palestinian consensus.

From Abu ‘Ammar to Abu Mazin:

The demise of ‘Arafat in November 2004 was indeed a turning point in the history of the Palestinian national movement. For over three decades, the pragmatic ‘Arafat dominated the Palestinian scene, and symbolized the long national struggle, as demonstrated by the highly emotional and mass demonstrations that spontaneously erupted on his death. However, it was only after the abortive Camp David negotiations of the Summer of 2000 that the totality of the Palestinian people accepted his undisputed leadership, particularly so during the last two years of his life, when he was a virtual prisoner under tight-Israeli siege. His funeral was an occasion of national solidarity, where all the Palestinian leaders, including those in Damascus and Fatah leaders, came to Cairo to bid him farewell. Hamas and Islamic Jihad previous open criticism to his policies had relatively subsidized during his last two years, and they stood firmly behind him against the Israeli aggression on his headquarters and life. By then, they were, in fact, nearer to him than some Fatah leaders.

Immediately after the death of ‘Arafat, the Central Committee of Fatah officially nominated Mahmud ‘Abbas (Abu Mazin) to be ‘Arafat’s successor, though some of its members, like Hani al-Hassan, were known for expressing serious reservations to his leadership. Seven candidates competed for the PA leadership, notably Mustafa al-Barghuthi, a former leader in the Palestinian Communist Party and the secretary of the “National Initiative”, an activist institution for rallying international civil support for the Palestinian cause. Abu Mazin failure in these elections was farfetched, but the interesting question was how many votes could he secure. Since Hamas did not nominate a candidate in these elections, the votes of supporters were a crucial factor in determining the extent of Abu Mazin’s majority. Finally, Abu Mazin got 62% of those who voted, who represented only 65% of the eligible voters.

Abu Mazin had certainly achieved a comfortable victory, but many thought it not to be overwhelming enough to qualify him for a decisive mandate from the people. The results had also revealed that some of Hamas votes went to al-Barghuthi (who won one fifth of the votes). But this should not be interpreted as an attempt by Hamas, or for that matter any of the other Palestinian groups, like Islamic Jihad, to abort Abu Mazin’s bid for the presidency. On the contrary, it was meant to caution everybody that the peoples’ support to Abu Mazin was conditional.

However, the Israeli and Palestinian authorities failed to arrange a meeting between Abu Mazin and Sharon, the latter had even declared the suspension of

all contacts with his counterpart until he disarm the resistance organizations. At this juncture, Egypt succeeded to convene a conference on 8 February at Sharm el-Sheikh, which was attended by the two leaders, in addition to King ‘Abdullah II of Jordan. In this conference, Sharon emphasized some previous decisions of his government, including the release of 900 Palestinian prisoners, gradual withdrawal from five cities in the WB, and to ease the Israeli military and security pressure on the inhabitants of GS and the WB. However, these largely symbolic concessions were not addressed to the Palestinian side, but were essentially a gesture of appreciation to the Egyptian leadership for its initiative to invite Sharon to Egypt. However, the conference issued a Palestinian-Israeli declaration which guaranteed mutual “cessation of violence” that was considered to be an implementation of the First article of the Road Map.

The Palestinian resistance groups interpreted the phrase “cessation of violence” as a virtual ceasefire, and criticized ‘Abbas for going that much without consulting other Palestinian forces. Besides, no mechanism had been spelled out to implement it on the ground. Soon, however, this declaration faced its first challenge, namely Israeli assassination on 16 February of some Palestinian activists, to which GS activists reacted by bombarding some nearby Jewish colonies. Nonetheless, this development did not obstruct a Palestinian dialogue, held, on Egypt’s initiative, in Cairo during the period 15 – 17 March, and attended by Abu Mazin himself and representatives of all Palestinian forces.

The Palestinian dialogue was by no means smooth or easy. Some small Palestinian organizations tried to prove their presence in the Palestinian scene, but the main controversy was between Abu Mazin and Hamas delegation, which warranted Egypt’s mediation. Finally, the conferees agreed to a political-economic program for the year 2005, which undertook to adhere to all the Palestinian fundamentals. Of these, were the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, the guarantee of the right of return for the Palestinians in the Diaspora and the recognition of the legitimate Palestinian right to resist the occupation, besides a year truce that is conditional on the cessation of Israeli aggression and their release of all prisoners and detainees. The program had, moreover, considered the continuation of the settlement policy and the erection of the Wall as time bombs. It also decreed the holding of elections on time, and the restructure of the PLO on mutually agreed basis that should guarantee the representation of all Palestinian forces and factions.⁷ The compromise embodied in this program illustrated the commitment of all political forces, Islamist and national, to facilitate Abu Mazin’s mission, and to

give him a new chance to achieve tangible progress on the issue of internal reform and on the all important national goals sought by all Palestinians.

But subsequent developments showed that the optimism that accompanied Cairo agreement was unfounded. The inherent assumption that Egypt, the patron of Cairo meeting, and Abu Mazin had secured the support of the Americans and a prior Israeli commitment to cool down, proved to be erroneous. As was the case in 2003, when some Israeli military acts of aggression made an obligation of cessation of violence, given to Abu Mazin by the Palestinian resistance, null and void, Israel continued after Cairo its assassination policy of the resistance activists that reached its peak prior and after the Israeli withdrawal from GS.⁸

During the year 2005 Israeli assassinated 56 Palestinians of whom 23 were from Fatah, 14 from Islamic Jihad and 13 from Hamas. The Palestinian response came from al-Quds Brigades (*Saraya al-Quds*) of Islamic Jihad and from Hamas, who undertook five and two “self-immolation” operations respectively. Hamas then rather limited military activity was due to the Organization’s decision to give priority to some internal issues, notably to put the Palestinian house in order, and to actively engage in the municipal and legislative elections that were boycotted by Islamic Jihad.⁹ On 23 September, a mysterious explosion hit a Hamas rally in the town of Jabaliya in which 17 Palestinians were killed. Hamas held Israel responsible for the attack, and its military wing, al-Qassam Brigades (*Kata’ib al-Qassam*) bombarded some Israeli targets along the line that separates GS from the Jewish state. Israel, on its part, accelerated its attacks in GS, including the assassination of two of Hamas military leaders in GS.¹⁰

The issue of reform within the institutions of the PA had also dragged on, though demanded by both the Palestinian groups and the Authority’s main financier, America and the EU.¹¹ But the reforms asked by the former, whether national or Islamic, was quiet different from those advocated by the latter. The Palestinians targeted corruption within the institutions of the Authority itself, criticized the weak judiciary and the multiple security organs that were largely concerned with supervising and suppressing the activities of the public institutions and the resistance organizations; while USA and EU focused on disarming resistance movements. Certainly, Abu Mazin tried to tackle the issue of reforms of the institutions and the structure of the Authority, but he faced many predicaments that restricted his movement. Fatah nominated him to the presidency on condition that Ahmad Qurei’ (Abu al-’Alaa) would be his premier. The latter, had, moreover, spent a fairly long time to form his government due to Fatah factionalism and his own differences with the President.

Salam Fayad, an intimate friend to the Americans and a former expert in the World Bank, was brought later to the cabinet to be in charge of the Ministry of Finance, which meant that financial reform became high in the government's agenda, particularly the control of Palestinian investments abroad, which was previously directly supervised by 'Arafat himself. However, it is difficult to know the extent of the reform achieved in this respect because of the confidentiality of the issue. On the other hand, the government had seriously addressed the issue of corruption quite late, only a few weeks before the legislative elections, presumably in an attempt to blossom its image during the electioneering process.¹²

Immediately after his elections, Abu Mazin introduced a project to unite the several security agencies into three only: the general security, the general intelligence and the national security.¹³ But the project was implemented at a very slow pace because of the dissension of Fatah into many centers of power, and up to the end of 2005 nothing tangible was apparently achieved in this respect. However, the only project that Abu Mazin successfully implemented was the military pension law that resulted in sending tens of old army officers into pension.

Nothing concrete was, however, achieved after Cairo dialogue on two major issues; the formation of a national leadership, at least in GS, and the restructuring of the PLO. Hamas insisted, in Cairo and afterwards, on a unified leadership in GS to administer GS after the expected Israeli withdrawal, but Fatah declined to have any such partnership with any Palestinian force on the presumption that the previous consensus on the Supervisory National Islamic Committee, agreed upon during the second *Intifadah*, was appropriate and adequate.

With regard to the restructuring of the PLO, Fatah exhibited a little measure of seriousness. On 28 March, Abu Mazin held a meeting of the PLO's Executive Committee to discuss the issue. Islamic Jihad sent a representative, but Hamas boycotted on the ground that the meeting was a retreat from Cairo agreement that provided for the incorporation of the two Organizations in the PLO prior to the reform process. Gaza meeting did not, however, achieve much, it did not even settle the question of the legislative elections. One reason for this rather slow, and perhaps deliberate, progress on the issue of reform was the rising conflict between Abu Mazin, the President of both the Authority and the PLO, and Faruq Qaddumi, a member of the Executive Committee of the PLO and the secretary-general of Fatah. Besides, Abu Mazin and the top leadership of the Authority seemed to have been inclined to weaken the PLO itself, and transfer its function of representing the Palestinian people to the PA.

On 13 August, Qaddumi demanded the election of a new Executive Committee for the PLO,¹⁴ while Abu Mazin continued his drive to strip the PLO's Political Committee from its power and functions and transfer them to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Qaddumi also suggested the formation of a representative committee of the leadership of all the Palestinian organizations in the Diaspora, but the latter declined because they saw in this an attempt to indulge them in Fatah internal dispute. However, a strong tendency developed within the Palestinian camp asking for the restructuring of the PLO, and the incorporation of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in it, on the grounds that Oslo Agreement had practically come to an end, and that there is an urgent need for a new mass Palestinian front within and outside the country. But Fatah continued to focus on GS and the WB, and saw in the PLO a liability rather than an asset.

Irrespective of the percentage that Abu Mazin earned in the elections, the Palestinian people in general, and their political organizations in particular, considered his presidency as a welcome departure from the single-handed, and, to many, almost "sacred" leadership of his predecessor 'Arafat, which was, however, criticized by some others who had insisted that 'Arafat surrenders some of his powers to the prime minister. The Palestinians had, thus, seen in Abu Mazin an ordinary leader who can be held accountable for his deeds without any fear or regret. But Abu Mazin did not succeed during the first year of his presidency to advance towards unifying the Palestinian front, whether in GS, the WB or in the Diaspora, nor had he even been able to stop the split of Fatah into rival and conflicting groups. In addition, Abu Mazin was not robust enough to face the American retreat from their declared promises to the Palestinian side, and the Israeli continuous disregard to the Palestinian demands. Thus, it was generally felt among the Palestinians that Abu Mazin was not up to the responsibilities of the national issue, particularly so after the Israeli withdrawal from GS.

The Withdrawal from Gaza Strip: The Israeli withdrawal from GS was indeed a resounding victory to the Palestinian resistance. Notwithstanding the serious Israeli reservations to extend their colonial expansionist policy in GS and their continuous reluctance to control GS, it is certain that their withdrawal from GS would not have been possible without the heavy political and human losses that they suffered in and around the region. The withdrawal was a unilateral Israeli action that was undertaken without any negotiation or coordination with the PA,

which tantamounted to an effective end of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, or, to say the least, a total Israeli disregard to it. Admittedly, the PA repeatedly protested against this policy and attitude, but the strong Euro-American support to the Israeli decision of withdrawal left the PA helpless. It was unhappy of a withdrawal in which it was not a part, but could not reject.

The Israeli government declared its intention to withdraw from GS a whole year before it actually did in September 2005. Prior to the policy of withdrawal, it was generally assumed that the Authority would fail to administer GS and it would be transferred into a battleground for internal Palestinian conflicts, and possibly a civil war. This would symbolize the inability of the Authority to administer the whole Palestinian affairs, and, thus, supports Sharon's contention of the lack of a credible Palestinian partner in the peace process. Infact, there was a genuine Palestinian concern that the existence of many armed militias in the small, poor and overpopulated GS would make it a theatre of conflict between the popular Hamas, on one side, and some Fatah groups and the security organs, on the other side, especially as Hamas had already signaled its intention to participate in the forthcoming legislative elections.

Israel's preparation for withdrawal from GS included a security deal with Egypt that allowed an Egyptian force of several hundreds soldiers to spread along the Egyptian-Palestinian-Israeli borders. By this agreement, the Israeli intended to hold Egypt responsible for any smuggling of people, arms and ammunition across the border between GS and Egypt. But Egypt viewed the deal differently, i.e., a tangible amendment of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty that prohibited the existence of Egyptian military forces east of the Suez Canal. Cairo declared the spread of its security forces along the border about two months after the completion of the withdrawal,¹⁵ but it was soon realized that the Egyptian action was not yet completed. However, this military presence, which took place few days before the Israeli withdrawal, consolidated the already active Egyptian role in the internal Palestinian affairs. The Egyptian intelligence, that had been entrusted with this responsibility a few years ago, sent a delegation to GS that was soon directed to stay there for several months. It played the role of a mediator in the internal Palestinian differences and guarded against the slip of GS into anarchy. Towards the end of August, an envoy of President Mubarak, Major-General 'Umar Sulayman, the Director of Intelligence and a Minister in the Presidency, arrived at GS, where he met leaders of various political groups and addressed the Legislative Council ensuring the continuation of Egypt support to the Palestinians.¹⁶ The Egyptian

cautious handling of the delicate situation in GS had, on the whole, a positive impact on the various Palestinian political circles. But Sulayman's visit and his address in the Legislative Council demonstrated beyond any doubt the strategic considerations behind Egypt's involvement in GS.

The prophecy of a civil war in GS, or it being a battleground for a conflict between Fatah and Hamas, proved erroneous. Despite the aggravated differences between Hamas and the PA for two months, September–October 2005, the Islamists exhibited during the post withdrawal period a greater measure of restraint than other factions. Meanwhile, it became increasingly evident that the PA was unable to administer the Palestinian affairs efficiently, and the pro-Fatah armed militias took the law in their own hands, to the detriment of security and stability in GS.

Following a meeting on 22 August, in Damascus, with the leaders of the Palestinian groups, Premier Ahmad Qurei' firmly declared that the armament of the resistance is beyond question. Nonetheless, with the active support of the Americans and the Europeans, the Authority exploited the Israeli withdrawal from GS to press for the disarmament of the resistance,¹⁷ but the Palestinian groups rejected this on the grounds that the Palestinian issue was far from being resolved, and they firmly declared that they will never ever give up their arms. This left the President with no option but to compromise. He maintained that what was required is not disarmament per se, but an end to armed violence. However, internal tension never subsidized, and, in fact, aggravated following the consecutive announcements of the results of the municipal elections.

By the end of August 2005, the Palestinian Ministry of Interior issued a declaration to the effect that the oneness and legitimacy of the Authority should by no means be doubted or placed at stake.¹⁸ A few days later, an explosion blasted a house in the quarter of al-Shajaiyyah, which belonged to some Hamas activists, and killed four citizens. The conflicting interpretations of this incident, given by Hamas and the Ministry of Interior, increased the tension in the town of Gaza. Hamas subsequent revelation of the names of its military leaders in GS was viewed by the Ministry of Interior as a defiance to the legitimacy of the Authority, and an indication of the existence of a "parallel authority."¹⁹ A further explosion took place on 23 September in the midst of a Hamas rally in the town of Jabaliya in which 17 were killed and many were wounded. This explosion led to a tense conflict between Hamas and the Authority, including President Abu Mazin and the Ministry of Interior, and was followed by a several days Israeli bombardment of some districts in GS.²⁰ President 'Abbas threatened to confront Hamas, the split

among the Palestinians accelerated, and the Israeli aggression on GS intensified. By then, a prominent Hamas leader, Mahmud al-Zahhar, announced the Organization's decision to stop attacks on Israeli from GS.

The intensified tension between Hamas and the PA, that goes back to the days before the completion of the Israeli withdrawal from GS, and in which the Minister of Interior played a major role, was bound to lead to a military confrontation. By early October 2005, a casual misunderstanding between some Hamas activists and the security forces triggered an armed clash in which several were killed and wounded.²¹ But, the situation did not get out of hands. However, Fatah internal strife subsided, thanks to the Egyptian security delegation which brought the military wings of eight Palestinian groups in GS to a reconciliation meeting that issued a document prohibiting internal fighting. Calm was quickly restored, and the conflict between Hamas and the Authority ceased to be military, it returned to its traditional political form.

The attempts during the coming few weeks to arrange a meeting between the Palestinian President, Mahmud 'Abbas, and the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, had all failed. Besides, western powers did not honour their pledges to extend economic and developmental aid to GS. Europe and the United States practically handed the peace process to Israel, and the PA was totally and indefinitely out of it. Though the Authority accepted unfair security arrangements for the sake of opening the boarder route between GS and Egypt, Israel refused to secure a safe route that connects GS and the WB. The Israeli occupation and isolation plans in the WB continued to be actively pursued, and Palestinian activists were targeted, particularly those of Islamic Jihad, al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (*Kata'ib Shuhada' al-Aqsa*) and Hamas. The inability of the national leadership to achieve any subsequent developments, and the split of Fatah into conflicting groups, lead to PA's loss of ability to rule, and chaos spread in GS.

Meanwhile, Major-General Musa 'Arafat, the military advisor of President Abu Mazin and a former leader of the national security, who was disreputable of corruption and abuse of power, was assassinated on 7 September in Gaza.²² But no serious investigation was conducted on the assassination of this prominent Fatah leader, though a Fatah militia group, al-Nasir Salah al-Din Brigades (*Alwiyyat al-Nasir Salah al-Din*), claimed, in some conflicting statements, that some of Fatah prominent leaders were behind the murder. However, immediately after the Israeli withdrawal, conflicts within Fatah aggravated to such an extent that the

Organization's Committee in the central provinces of GS resigned in protest of what it called "the security hazards."²³ The intensity of the internal conflicts within Fatah, that accompanied the Israeli withdrawal from GS, had decreased during the coming few weeks, which anyhow witnessed rising differences between Hamas and the Authority. But these conflicts reappeared during the last two months of 2005 and the first month of 2006. The Authority tried to deal with this imminent threat to their Organization through a plan to incorporate al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in the security organs. But the project dragged on either because of the Authority's inability to incorporate all Fatah militias, or because of the latter's refusal to give up their style of work for the sake of joining the official security forces. The actual competition between Fatah factions over the list of nominees to the legislative elections was a further element for chaos in GS and parts of the WB, where these factions launched indiscriminate attacks that did not even spare the headquarters of some government institutions, and they kidnapped journalists and foreign visitors.

GS glaringly reflected the crisis that the PA had experienced since its formation. While the Oslo Agreement had given the Authority the semblance of a state, with such institutions and organs as presidency, ministries, central budget, parliament, judiciary and security organs, it was, in fact, incomplete. Being formed under the occupation, the PA had no sovereignty over its land and borders, and no right to protect its own people, particularly so after the outbreak of the *Intifadah*. While a state should, on one hand, control all the means of violence and accepts no intermediaries between its people, the status of being occupied and its consequential loss of security and freedom would, on the other hand, undoubtedly ignite a national armed resistance. In other words, the self-rule PA lies in a gray area between a state and a national liberation movement. This causes a permanent state of tension between the Authority and the resistance forces that requires huge effort from both sides to avoid a bloody internal conflict.

From the Municipal to the Legislative Elections:

The legislative elections, the second of its kind since the formation of the Authority, was very important and controversial too.

With the departure of the commanding 'Arafat from the Palestinian political scene, the Legislative Council had become a powerful body for the enactment of laws and the supervision of the performance of the PA. Since Hamas, which had boycotted the 1996 elections, ran for this round, these elections provided an important means to test the popularity of the main competitors, Fatah and Hamas. Besides, these

elections were conducted immediately after the municipal elections in GS and the WB that took a whole year, and gave indicators of a profound change in the Palestinian political map.

The first phase of the elections was held in late December 2004 and late January 2005, the second in early May, the third by the beginning of October and the fourth in mid December. Fatah and Hamas gave conflicting reports on the outcome of the first phase, but they seem to have been largely neck to neck. Admittedly, it was difficult to precisely identify the winner as many of Hamas nominees ran on independent tickets, a predicament that the Organization overcome in the second phase by having one certified list of candidates under the name of “Reform and Change.” Whatever the exact results may have been, they shocked Fatah, but boosted the morale of Hamas. The results of the second phase were clearer.²⁴ Out of 84 municipal councils, 76 in the WB and 8 in GS, Fatah dominated 50 and Hamas 30. However, Hamas success was largely in towns, like Qalqilya, Rafah and Jabaliya, while that of Fatah was in smaller municipalities and villages.

During the third phase, competition was around 104 municipal councils which were largely won by Fatah, though Hamas got a large percentage of the total vote.²⁵ As for the fourth stage, Hamas overran most of the councils in the big towns of the WB, e.g. it won 74% of the total vote in Nablus. As for Ramallah, Hamas lost the council, but its representatives maintained the casting vote.²⁶ Fatah and the concerned international quarters were deeply shocked by the outcome of these elections, particularly so as they were the prelude to the all important forthcoming legislative elections. Besides, it was generally speculated that Fatah will achieve supremacy in the WB and Hamas control GS.

Though no exact statistics are available on these elections, we have sufficient evidence to say that Hamas preceded Fatah on the overall vote and in major municipalities, while Fatah was in advance in terms of number of seals and in small municipalities. However, it may be worthwhile to note here that the Authority postponed the elections in two of the strongholds of Hamas, the towns of al-Khalil and Gaza.

The below table (table 1/1), which is based on different sources, gives a broad picture on the results of these municipal elections. However, no exact statistics can be provided due to the conflicting reports given by Fatah and Hamas on the outcome of the elections. Besides, some of the winners in these elections, particularly those who presumably belong to the Hamas Camp, declined to admit where they stand.

Table 1/1: Results of the Palestinian Municipal Elections in its Four Phases²⁷

Movement	The percentage of seat number in the four phases of the Palestinian municipal elections %				The percentage of votes in the four phases of the Palestinian municipal elections %				Number of seats	The percentage of seat number
	The first phase 23/12/2004, 27/1/2005 26 constituencies in the WB and 10 in GS	The second phase 5/5/2005 76 constituencies in the WB and 8 in GS	The third phase 29/9/2005 104 constituencies in the WB	The fourth phase 15/12/2005 39 constituencies in the WB and 3 in GS	The first phase	The second phase	The third phase	The fourth phase		
Fatah	38.9	56	53.6	32.85	32	40.2	53.73	30	1,164	42.68
Hamas	36.8	33.6	25.1	30	50	33.7	26.03	50.5	862	31.60
Independents and other movements	24.3	10.4	21.3	37.15	18	26.1	20.24	19.5	701	25.72
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	2,727	100

The municipal elections confirmed the prevalent trend of voting in the Arab region as a whole; namely that the Islamic forces usually outdo other parties in main cities and among the modern forces, while the ruling parties, on the other hand, dominate the rural regions and the traditional sectors, who believe that their interests can only be guaranteed through alignment with the ruling class. However, taken into consideration the decision of the Islamic Jihad Movement to boycott the elections, it may be said that the Islamic trend enjoys the support of the majority, though not overwhelmingly.

This contradictory shift in the Palestinian political scene appears to have taken place because Fatah (or at least part of it) is still regarded as a resistance force, not just a ruling party. Though voting in these municipal elections was influenced by multiple considerations, politics, services, impartiality, and local interests, it was clear that the Palestinian voters had penalized Fatah candidates for the prevalence of corruption within its ranks and in the PA.

The municipal elections, however, might not be a prototype of the legislative elections, as the latter are largely associated with political considerations, and are usually viewed as a reflection of the future of the Palestinian issue, as well as the nature of the Palestinian relations with the Arab States and the concerned International powers. But this, in actual fact, had fallen short of preventing political upheavals that blew up Fatah a few weeks before the beginning of the legislative elections.

In late November, Fatah conducted preliminary local elections in the WB (not

GS), which resulted in a landslide victory of what came to be known as “Jeel al-Shabab” [roughly translated as the youth-generation] in Ramallah. Nevertheless, the leadership of Fatah disregarded these results, and officially nominated a panel of some traditional leaders, including the unpopular Premier Ahmad Qurei’, who was placed on top of the list. Within a few days, Muhammad Dahlan, the former leader of the Preventive Security Apparatus in GS and a former Minister in the PA, announced, in agreement with the detained Marwan al-Barghuthi, secretary of Fatah Organization in the WB, an alternative list.²⁸

This list, called “The Future List”, included, beside Dahlan and al-Barghuthi, a considerable number of young Fatah leaders, including Jibreel al-Rujub, the former leader of the Preventive Security Service in the WB and the cut-throat rival of Dahlan for several years. The Dahlan - al-Barghuthi list showed that the split within Fatah is essentially an internal schism between some indoor leaders and a group offshore newcomers, rather than being a rift between the old and the young. It also reflected differences on the national agenda of the Palestinian issue, and was a kind of backstairs struggle on the succession of President Abu Mazin, which was not a purely Palestinian struggle, as it included other regional and international beneficiaries.

The existence of Fatah two lists showed beyond doubt that an intense conflict was in the making during the legislative elections, not only between Fatah and Hamas but also within Fatah itself. To avoid a painful collapse of the electoral process, many circles, within and outside Fatah, strove to standardize the two lists, which they actually did on 27 December 2005. However, this standardization was not enough to allay the concerns of many of Fatah leaders, who pressurized Abu Mazin to postpone the elections. But Abu Mazin was apparently aware of the inherent dangers of such postponement. He, furthermore, viewed the elections as an important factor for internal stability, and hoped that Hamas presence in the Legislative Council, and possibly the government, would persuade it to accept the peace process, and abide by the Oslo Accords. However, we have sufficient evidence to argue that Abu Mazin himself had entertained the idea of postponing the elections. For the coming weeks witnessed a barrage of European and American statements that called for prohibiting Hamas participation in the elections unless it agrees to disarm, and in the government until it recognizes the Hebrew state and abides by the diplomatic game. The repeated threats of the USA and the EU that they will suspend all kind of aid to the PA if Hamas participated in it had, furthermore, glaringly showed that these powers have become to all intend and

purposes active partners in the elections.

Abu Mazin tried to resist these Euro-American pressures, and hinted that the electoral process and its outcome is an exclusive Palestinian concern. But the American insistence on holding the elections, which was motivated by the desire of the Bush administration to add a new “victory” to its policy of democratization in the Middle East, was clear to every body. The USA government seemed to have been misled by opinion polls, conducted by some Palestinian institutions, that predicted that Hamas will not get more than 30% to 35% of the Palestinian vote. Faced with these mounting conflicting internal and external pressures, Abu Mazin insisted that Hamas participation in the elections, and its expected membership in the legislative assembly, are within Oslo Accords, of which all the institutions of the PA and its entire existence are mere off-shoots.

Hamas, on the other hand, was faced with the difficult challenge of justifying its participation in the elections. It argued that such a participation does not necessarily mean it abandonment of the armed struggle to achieve full liberation. Since Oslo had practically come to an end, there is a need for a long truce during which an interim solution, that should embody the establishment of a Palestinian state on all the 1967 occupied territories, may be concluded. Hamas further argued that these elections would be based on the achievements of the second *Intifadah*, and that they are necessary to abort the serious intrigues of the Organization’s many adversaries to suppress it. However, this rational did not prevent Hamas from taking in consideration the mounting internal and external pressures. Thus, its election program neither included its traditional slogans that called for the destructions of Israel, nor focused on the option of the Jihad.²⁹ In response to the increasing controversy over the implications of Hamas’ participation in the elections, President Abu Mazin unprecedentedly declared that he will resign if the majority of the elected Legislative Council opposed Oslo Agreement.³⁰ The contested seats of the Legislative Council were divided into two equal halves, one for the proportional lists and the other for individual competition. Eleven lists contested the election, of which the most important were those of Fatah, Hamas and the Popular Front (*al-Jabha al-Sha’abiyyah*), in addition to other independent and semi-independent ones. As was the case in the municipal elections, Islamic Jihad boycotted these elections, either because of its commitment to its radical position towards the Authority and its institutions, or because of an increasing conviction that its support among the electorate was not strong enough to give the Organization an effective say in the

Council. However, it was generally assumed that most of Islamic Jihad's vote will go to Hamas list and candidates. The PA leadership, as well as Fatah and Hamas, called for a widespread popular participation, the maintainance of law and order and absolute transparency in these elections that were held on 25 January 2006. Hamas won 74 seats, in addition to 4 others garnered pro-Hamas independent candidates. Fatah, on its part, got 45 seats only, and 9 seats were won by four lists. These results had, no doubt, triggered a drastic political change in Palestinian arena.

Conclusion:

The year 2005 was an eventful, and, to a large extent, a transitional year. Notwithstanding the continuation of the confrontation with the occupation forces, the perpetual Israeli aggression and the death of President 'Arafat, the Palestinian people succeeded to achieve a smooth transfer of power from a historical leader to a less popular and charismatic one. They also managed to expel the Israeli occupation forces from GS, and to avoid any widespread civil conflict in the region after the withdrawal. Indeed, there was a large measure of difference between the positions of the major political forces on the national issue, but this diversity did not hinder the conclusion of a minimum understanding to govern and control the relations between them. A dialogue between all political forces, attended by Abu Mazin and held in Cairo in the Spring of 2005, exhibited a strong desire for national consensus, and to secure conducive environment for the success of Abu Mazin's presidency. But Abu Mazin and the Egyptian government, the patron of the dialogue, were unable to persuade the Israeli to reciprocate to the Palestinian initiative of pacification.

Meanwhile, conflicts within Fatah, the cornerstone of the PA and the pioneer leader of the national struggle for decades, increased partly because of competition for power, but, more importantly, because of the Euro-American, (even Israeli) interference in these internal Fatah conflicts. However, they were further aggravated because of a general assumption, in Palestine as well as regionally and internationally, that Abu Mazin was too weak to handle that complicated stage in the Palestinian struggle, and that he will step down after the end of his first presidency. The drive of some of the second line Fatah leaders may, thus, be viewed as a preparatory step to succeed Abu Mazin. Since the various Fatah groups in al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades are not united under one leadership, the arms of the Brigades were sometimes misused by one group or another. This intensified fragmentation of Fatah led to a state of military anarchy, particularly in GS.

The outcome of the municipal elections and the subsequent unprecedented major defeat of Fatah in the legislative elections were instrumental in escalating the tension between Fatah and Hamas. Fatah was now challenged by a serious competitor, Hamas, in the municipal councils, and the latter's achievements in the councils that it dominated were too substantial to be ignored or denied. In the Legislative Council, Fatah found itself, for the first time since its control of the institutions as well as the leadership of the PLO in the 1960's, in the camp of the opposition. Though Fatah had been widely acclaimed for not violently reacting to Hamas victory, and for its acceptance of the results of the elections, it is too early to pass a judgment on its attitude towards the current Palestinian government. The fact that Fatah controls the various security organs and the bureaucracy of the PA may encourage it to create problems for Hamas government. If Abu Mazin and other leaders of Fatah seek cooperation with Israel and the concerned Arab and international powers to topple this government, the Palestinian scene will be extremely tense and complicated.

Not only will the intentions of Abu Mazin and Fatah be disclosed on the Palestinian internal affairs, but also on the issue of re-building and activating the PLO. In this connection, it is clearly noticeable that the post elections periods have revealed two contradictory positions. Abu Mazin, who gave little attention to the implementation of the national agreement on re-building the PLO, has apparently come to the conclusion that the current status of the PLO prevents Hamas from controlling the Legislative Council and the government. On the other hand, the Palestinian people and organizations showed a strong desire to re-build and activate the PLO in order to restore national unity, both inside and outside Palestine, and to strengthen the Palestinian stand towards the enemy. Consequently, Abu Mazin and Fatah will be obliged, especially after the results of the legislative elections, to initiate practical procedures for re-building and activating the PLO.

By giving Hamas a substantial majority in the Legislative Council, the Palestinians have shown a clear desire to have new options for the national struggle, other than that of Oslo Accords and its annexes. They, moreover, realized the close relationship between the changes in the Palestinian arena and the rising tendency among the Arab and Muslim peoples to place politics within an Islamic framework that have a clear program of resistance. Hamas' victory has posed a number of questions before all the concerned parties,³¹ but one should never forget that the national struggle has almost always been based on consensus. It is clear that the Palestinians do not only want to entrust Hamas with the leadership of their national

affairs, but also wish that this leadership operate harmoniously, particularly with Fatah. Thus, Fatah's refusal to cooperate with the new government will constitute a serious setback to this strong public tendency, and proves that it endeavors to topple Hamas government through means that do not relate in any way to the ballot boxes.

Finally, it is difficult to conceive the internal changes of the Palestinian situation in isolation from the aggravating crisis of the American policy in the Arab and Islamic regions.³² The increasing American failure to realize their goals in Iraq, the American confusion in handling Iran's nuclear file, and the firm resistance of Syria and Hizbullah to Euro-American pressures are all clear evidence of the comparative weakness of the external aggression on the region that had been continuing for years. If the American politics show in the next period more confusion and retreat, and the Arab-Islamic support for the Palestinian cause becomes paramount, the Palestinian scene may experience significant developments towards a complete departure from the Oslo line, the building of a new Palestinian unity on the basis of a new national struggling program, and the restoration of the Palestinian cause to its dual Arab-Islamic dimensions.

Endnotes:

- 1 Dr. Basheer Musa Nafi': Lecturer of Islamic History and Islamic Studies, at the University of London, Berbeck College.
- 2 On the establishment of Fatah and the Islamic background of most of its pioneer leaders, see: 'Abdullah Abu 'Izza, *Ma'a al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Duwal al-'Arabiyyah* (With the Islamic Movement In Arab Countries) (Kuwait: Dar al-Qalam, 1986), pp.59-60 and 75-88; Ziyad Abu 'Amr, *Usuwl al-Harakat al-Siyasiyyah fi Qitaa' Ghazzah 1948 – 1967* (The Origin of Political Movements in Gaza Strip 1948 – 1967) (Acre: Dar al-Aswar, 1987), pp.85-100; Salih 'Abd al-Jawad, "Dirasah fi Qiyadat Fatah," (A Study on Fatah Leadership), *Qadaya*, 4 August 1990, pp.30-32; and Basheer Musa Nafi', "Al-Islamiyyun al-Filistiniyyun wa al-Qadiyyah al-Filistiniyyah 1950-1980," (Palestinian Islamists and the Palestinian Issue 1950-1980), *Marasid*, 1,2(1999), p.58 and 59.
- 3 On the rise of Fatah, see: Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organization: People, Power, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.36-48; and Barry Rubin, *Revolution until Victory? The Politics and History of PLO* (Cambridge, Mss: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp.1-23.
- 4 On the origin of Islamic Jihad and Hamas Movements, see: Ziyad Abu 'Amr, *Al-Harakah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Diffah al-Gharbiyyah wa Qitaa' Ghazzah* (The Islamic Movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip) (Acre: Dar al-Aswar, 1989); Iyad al-Barghuthi, *Al-Aslamah wa al-Siyasah fi al-Arabi al-Filistiniyyah al-Muhtallah* (Islamization and Policies in Palestinian Occupied Lands) (Al-Quds: al-Zahra' Center for Studies and Researches, 1990); 'Atif 'Udwan, *al-Sheikh Ahmad Yasin Hayatuh wa Jihadu* (Sheikh Ahmad Yassin's Life and Strife) (Gaza: Islamic University, 1991); and Ahmad Yusuf, *Ahmad Yasin: Al-Zahirah al-Mu'jizah wa Usturat al-Tahaddi* (Ahmad Yasin: The Miraculous Phenomenon and the Legend Of Challenge) (Worth, Illinois (USA): International Center for Researches and Studies, n.d.).
- 5 On the crisis of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement prior to the Oslo Accords, see: Basheer Musa Nafi', "Al-Mashru' al-Watani al-Filistini Nahwa Marhalah Jadidah," (The Palestinian National Project towards a New Stage), *Qira'at Siyasiyyah*, 2 (1992).
- 6 The overwhelming majority of Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims are considering these operations as "martyrdom operations" while most Israelis and western writers and media are considering them as "suicide operations". We used the word "self-immolation" in this report to be as neutral as possible. However, such terms may need more discussions.
- 7 *Al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi* newspapers, London, 18 and 19 March 2005.
- 8 On the Israeli series of aggressions against the Palestinians, which included detention, assassinations, bombardment of civil targets and chasing members of Palestinian resistance forces, see: *al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 24 August 2005, *al-Hayat*, 25, 26, 27 and 28 September, 11, 25 and 28 October and 2 November 2005.
- 9 For example, it was recorded on 28 August that a Palestinian "self-immolation" attack took place in Bi'r al-sabi' (Beersheba) for which al-Quds Brigades and al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades declared their responsibility (*al-Hayat*, 29 August 2005), this operation was, in fact carried out by Hamas; also on 16 October, three Israelis were killed near the settlement of Ghush Etzion in an attack claimed by al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades (*al-Hayat*, 17 October 2005); and moreover, on 26 October five Israelis were killed in an operation carried out by Islamic Jihad in al-Khudyrah (*al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 26 October 2005).
- 10 *Al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 24, 25 and 26 September 2005.

- 11 See for instance, The outcomes of the International Conference for Supporting the Palestinian Reformation Process, held on 1 March 2005, in London (*al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 2 March 2005).
- 12 *Al-Hayat*, 8 January 2006.
- 13 *Al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 15 April 2005.
- 14 *Al-Hayat*, 14 August 2005.
- 15 *Al-Ahram* newspaper, Cairo, 13 August 2005.
- 16 *Al-Hayat*, 31 August 2005.
- 17 *Al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 23 and 28 August, 1, 4 and 21 September 2005.
- 18 *Al-Hayat*, 1 September 2005.
- 19 *Al-Hayat*, 6 September 2005.
- 20 *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 24, 25, 26 and 27 September 2005.
- 21 *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 3 and 4 October 2005.
- 22 *Al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 8 September 2005.
- 23 *Al-Hayat*, 22 September 2005.
- 24 *Al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 6 and 7 May 2005.
- 25 *Al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 3 and 4 October 2005.
- 26 *Al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 17 December 2005.
- 27 References used in the preparation of this table are: the United Nations Development Programme: <http://www.pogar.org/arabic/govnews/2005/issue2/palestine.html#m2a>, and a study: Middle East Studies Center (MESC), *Results of Municipal Elections in the Early Three Phases*, Amman, November 2005. Besides, *Assafir* newspaper, Beirut, 10 May 2005, *al-Khaleej* newspaper, United Arab Emirates, 1 October 2005, *al-Hayat al-Jadidah*, Palestine, 18 September 2005, and The Palestinian Information Center, 18 December 2005:
<http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/palestoday/reports/report2005/entkhabat05/nataeej/nataeej.htm>
- 28 *Al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 16 December 2005.
- 29 *Al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 13 January 2005.
- 30 *Al-Hayat* and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 19 January 2006.
- 31 To discuss the implications of Hamas electoral rise, see the full report of International Crisis Group, which is neutral in general and oversees the Palestinian issue from a European point of view: International Crisis Group, "Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration," Middle East Report 49, 18 January 2006.
- 32 To have an academic overview on the inability of the United States to continue a foreign policy based on the principle of Bush, read the following: Robert Jarvis, "Why the Bush Doctrine Cannot Be Sustained," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.120, No.3 (Fall, 2005).

Chapter Two

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene: Launching the Journey towards the Green Line

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene: Launching the Journey towards the Green Line¹

Introduction: The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip (GS) and the foundation of the Kadima (Forward) Party, led by Sharon, were the most significant events in the Israeli-Palestinian scene in 2005. On the other hand, Israel continued to argue that there is no appropriate Palestinian peace partner, and, thus, acted unilaterally and enforced its dictates. Neither the election of Mahmud 'Abbas as the leader of the Palestinian Authority (PA), nor the period of calm announced by the Palestinian factions, had tangible effect towards a compromise; freeing the captives, halting the Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank (WB), or mitigating the intensity of the Israeli campaign to give Jerusalem a Judaic identity. Moreover, the drive to build the Separation Wall in the WB escalated, and the Israeli authorities continued their campaigns of economic blockade, closure of the crossings, assassinations and arrests. Meanwhile, on the Israel's side, the management of the conflict became relatively easy because of the Palestinian declared Hudna (truce), recession of the resistance operations, across the Green Line in particular, and the substantial amelioration of the Israeli economy, in addition to the unlimited American support for Israel, and the apathy of the Arab nations. The Israelis managed to engage the world in monitoring their withdrawal from. This weakened the ability to activate current political initiatives, and, thus, helped the Israelis to impose the general framework of their political agenda. However, whether the Israelis liked or not, the year 2005 marked the beginning of their oblivion drive towards the Green Line.

The Israeli Scene: In the year 2005, Israel was still officially establishing itself on an area of 20,770 km², which amounted to 76.9% of the historical land of Palestine, besides the annexed Syrian Golan Heights (1,154 km²), the occupied areas of the WB (5,876 km²), GS (363 km²), and the Lebanese Shab'ah farms.

The Demographic Scene: According to official Israeli statistics, the Israeli population by the end of 2005 totaled about 6 million & 988,000, amongst whom were 5 million & 309,000 Jews; i.e., about 76% of the population. The Arab population totaled 1 million &

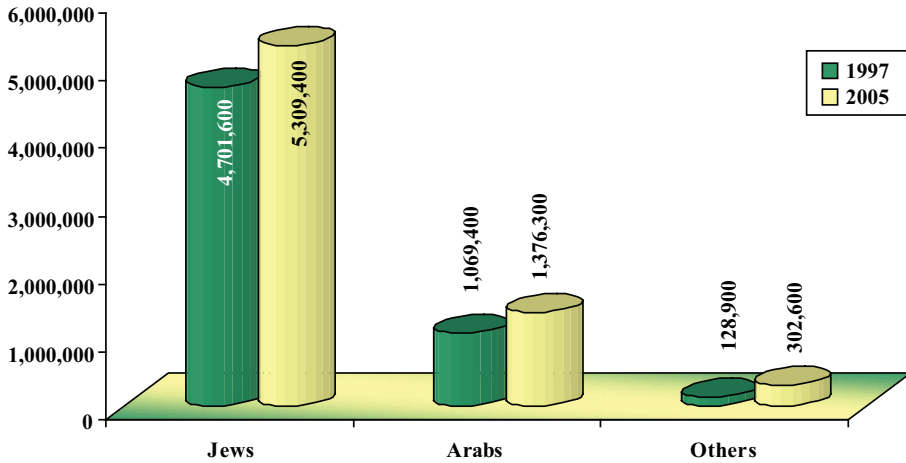
376,000, including the inhabitants of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, which constituted about 19.7% of the population. Meanwhile, about 300,000 did not declare their religions (4.3%),² who are most likely immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe whose Jewish identity has not yet been established. About 452,000 Jewish settlers stayed in the WB, including East Jerusalem, and 20,000 in the Golan Heights, while 8,500 settlers were transferred from GS in August 2005 (see table 1/2).

22,818 Jews immigrated to Israel during the year 2005, which is slightly higher than the 22,500 immigrants of 2004. Thus, Jewish immigration maintained a relatively low pace compared to that of the last decade of the twentieth century (1990 – 1999), which witnessed an influx of approximately 825,000 Jews.³ This decline may be linked to the depletion of immigrants from Russia and States of the Former Soviet Union, in addition to the negative impact of the Palestinian *Intifadah* on the economy and security of Israel (see table 2/2).

Table 1/2: Population of Israel 1997 – 2005
(Population estimates do not include foreign labor)⁴

Year	Gross population number	Jews	Arabs (including the population of Eastern Jerusalem and in the Golan Heights)	Others
1997	5,899,900	4,701,600	1,069,400	128,900
1998	6,041,400	4,785,100	1,105,400	150,900
1999	6,209,100	4,872,800	1,143,900	192,400
2000	6,369,300	4,955,400	1,188,700	225,200
2001	6,508,800	5,025,000	1,227,500	256,300
2002	6,631,100	5,094,200	1,263,900	273,000
2003	6,748,400	5,165,400	1,301,600	281,400
2004	6,869,500	5,237,600	1,340,200	291,700
2005	6,988,300	5,309,400	1,376,300	302,600

Population of Israel for 1997 & 2005



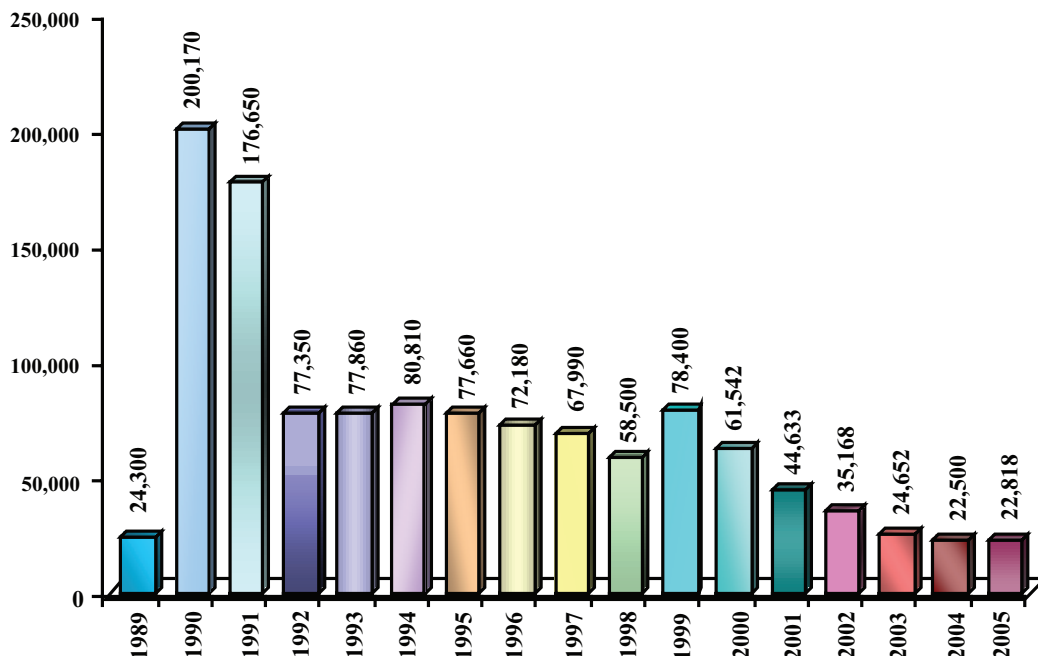
Undoubtedly, the demographic conditions in occupied Palestine were a major concern for the Israeli project of settlement, and had been a factor for their withdrawal from GS (though not as important as the pressures of the *Intifadah* and the resistance). Demography was also behind the Israeli endeavors to implement projects based on the concept of preservation of the Jewish character of the state, and on the policy of “more lands, less Arabs.” Nonetheless, it is important to mention that the number of Palestinians in Palestine with its historical-geographical borders reached, by the end of 2005, approximately 4 million & 920,000 (48.1% of the population),⁵ and is likely to be by 2010 equal to that of the Jews in the whole of Palestine.

Table 2/2: Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel by Year⁶

Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Number of immigrants	24,300	200,170	176,650	77,350	77,860	80,810	77,660	72,180	67,990

Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Total
Number of immigrants	58,500	78,400	61,542	44,633	35,168	24,652	22,500	22,818	1,203,183

Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1989 - 2005



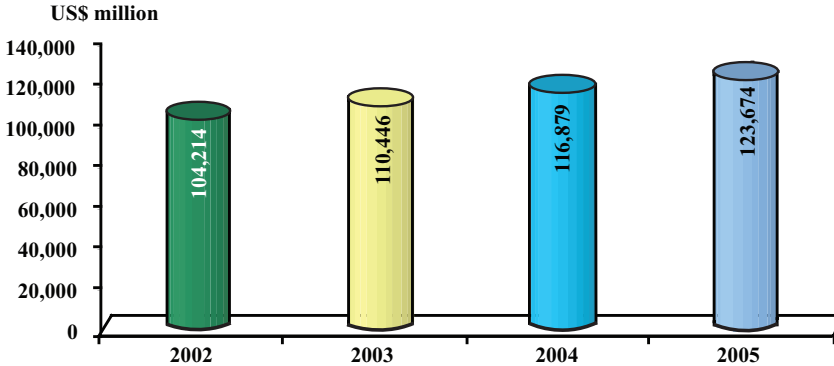
The Economic Scene:

Official Israeli statistics indicate that the Israeli economy began to recover from the economic crisis caused by the *Intifadah of al-Aqsa*, and that it achieved an economic growth of 5.2% in 2005, compared to 4.4% in 2004 and of 1.7% in 2003. However, economic growth was negative in 2001 (-0.3%) and 2002 (-1.2%). The Israeli Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rose from (523 billion & 851 million shekels), i.e., \$116 billion & 879 million, in 2004⁷ to (555 billion & 26 million shekels), i.e., \$123 billion & 674 million, in 2005 (see table 3/2).⁸

Table 3/2: Israeli Gross Domestic Product 2002 – 2005

Year	Gross domestic product (million shekel)	Gross domestic product (US\$ million)	Current exchange (according to Israel Central Bank)
2002	493,747	104,214	4.7378
2003	502,343	110,446	4.5483
2004	523,851	116,879	4.4820
2005	555,026	123,674	4.4878

Israeli Gross Domestic Product 2002 - 2005

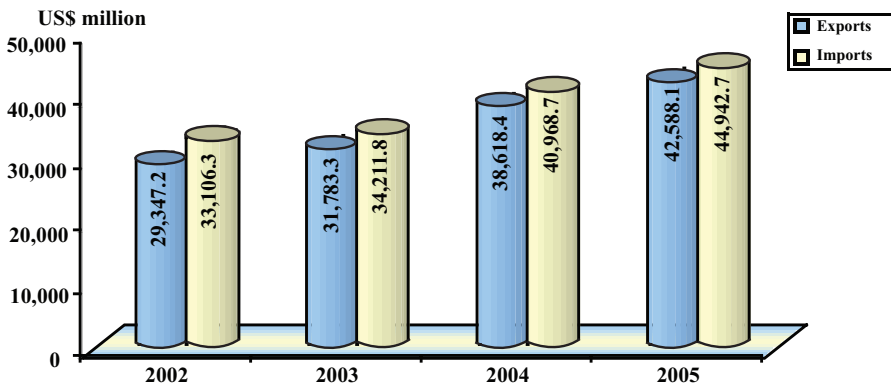


The revenue of the 2005 Israeli budget totaled \$53 billion & 820 million, while the expenditure was \$58 billion & 40 million.⁹ Statistics of the Israeli Ministry of Finance reported a reduction in budget deficit at the end of the year to \$2,290 million.¹⁰ Israel suffers from heavy debts of about \$74 billion.¹¹ Israeli exports, amounted to \$42 billion 588 million & 100,000 in 2005, while they were \$38 billion 618 million & 400,000 in 2004, i.e., an increase of \$3,969 million & 700,000 (about 10.3%). Imports, on the other hand, amounted to \$44 billion 942 million & 700,000 in 2005, while they were \$40 billion 968 million & 700,000 in 2004, i.e., an increase of \$3,974 million (about 9.7%) (see table 4/2).¹²

Table 4/2: Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2002 – 2005 ¹³
(US\$ million)

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
Exports	29,347.2	31,783.3	38,618.4	42,588.1
Imports	33,106.3	34,211.8	40,968.7	44,942.7

Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2002 - 2005



There is a great disparity of income between the various sectors of the Israeli community, and the government pursues at different levels discriminatory racial policies against the Arabs inside the Green Line. This leads to poverty and negligence of their towns and villages. Poverty is widespread in Israel as the number of the poor at the end of 2004 (beginning of 2005), according to a report published by the governmental Institution of National Insurance, totaled 1 million & 534,000, amongst whom 714,000 are children. Moreover, nearly half the Arab population is living below the poverty line.¹⁴

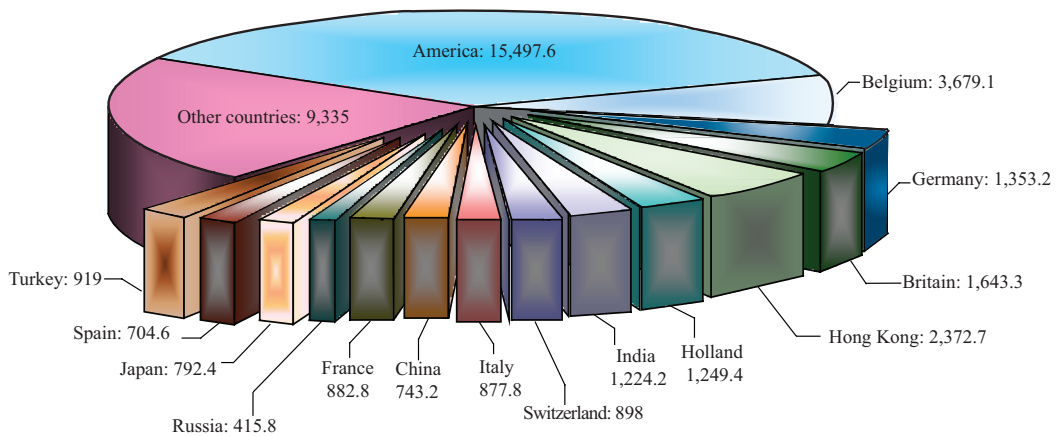
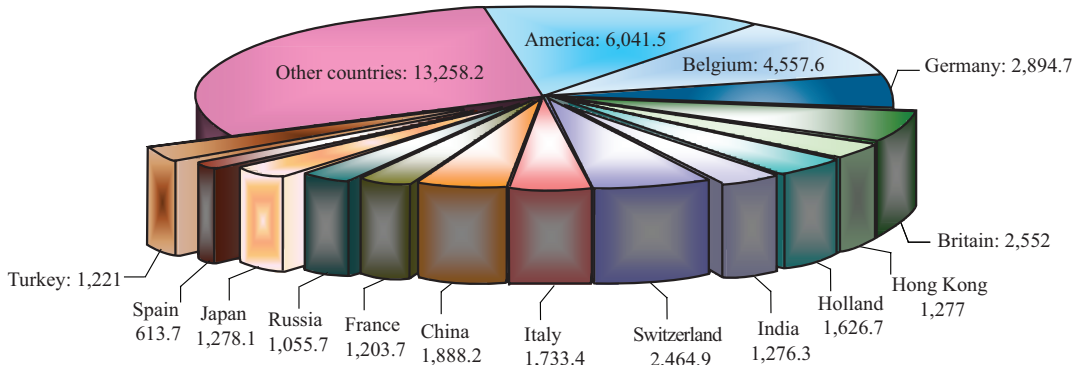
The United States provides huge annual assistance to Israel, about \$3,160 million, of which \$1 billion is for military assistance. However, it is important to note that Israel has become less dependent on this aid, and is no longer at the mercy of the US, thanks to the doubling of national income 9 times more than that of the past 22 years. While these grants constituted 25% of the national income in 1983, the figure was sharply reduced to less than 3% in 2005. We, however, should indicate that this direct financial aid constitutes only part of the whole American aid. Indirect American financial aid comes in various forms: exemption of the grants provided by American Jews to Israel from taxes, purchases of Israeli bonds, and various international agreements that give Israel many privileges, in addition to a considerable American pressure on Arab and other countries to cooperate with Israel economically and commercially, e.g. the Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ) Agreement with Egypt. The United States also provides huge assistance to Israel in the field of military industries, which develop in the Hebrew state at rates that are totally incompatible with the means of a small country.

Israel, on the other hand, largely depends on its economic relations with the United States, its imports to and exports from the United States in the year 2005 respectively reached \$6,099 million & 100,000, which represents 13.6% of the total imports, and \$15 billion 497 million & 600,00, i.e., 36.4% of the total exports (see table 5/2).¹⁵

It is important to note that Israel is vastly exhausting Palestinian resources, and it controls its water sources. This made the Palestinian economy in the WB and GS to be almost wholly dependent in its imports and exports on Israel. Israel also turned these territories into a market for its products, and obstructed their normal growth. Besides, is the Israeli systematic work to frustrate (and even destroy) Palestinian agriculture, industry, and the whole infrastructure.

Table 5/2: Israeli Exports and Imports to Some Countries (US\$ million)

Year	Israeli exports to				Israeli imports from			
	2005	2004	2003	2002	2005	2004	2003	2002
America	15,497.6	14,175.1	12,088.5	11,712.2	6,041.5	6,099.1	5,330.8	6,134.1
Belgium	3,679.1	2,898.1	2,320.9	1,863.2	4,557.6	4,130.8	3,179.9	3,028.3
Germany	1,353.2	1,361	1,123.3	1,026.5	2,894.7	3,090.2	2,731.1	2,347.8
Britain	1,643.3	1,447.8	1,224.5	1,164.5	2,552	2,482.8	2,283.4	2,226.8
Hong Kong	2,372.7	1,907.7	1,495.4	1,373.2	1,277	1,178.3	892.7	1,194.1
Holland	1,249.4	1,232.8	1,085.1	909.1	1,626.7	1,483.8	1,196.5	1,177.9
India	1,224.2	1,037.9	717.8	613.7	1,276.3	1,107.7	888.8	653.2
Switzerland	898	782.3	504.9	384.6	2,464.9	2,682.1	2,062	2,075.2
Italy	877.8	810	772.5	693.7	1,733.4	1,565.7	1,398.2	1,530
China	743.2	786.9	612.6	426.6	1,888.2	1,418.4	1,008.1	793.3
France	882.8	764	684.6	649	1,203.7	1,248.9	1,182.9	1,186.9
Russia	415.8	319.1	220.5	210.5	1,055.7	688	618.2	519.9
Japan	792.4	782.3	626	649.8	1,278.1	1,197	843.7	782
Spain	704.6	616.2	525.4	399.7	613.7	625.3	624.6	637.8

Israeli Exports to Some Countries in 2005 (US\$ million)

Israeli Imports from Some Countries in 2005 (US\$ million)


The Military Scene:

The Israeli military strategic structure depends mainly on building a formidable and striking military force that can defeat the Arab countries collectively; supported, of course, with its strategic alliance with the United States, which guarantees the absolute supremacy of the Zionist state. Therefore, Israel laid down its military strategy upon the following principles:

1. The militarization of the Zionist society in Palestine, and the promotion of the competence of the fighters as well as the weaponry.
2. Precautionary war.
3. Deterrence.
4. Military predominance.
5. Moving the battlefield into the enemies' lands.
6. Ensuring strategic positions and building security zones.
7. Flexibility: easy movement and quick decisions in the battlefield.
8. Reduction of loss of life as far as possible.
9. Imposing tight control on the armament of the possible opposing parties (Arab and Muslims) that keeps it at minimum levels.

The Israeli security theory is based on the possibility of war at any time, and on offensive and defensive strategies, surprise attacks, quick movement and pre-emptive strikes.

Moreover, Israel spends a huge part of its budget on the army, security, and military industries. However, a great deal of the money assigned for military expenditure, as well as the income of arms deals is concealed for security reasons. The 1999 official budget for military expenditures, for instance, was \$8,700 million, though the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), in London, estimated the figure for the year 1997 as \$11 billion & 700 million.

In 2004, the military balance approved by the government and the Knesset reached 46 billion & 800 million shekels, but in late August 2005, the State Observer disclosed that Sharon and his Minister of Defense, Mofaz, deposited a great deal of the income derived from arms deals and the like in the military budget without informing the government or the Ministry of Finance. These sums, estimated at 11 billion & 700 million shekels (about \$2,600 million), had actually led to an increase in the budget to reach 58 billion & 500 million shekels (about \$13 billion).¹⁶

The official balance assigned for military expenditure for the year 2005 reached almost 18% of the total budget, which is estimated at \$10 billion & 450 million. However, it is most likely that the income of weapons transactions had been transmuted, as in 2004, to the military balance, because these transactions are handled with absolute confidentiality, complete privacy and are not included in the budget.¹⁷ The number of soldiers in the Israeli army is approximately 186,000 soldiers; while those of the reserve forces are about 430,000. The latter can be fully and effectively mobilized within four days only. There has been no significant change in the size of the Israeli army for many years.¹⁸ However, we should point to some new indicators that undermine the fighting capability of the Israeli army as follows:

1. Israeli soldiers spare no effort to suppress the Palestinian fighters and to severely punish their supporters. They also carry out strictly non-militarily operations to assassinate the Palestinian military and political leadership. It is very well known that involvement in such operations in particular and in the suppression of civilian uprisings and liberation movements in general reduces the military capability of regular soldiers, and diminishes their morale. Israeli newspapers had recently published reports about the exposition of some disbanded Israeli soldiers to nervous breakdowns, while others who migrated to India in quest for peace of mind in its oriental religions.
2. The Israeli military institution persuaded the youth to willingly recruit themselves in the army on the plea that wars had been imposed against the country, and that it has no option except to defend itself against the Arab aggressors. But the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, its brutal suppression of the first and the second Palestinian *Intifadahs*, and its ruthless defense of Israeli settlers in the WB have clearly shown that the wars of the Zionist state were, to a large extent, not defensive. Hence, the zeal to fight gradually debilitated among the Israeli youngsters, and some refused or escaped from the military service.
3. Secular societies are characterized by their tendency to seek salvation through self-realization, which in essence lead to a rise in consumption and the gratification of desires. Israeli youth are no exception, thus their patriotic zeal is on the wane.



In 2005, the Israeli army possessed a huge arsenal consisting of 820 warplanes (470 of them in service), 3,910 tanks (3,630 in service), 70 aircraft for transportation, 283 helicopters (181 in service), 1,948 batteries (1,348 in service), 3 submarines and 15 warships, and so on.¹⁹ The importance of these arms does not lie in their numbers, but, rather, in their quality, as they represent the latest in international military technology. Therefore, they have the capacity to easily deal with the “scrap metal and stocks” of arms in the Arab countries.

Moreover, Israeli forces possess the third generation of the Merkava MK III tanks, and the fourth Merkava MK IV, have just been commissioned to service. Recently, Israel purchased 52 F-16 I warplanes, which have been gradually delivered since 2004, and are scheduled to be received in full in 2008.²⁰ By early April 2005, Israel began receiving the first freight of the latest military helicopters, the Apache Long Bow, as well as the first three out of twenty planes from a new generation of warplanes.²¹ The number of Israeli nuclear heads, or what we may call “The Silent Eloquent” is around 200, though Israel adamantly refuses to officially disclose the true size of its nuclear arsenal.

It is worth mentioning that the military industry is one of the most important industries in Israel. It is closely related to the hostile and occupational nature of the Zionist state, which is based on the principle of power. Furthermore, there are numerous developed factories for building fighter jets, tanks, rockets, and light weapons. Estimations point to the existence of about 120,000 workers employed in this field, and that about half the scientists and engineers are somehow related to this industry. The amount of weapons that Israel exports annually is estimated to be worth of \$2 billion, which makes it occupies the fourth or fifth position among the weapon exporting countries, just after the US, Russia, France, and China.²² But the Israeli military industry, as mentioned before, could not have secured such a position without the massive support it receives from America.

The Political Scene: Sharon’s dissent from the Likud Party and his formation of Kadima was the most significant development, indeed an “earthquake”, in Israeli 2005 political life. However, this had not been the first time for leading figures to quit their parties and form their own ones. For example, David Ben-Gurion, the former Prime Minister of Israel, dissented from the Mapai Party and formed the Rafi Party that competed for the sixth Knesset elections in 1965. Likewise, less prominent leaders have

dissented from the Likud, such as David Levy (the former Foreign Minister), who established the Geshet Movement in 1996. Another example is Itzhak Mordechai (the former Minister of Defense), who established the Center Party in 1999. Nevertheless, these Parties failed to command public support, contrary to the Kadima Party, which, according to opinion polls, took the top position of all Israeli parties by the end of 2005.

However, the establishment of Kadima should not be separated from a number of general phenomena that characterize the party system in Israel, of which the most prominent are the multiplicity of political parties, and the rapid frequency in which new parties are formed and old ones are spirited, besides the numerous party coalitions. In short, Israel has a history of forming and dissolving parties.

Moreover, the security role in the process of decision-making should not be overlooked, particularly because retired military generals frequently turn into political activists and leaders. Most of the large parties are not political parties per se; they also play extensive role in the socio-economic, educational and health issues. Besides, many Israeli parties are characterized by their ability to coexist and compromise. Almost everything is open for bargain between secularists, religious groups, leftists, and rightists.

There are traditional differences among Israeli parties, be it rightist, leftist, or the religious parties, but these are not necessarily based on adherence to different social and liberal theories. Rather, their essence stems from three main issues: the destiny of occupied Arab territories (peace settlement), the economic system, and the relation between religion and the state. The colonial drive of Israel and its essential contradiction with the historical and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people remains the main element that governs the behavior of Israeli political parties.

Indeed, in recent years, especially after the outbreak of *Intifadat al-Aqsa* (September 2000), political differences between the bi-polar of Israeli political life, the Labor and Likud Parties; have considerably abated. The Labor Party has taken such a tougher line towards the Palestinians that it appeared as a pale shade to the policies adopted by the Likud Party during their coalition in the government formed by Sharon (March 2003 – November 2005).

However, the Likud Party found it inevitable to handle matters realistically in the light of the escalating Palestinian resistance, and the political stalemate

facing its extreme views, namely “The right of the Jewish people to have all the land of Israel.” Therefore, Likud leaders accepted the “Road Map” (though with 14 reservations) and the establishment of a Palestinian state, and they adopted a unilateral separation plan that led to the Israeli withdrawal from GS and the establishment of the discriminatory Separation Wall in the WB. Indeed, the latter is an implicit admission of the inability of Israel to continue the occupation of all the land of Palestine. However, these policies resulted in sharp divisions and partitions inside the Likud Party, which had finally forced Sharon to resign and form a new party.

By the end of 2005, the Israeli voter did not find essential differences between the leading political parties, in particular Kadima and the Labor Party. They were largely dominated by personal concerns, to the detriment of political vision and stand. These are the whys and wherefores that triggered the Israeli writer Alouf Benn to sarcastically say that the Israeli voter is required to either choose Sharon’s white hair or Amir Peretz’s black moustache!²³ Mr. Eitan Haber, who regretted the absence of political and ideological commitment, bitterly stated that: “In the Spring of 2006, we will go to the polls with anti-disgust tablets”²⁴!!

By 2005, there were sharp differences in Israel on the issue of withdrawal from GS. Though a large majority of the public backed this move, a solid body inside the Likud Party defiantly opposed it. On 2 May 2005, Natan Sharansky, the Minister of Jerusalem Affairs, resigned from the government in protest of the expected withdrawal.²⁵ The overt struggle for power between Ehud Olmert (the then vice Premier) and Netanyahu (the Minister of Finance and an aspirant for the leadership of the Likud and the post of the Premier) impelled the former to dismiss the latter as a dirty and corrupt Minister who masterminds cheap and filthy political intrigues. In response, Netanyahu accused his adversary of suffering from an inferiority complex that he wanted to compensate by highlighting himself on the headlines of the noisy yellow newspaper, Netanyahu had, furthermore, equated Olmert with Ceausescu, the former oppressive Romanian President.²⁶

On 7 August 2005, Netanyahu resigned in protest against the withdrawal plan from GS that was approved by the Israeli cabinet on the very same day. It was clear that the Likud Party was at the threshold of a crisis around the orientation and the leadership of the Party. Public opinion polls fluctuated between Ariel Sharon and Netanyahu.²⁷ At the same time, Sharon realized more than at any

time before that he would not be able to implement his policies with such a strong and troubling opposition within his own Party, that threatens him with dismissal at any moment. Meanwhile, his plan received wide support from the Israeli public.

News began to leak that Sharon may withdraw from the Likud and form a new party supported by the Israeli middle and right. Indeed, the majority of Sharon's political advisors, known as the "Farm Forum", supported this step because they felt that it would be very difficult for Sharon to win the leadership of the Likud. Even if he does, the advisors argued, the Likud candidates to the next elections would be from the extreme orthodox and religious right, thus it would be extremely difficult for Sharon to implement his program.²⁸

On 30 August, Netanyahu announced his candidacy to lead the Likud Party to fight corruption. He accuses Sharon of damaging the Likud Party and undermining its principles through his insistence to force thousands of the Israeli people to abandon GS.²⁹ On the other side, Sharon accused Netanyahu of suffering from tension and distress, and argued that Israel has specific problems that require cool nerves and the ability to view matters in a balanced manner, qualities that Netanyahu lacks.³⁰

When Sharon delivered his speech before the United Nations on 15 September 2005, there was general agreement among observers that he had realized a swing in the mood of the Zionist public towards "the middle." His speech was, in fact, addressed to this segment from which he hoped to have his "new voters." Implicitly, he severed relations with his traditional orthodox voters from the Likud through speaking of the Palestinian national rights, and of his readiness to concede to them some "painful concessions."³¹

On 26 September, Sharon achieved a difficult, but temporary, victory over his adversary, Netanyahu. 51.4% of the Likud center members supported Sharon's motion not to advance the preliminary internal election for the choice of the Party's leadership, while the rest, 47.7%, backed Netanyahu's counter motion.³² It was obvious that Sharon and the Likud Party were confronting critical decisions concerning the future orientation of the Party at large. Will it be a pragmatic rightist party close to the pulse of the Israeli street as Sharon intends? Or will it be an orthodox religious rightist party similar to the Settlement Council, as Netanyahu, Uzi Landau, and others desire? According to Helmi Musa, Likud members found themselves in a real dilemma due to their

closeness to the middle, and not because of their rightist attitudes. They wanted to punish Sharon for his policies, corruption, and his despise for the Party's institutions. However, they feared that such a measure might bring failure to all of them.³³

On 21 November 2005, Sharon finally announced his withdrawal from the Likud Party, which, in his words, is no longer suitable to rule Israel, and formed the Kadima Party. Soon many ministers, Knesset members and members of the Labor and Likud Parties joined the new Party, of whom the most important were Ehud Olmert, Tzipi Livni, Meir Sheetrit, Gideon Ezra, Abraham Hirschson, and Shaul Mofaz. Similarly, Shimon Peres, the historical leader of the Labor Party, as well as two of its Ministers Haim Ramon, and Dalia Itzik, joined Kadima. Likewise, Uriel Reichman, the founder of the Shinui Party, joined the new Party. Soon, the newborn Kadima stole the limelight and, according to the opinion polls, became the strongest party in Israel. By the end of 2005, public opinion polls gave the new Party a third of the total votes of Israel, i.e., 40 of the Knesset's total seats, while Likud's popularity sharply declined to 12 – 16 seats. At the same time, the Labor Party oscillated between 22 – 27 seats. Thus, the emergence of Kadima constituted a severe blow to the Likud, in which the ultra-orthodox had, however, remained. The Labor Party also suffered considerable losses, while the Shinui Party lost to Kadima most of its traditional constituency in the middle. Shinui received a deathblow when public opinions cast doubts on its ability to overcome the threshold needed to enter the Knesset, though it had captured 15 seats in the last elections (of 2003).³⁴

Sharon's charisma and strong character was the cornerstone of the new Party. This development had also shown the prevalent desire among the Israeli public to reach a solution with the Palestinians, under the leadership of a powerful figure like Sharon, and, at the same time, their disappointment in the policies and performance of the Israeli parties on internal issues.

On 28 December 2005, Kadima issued its political program which was based on the premise of "the national and historical right of the Israeli people in the whole land of Israel." However, in order to protect the existence of Israel as a homeland for the Jews, Kadima agreed to a Palestinian state, and to recede part of "the land of Israel" for this purpose on condition that this state would bear no arms and be free from "terrorism". Besides, the Palestinians should forgo their claims on Jerusalem and large parts of the WB, and to give up the right of return

to the land occupied in 1948.³⁵

It was obvious that these so-called “painful concessions” were only offered under the pressure of the *Intifadah*. However, they did not include, or rather were determined not to include, Palestinian legal rights, and even refused to recognize their full rights in part of their historical homeland, i.e., the WB and GS. They looked down upon the Palestinians, who were arrogantly viewed as people without national honor and right of sovereignty over their land. Therefore, the Palestinians had still a long way to go, and a lot of sacrifice and hardship to undergo in order to secure the minimum rights accepted by only some of their factions, and approved by the international community.

There is no doubt that the year 2005 was surely “the year of Sharon.” He managed to impose his agenda and to reshape the political map of Israel. Moreover, he announced his intention to get rid of the proportionate electoral system, which had been adopted by the Zionist state since its establishment, because it gives the small parties more weight than they deserve, and expose the larger parties to their political extortion. Furthermore, it leaves the gate wide open to corruption and bribery. As an alternative, Sharon proposed a system similar to that of the Americans, which is based on constituencies and the direct election of the president (the prime minister in the case of Israel).³⁶ However, Sharon did not sail safely through the storm he had created. His health deteriorated, and was afflicted on 18 December 2005 with thrombus, and later, on 4 January 2006, by brain damage. He then entered in a long coma.

Meanwhile, the Labor Party was exposed during 2005 to internal squabbling, and its leaders were increasingly concerned that the Party may wane under the cloak of Sharon. This profound fear triggered the Party’s youth to organize on 17 October 2005 a demonstration against the leader of the Party that shouted “Shimon Peres is the humble dog of Sharon.”³⁷ Contrary to expectations, Amir Peretz defeated, on 9 November 2005, Shimon Peres in the bid for the Party’s Presidency, with a small margin (42.35% to 39.96%), while Ben-Eliezer got 16.82%. The victory of Amir Peretz revived hopes within the Labor Party that it may restore its place in Israeli politics, and win new voters, especially among the eastern Jews to whom Peretz belongs (from Morocco). In fact, he was the first eastern to occupy the Presidency of this Party. However, the rising popularity of the Labor Party was short-lived. The formation of Kadima twelve days later turned things upside down. Many of the Labor Party’s historical leaders, headed by Shimon Peres, soon joined the new Party.

To recover from the strong blow that it suffered by the formation of Kadima, the Likud Party organized on 19 December 2005 its presidential election, in which Netanyahu easily won. For the first time, Netanyahu realized that the battle for the leadership of the Party was not necessarily the same for the Prime Minister's office, and that the Likud Party had still a long way to go before it regains its position in the streets of Israel, as it had already lost more than half of its supporters. However, dominance of the ultra-orthodox over the Likud does not for sure mean that the Party will follow an extreme line. The fears that the Party may wane and be marginalized, and the existence of some pragmatic elements within its ranks, triggered it to follow a "reasonable" line and to accommodate the new changes in the orientation of the Israeli voters. Hence, the Party's program for the 17th Knesset elections in March 2006, deleted the article that rejects the recognition of a Palestinian state.³⁸

However, the electoral program of the Labor Party was basically the same as those of Kadima and other main Israeli parties. It regards Jerusalem, east and west, as the eternal capital of Israel, and denies Palestinians the right of return. Nonetheless, it tries to mitigate this extremism by offering immediate negotiation to conclude a final settlement with the Palestinians, and the continuation of the Jewish settlements in the WB in return for a long lease of at least 99 years. In the same context, it suggests the exchange of land between the PA and Israel, i.e., the Palestinian state will incorporate some lands inside the Green Line, but forgo the large settlement blocks such as Ghush Etzion and Ariel, to Israel. However, the program refused Hamas participation in the legislative elections and to hold talks with it.³⁹

Therefore, the most prominent feature of the Israeli political scenario in 2005 was the increasing tendency within the "right" and the "left" towards the "center", which implies a growing conviction of the inability of Israel to impose by force its hegemony and dominance over the Palestinian people. Besides, there has been a rapid escalation in the political influence of the eastern Jews, while the formation of the powerful Kadima Party made it clear that Israeli politicking no longer depended on a two-party system, the Labor and the Likud.

Aggression and Resistance: Throughout the year 2005, the Israeli authorities continued their aggression against the land and people in Palestine. Tanks and bulldozers continued to impose new realities on the ground, and to oppress the Palestinians and confiscate their properties. At the same time, the Israeli media pursued a vocal propaganda campaign (echoed by the western media), which asserted the lack of a genuine Palestinian partner for peace. Indeed, this is part of the “surrealist” scene which the world has become accustomed to, and dealt with, namely, the occupation force that is armed to the teeth and usurped the land of another people by force be the party that should be supported and assured. Israeli fears have to be placated, while the Palestinian people, “the victims”, have to prove their good intentions and peaceful orientation.

During the year 2005, *al-Aqsa Intifadah* had abated, because of the developments that followed the death of Yasir ‘Arafat, and the election of Mahmud ‘Abbas as President of the PA. Besides, the Palestinians were preoccupied with the municipal elections and the preparations for the forthcoming legislative election. Moreover, the Palestinian factions announced on 22 January a unilateral truce that was followed, on 8 February, by a ceasefire between the Authority and Israel. In fact, the little of the resistance during 2005 took the shape of some vengeful and retaliatory operations against Israeli aggressions. According to the Palestinian National Information Centre, Israeli violations during the period that followed the pronouncement of a ceasefire, from 8 February 2005 to 2 January 2006, amounted to 23,427, including 2,366 shooting operations (see table 6/2).⁴⁰

Table 6/2: Israeli Violations of the Ceasefire from 8/2/2005 to 2/1/2006

Arrested	Injured	Killed	Shooting	Total violations
3,932	1,161	165	2,366	23,427

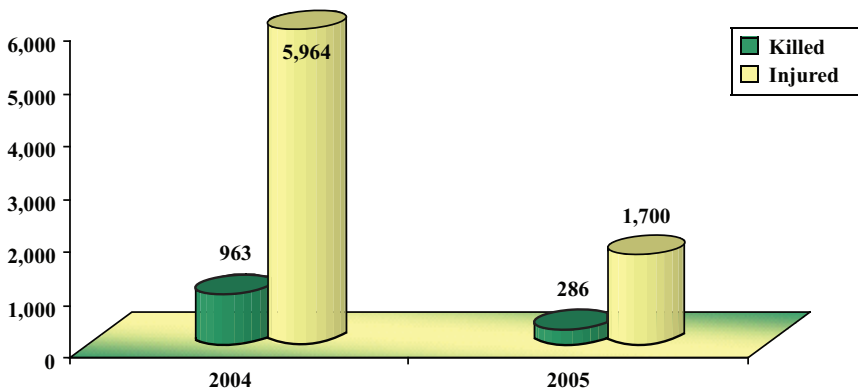
Formal Palestinian statistics indicate that during 2005, there were 286 killed Palestinians, including 68 children and 56 victims of Israeli assassination operation, and 1,700 injured,⁴¹ while the numbers for the year 2004 were 963 killed and 5,964 injured (see table 7/2).⁴² Conversely, according to the Prime Minister’s office and the statistics of the Shein Beit (General Security Service), 2,990 resistance operations were carried out during the year 2005 that resulted

in 45 Israeli killed and 406 injured, while in 2004, 117 Israeli were killed and 589 injured (see table 8/2).⁴³ The resistance carried out seven “self-immolation” operations during 2005, that left 23 Israeli killed and 213 injured, which five were carried by Islamic Jihad Movement and the rest two by Hamas.⁴⁴

Table 7/2: The Palestinians Killed and Injured during 2004 – 2005

Year	Killed	Injured
2005	286	1,700
2004	963	5,964

The Palistinians Killed and Injured during 2004 & 2005



According to statistics prepared by *Haaretz* newspaper, 3,333 Palestinians and 1,330 Israelis were killed during the five-years of the *Intifadah* (29 September 2000 – 28 September 2005), of whom 425 Palestinians and 56 Israelis were killed during the fifth year alone.⁴⁵ However, according to Palestinian estimation, 4,172 were killed (including 783 children and 269 women) and 45,718 were injured during the five years of the *Intifadah*. Moreover, 139 were killed due to the Israeli obstruction at the barricades.⁴⁶

Table 8/2: The Israelis Killed and Injured during 2004 – 2005⁴⁷

Year	Killed	Injured
2005	45	406
2004	117	589

Table 9/2: Resistance Operations 2004 – 2005⁴⁸

	“Self-immolation” operations	Rocket launches	Other operations	Total
Resistance operations 2005	7	377	2,606	2,990
Resistance operations 2004	15	309	3,547	3,871

**Table 10/2: Assassinations of Palestinians According to their
Membership during 2005 ⁴⁹**

Organization	Fatah	Islamic Jihad	Hamas	Popular Front	Indefinite	Total
Number	23	14	13	1	5	56

Israeli policy, during the year 2005, on Palestinian detainees and prisoners of *Intifadah* was basically the same as in previous years. It was essentially a vicious circle. Soon after releasing some (after exhaustive efforts or by the end of the imprisonment terms), the Israeli authorities arrest many other Palestinians in order to keep the prisoners' issue a constant weapon of bargain and pressure on the other side. The Israeli government pledged in the Sharm el-Sheikh agreements (8 February 2005) to release 900 Palestinians. On 21 February, 500 were released, and on 2 June, 398 others were set free. However, though the Palestinians had announced a truce and the *Intifadah* abated, the number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons increased day by day. In the beginning of 2005, there were about 7,800, but their numbers increased to 9,200 at the end of the year. During the year 2005, Israel arrested 3,495 Palestinians, of whom 1,600 remained in jail.⁵⁰

Indeed, the year 2005 witnessed an increasing growth of Zionist settlements in the WB, which synchronized with the building of the Separation Wall, the confiscation of land and the lumping of the Palestinian people in congested and isolated buildings in order to impose the Israeli vision of the final shape of the peace settlement. For example, the Israeli authorities confiscated 39,800 donums (1 donum (dunam) = 1,000 square meters).⁵¹ A comparative reading of the statistics from various sources indicates that the number of Jewish settlers in the WB increased from 440,000 at the end of 2004 to 452,000 by the end

of 2005, including 200,000 in East Jerusalem. Similarly, many evacuated settlers from GS were resettled in the WB. In addition to 160 “formal” Israeli settlements, there are 102 other settlement points, including 52 established after March 2001. During the year 2005, wide scale building operations were carried out, and by the end of its first half 4,207 housing units were built.⁵² *The Guardian* newspaper of 18 October 2005 recorded a further 4,000 housing units in the process of building.⁵³

The year 2005 had, moreover, witnessed the intensification of the Israeli campaign to Judaize Jerusalem and to isolate it through the building of the Separation Wall around the town, along with excessive settlement processes, the confiscation of Arab real estate properties in old Jerusalem, and the enactment of laws that make life of the Arab population in the city extremely difficult.

Some Jewish extremists declared 2005 as “The year of the Temple.” *Al-Aqsa* Mosque was subjected to several attacks undertaken by Jewish settlers, conducted from the Palestinian point of view, in connivance with the occupation government. The most infamous was the one called for by the extremist group “Revava” on 10 April 2005, which had been aborted by Palestinians who rushed to defend the sanctity of the Mosque. They tried again on 6 June, but also failed. Nonetheless, their attempts continued, though at a lower pace. Meanwhile, the preparation for the construction of the presumed Temple continued, and a solid 25 meters skeleton for it was build in Kiryat Shmona settlement in the north of Palestine. In addition, was the final tailoring of the clothes intended to be worn by the so-called “Chief Rabbi of the Temple” and their displaying to the audience.

The attempts of the Israeli authorities continued throughout 2005 to control and dominate *al-Aqsa* Mosque. On 20 April, the Israeli government constructed a bridge in the area of *al-Buraq* Wall, by which they intended to facilitate, through *al-Magharibah* Gate that they control, the entry of Jews and tourists to the Mosque. It has also been revealed that the occupation authorities have finished the building of a greater part of the tourist religious city that lies 14 meters under the Mosque.

The year 2005 also witnessed the scandal of the sale of the properties of the Orthodox Church, an infamous act unveiled on 18 March. Through a secret deal concluded between two Jewish settler groups and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchy, the former bought the land on which the Imperial and al-Batra hotels

were constructed, in addition to 27 shops possessed by the Greek Orthodoxy in ‘Umar bin al-Khattab square in *Bab al-Khalil* zone within the old city of Jerusalem. This scandal brought on 5 May the downfall of Patriarch “Irineos I” who proved to be a culprit. The holy synod of the Orthodox Roman Patriarchy elected on 22 August “Theophilos III” as a new bishop of the Orthodox Church. Since then, the Israeli government has subjected the new bishop to blackmail by refusing his appointment and delaying his formal investiture, until he endorses the deal of selling the properties of the Greek Church in Jerusalem.

The Separation Wall: Using words like “separation”, or “racial separation”, to label the Wall is but a diluted description of the heinous crime that has been committed against the Palestinians. Actually, it would be more accurate to describe this forced segregation as an “unjust deracination”, or “evil embankment”, for it sabotages the life of the Palestinians and expropriates their land and water resources. However, our adoption here of some commonly used terms to describe this Wall should not be interpreted as a tendency to mitigate the intensity of the atrocity it represents.

This racial Wall, built by Israel around the WB, reflects part of the Zionist isolationist mentality that emanates from their security concern and fear of the original inhabitants, the Palestinians. Undoubtedly, this mentality is very much similar to that of the white settlers in all colonial settlements. Thus, this Wall reminds of the racial discriminatory policies adopted by the white Afrikaner racists in South Africa during the Apartheid era, whose nature and orientation is similar to that of the Zionist movement. For the latter had established an isolated foreign body that surrounded itself with religious, political, cultural, and linguistic barriers which are alien to the prevailing milieu, but found itself cornered in a hostile environment. This Wall stands as a tacit confession of their failure to become a welcomed state within the region. By its construction in the WB, Israel has, thus, a number of goals and concerns that are enumerated below:

1. **The Security Dimension:** It is represented in the Israeli drive to prevent the infiltration of Palestinians from the WB into the occupied territories (since 1948), and to stop the “self-immolation” operations.
2. **The Political Dimension:** In this respect, Israel wanted to impose its vision

of a final settlement on the Palestinians, to demarcate borders unilaterally, to annex lands, on which it would erect settlements that would make the establishment of a Palestinian state impossible, and to spread Israeli authority over the Palestinian lands, especially Jerusalem.

3. **The Economic Dimension:** This is represented in the Israeli drive to expropriate the cultivated lands and water resources of the Palestinians, to hamper their ability to work and to place them under severe hardships that would compel them to emigrate from their land.
4. **The Social Dimension:** The erection of the Wall disrupts the social fabric of the Palestinian society, as it isolates a large number of districts, villages, and cities from each other, and impedes their social and familial connections. In addition, is the negative effect of the Wall on the health and educational services needed by hundreds of thousands of victims.

After the outbreak of the first *Intifadah* in 1987, the Israeli government built a fence around GS. Subsequently, in 1992, Yitzhak Rabin won the presidential elections on the basis of his program that claims: “We are here, they are there.”

In April 2002, the Israeli government decided to establish a separation barrier in the WB, and duly began the project on 16 June 2002. It officially approved, in October 2003 and June 2004, its length to be 652 km. Moreover, Ariel Sharon, the Prime Minister, announced in March 2003 the government’s plan to build another wall in the Jordanian Valley, east of the WB, with an average length of 132 km. In May 2005, an Israeli ministerial committee stated that the Wall should include Ma’ale Adumim, east of Jerusalem. This actually adds another 48 km to the Wall, bringing its full length to 832 km, i.e., double the length of the Green Line (the borders of the WB with the Israeli controlled area since 1948), which stretches 320 km only.

If constructed according to plan, the Wall would bring 47.6% of the WB under Israeli authority, and directly affects 680,000 Palestinians, while about 250,000 others will be sandwiched between the Separation Wall and the Green Line. Moreover, 330,000 Palestinians will remain isolated from their land and places of vocation. In addition, 101 villages, cities, and inhabited territories would remain isolated by the barrier, of which 19 would be in the western part of the Wall without any access to other Palestinian in the WB. Moreover, 53 villages and cities would find themselves surrounded by the fence from three sides. This would, in effect, place hundreds of thousands of Palestinians under

dire conditions that may compel them to emigrate from their homelands. Part of this sinister plan was that the Wall would include the largest number of Israeli settlements in the WB. It was, in fact, designed in a manner to incorporate 55 settlements with 322,000 Jewish settlers, who represent most of the WB's colonists.

The Israeli authorities attempted to muster international support to the barrier by claiming that it is just a "fence." But a close observation of its plans and structure would demonstrate that it is, in reality, a highly complicated military line. This is evident in the spiral barbed wire that runs along the length of this "fence", followed by a five meter deep and 4 meter wide trench, then a blacktop street (12 meters in width), followed by another soft sand matted street (4 meters in width), then a high cement wall (8 meters), on top of which are iron and electronic fences, equipped with cameras, searchlights, and military watch towers.⁵⁴

Perhaps the most important goal of this Segregation Wall is to continue the process of the Judaization of Jerusalem, and to confiscate its lands and encircle it with walls and colonial settlements that would isolate it from the Arab and Islamic world. The length of the racial Wall around Jerusalem is estimated to be about 181 km. It demarcates Jerusalem, starting from Northern Bethlehem, and encompasses *Rahel's* tomb and isolate the two villages of Abu-Dis and al-'Aizariyah from Jerusalem, then it turns left to include the settlements of Ma'ale Adumim, then west to isolate 'Anata, Shu'fat camp, Hazma, al-Ram, Kafr 'Aqib and Rafat from the holy city (Jerusalem). Bir Nabala and al-Jib, which have abruptly found themselves behind the Wall, will be blockaded by another one that deprive them from direct contact with the sacred city of Jerusalem, having access only through Ramallah.

Moreover, Beit Hanina will find itself facing the western part of the Wall, which, with the settlements, will surround it from three directions, leaving it with only one access through the gate of Bir Nabala opposite Ramallah. According to some estimates, the Separation Wall will isolate 18 Palestinian villages and municipalities, inhabited by 220,000 Palestinians, from Jerusalem. They constitute a natural extension to the sacred city, fall within its domains and depend economically, socially (as well as religiously and politically) on their relationship with it. The Wall would, thus, deprive these areas from their main



source of revenue, and consequently depopulate Jerusalem by about 60,000 out of its total population of 230,000.

Accordingly, the establishment of this Wall will lead to the loss of 90% of Jerusalem's lands. Furthermore, the settlement enclosure around the city will be completed, from the settlement of Abu Ghuneim (Harhoma), in the south of Jerusalem, Ma'ale Adumim in the east through the settlements of Pisgat Ze'ev and Giv'at Ze'ev to the north of the city. Thus, Israeli plans to reduce the ratio of the Arabs in Jerusalem from 33% to 22% will practically materialize. Moreover, the establishment of this dangerous enclosure around Jerusalem will effectively isolate 617 of the city's sacred and civilizational sites from their Arab and Islamic surrounding.

An example of the hardship that the Wall will inflict on the inhabitants of Jerusalem and its suburbs is that it separates the 25,000 population of the village of al-Sawahra into two parts, 10,000 living to the east of the Wall and 15,000 to its west. Moreover, the Wall cuts the village of Abu-Dis into two, thus separating Umm al-Zarazeer and Khillat 'Abd quarters from the rest of the village. The Wall also splits al-Salam suburb to the west of 'Anata into two halves and divides the village of Beit Hanina into two parts. Besides, it denies the inhabitants' of the latter free access to the village except through gates or tunnels, and separates it from 7,000 donums of its cultivated lands. The Wall also surrounds the village of al-Jib and expropriates 85% of its lands, leaving to the indigenous Palestinians only 1,770 donums out of 9,000 donums.⁵⁵

Nonetheless, the Security Council failed to condemn the Wall because the United States vetoed, in October 2003, a draft proposal that condemned Israel and asked it to stop the building. Subsequently, an alternative proposal was placed before the UN General Assembly which confined itself to calling the Israeli government to freeze its building plans. It is worthwhile to note that this non-binding decision received the approval of 144 members against four and 12 abstainees.

On 9 July 2004, the International Court of Justice issued an advisory decision which considered the Wall illegal and against the principles of international law. Furthermore, it called for the cessation of this project, and demanded that Israel compensate all the Palestinian victims. The Court ruled that the Wall obstructs

the Palestinians' right of self-determination, and effectively annex their lands. It also considered the establishment of Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands a violation of international law.

According to official Israeli sources, by December 2005, the total of 275 km of the Wall had been built and another 150 km are in an advanced stage of construction. Moreover, construction works will begin soon for another 83 km while 250 km are under planning and "legal" consideration by the Israeli authorities. As for the Wall that surrounds Jerusalem, it will be established by the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006.⁵⁶

The Peace Settlement Track: The Road Map has been scheduled to reach its final phase and bring the Palestinians and Israeli sides to a final agreement before the end of 2005. But the year 2005 elapsed without even initiating the implementation of this plan. Moreover, it was postulated that the two parties would reach a final agreement within five years after the Oslo Accords, but to no avail. Instead, the successive series of failures resulted in the outbreak of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in September 2000.

Since the signature of Oslo Accords in September 1993, Israel has effectively succeeded in affirming Yitzhak Rabin's statement that says: "Dates are not sacred", which has subsequently become central in Israeli politics, and one of its means for coercive pressure and extortion. The two parties failed - from the very beginning - to reach an agreement concerning the feasible details of the first phase agreement (Gaza – Jericho), and the period specified for Israeli withdrawal from this region had elapsed even before starting the process. This, however, was the dominant feature that overwhelmed the following agreements: Cairo (4 May 1994), Taba or Oslo 2 (28 September 1995), Hebron Agreement (15 January 1997), Wye River Plantation (23 October 1998), and Sharm el-Sheikh (4 September 1999).

In fact, Israel was not in a hurry to pursue the peace process as the local, regional, and international developments were in its favour. Besides, the Palestinian partner had been rushing to reach to results, though it lacked leverage. This gave Israel the opportunity to impose its conditions and to bring down the level of Palestinian expectations. Meanwhile, Israel organized an active settlement campaign that doubled the numbers of Jewish settlers in the WB, and it moved quickly to Judaize East Jerusalem. By then, Israel was reaping the

profits of the so-called “peace”, particularly by normalizing its relations with a number of Arab, Islamic, and international countries with whom it established diplomatic representation.

Meanwhile, the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa Intifadah* manifested the failure of the Oslo peace process, and the state of frustration that overwhelmed the Palestinian people. After 7 years of self-government, the PA extended its security and administrative authority to only 18% of the WB. Actually, Oslo’s biggest predicament was that it entailed the seeds of its own failure, as it did not address right from the beginning the fundamental issues, but occupied itself with procedures and details. Moreover, it placed the Palestinians under the mercy of the Israeli “good intentions”, while it did not oblige the aggressor to evacuate the 1967 occupied territories, or to abide by the edicts of international law. Rather, Israel, the opponent and the enemy, has simultaneously become the judge. Everything is dependent on the Israeli “goodwill” and mercy towards the Palestinians.

Israel reoccupied the regions under the PA and destroyed its infrastructure. Moreover, it besieged Abu ‘Ammar in his headquarters for two and a half years until he passed away, in mysterious circumstances on 9 November 2004. But the *Intifadah* had inflicted heavy damage on the Zionist state, shattered its security and economic infrastructure and disclosed the ugly face of its occupation. Ariel Sharon, who became the Premier on 6 February 2001, failed throughout his four years of Premiership to provide security for the Israelis, and to crush the *Intifadah* in hundred days, as he promised.

Sharon, had, in fact, represented the ultra extreme of the Israeli leadership. He superseded his predecessors in massacring the Palestinians, in encouraging the construction of the Jewish settlements, that earned him the title “The Father of Settlement”, and in expropriating Palestinian lands. Moreover, he voted against the Camp David Accords with Egypt and the Oslo Accords with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and expressed reservation towards the peace agreement with Jordan. Indeed, Sharon tried to pull the clock back and to impose his whims on others. He reiterated the claim that the Oslo Agreement had died, and described it in 2005 as “the biggest blunder committed by an Israeli government”, as reported by the American magazine, *Time*, in May 2005.⁵⁷

On his assumption of power, Sharon’s project was essentially security – focused. It just offered the Palestinians self-government on only 40 – 45%

of the WB, but refused to enter into negotiations with them before the end of the *Intifadah*, and by the end of November 2001, he even tried to sell them the notion of “Gaza first.” Sharon ignored the recommendations of Tenet and Mitchell, and was not for cooperation with the PA. All that he intended was to unveil its weakness before its people, and to demonstrate that it has no role to play except to be a police in the service of the occupation. Meanwhile, Sharon spared no effort to destroy the Authority’s infrastructure and security forces.

When signing Oslo Accords, the Palestinian side believed that this agreement would be the prelude to the establishment of the Palestinian state on the lands of the WB and GS. The PA was therefore obliged to carry out suppressive measures against the resistance factions, particularly Hamas, that were subjected to fierce attacks in the Spring of 1996 in order to prevent them from carrying out operations against the Israelis.

Unfortunately, the PA did not have many options in their struggle against Israeli decisions, or in dealing with their de facto policy. Furthermore, the American side, that patronized the peace process, was not an impartial or neutral partner. In addition, internally in Palestine, the positions of various groups varied between supporting the peace process and insisting on the resistance. Moreover, the corruption and the flaccidity of the PA had adversely affected its potentialities, and distanced the public and the professionals from it.

After ten years, the Israelis were still far away from meeting the minimum demands of the pro-peace groups. Moreover, there was almost a consensus among major Israeli political factions that denied the Palestinian refugees the right to return to the occupied territories of 1948, insisted that Jerusalem, with its east and west parts, be the eternal capital of Israel, and that the main settlements in the WB remain intact. Furthermore, the Israelis strove to seek guarantees that would undermine the sovereignty and freedom of the Palestinian state, e.g. security guarantees.

However, the failure of the July 2000 Camp David shuttle negotiations had actually, brought the peace process to a deadlock. The outbreak of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* and the rising popularity of the resistance groups were among the most prominent forms of public discontent and protest against the entire peace process.

The Road Map: During the year 2005, Israel had obviously succeeded to marginalize the Road Map project, even though it

was heavily biased towards it, and to rally local, regional, and international support for its agenda of unilateral withdrawal from GS. Nonetheless, the PA had no way but to cooperate. The Road Map remained a reference invoked by all parties, and a subject for political debates, and establishing positions as well as a means of pressure on the Palestinians.

In his speech on 24 June 2002, George Bush explained his vision for peace in the Middle East. This speech, which constituted the core of the Road Map project, was soon adopted by the “Quartet”, which is composed of the United States of America, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations. This project, formally published on 30 April 2003, called for an end of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the conclusion of a final settlement through a specific program that ends in 2005. It is based on establishing a Palestinian state in conformity with Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 1397, while taking into consideration the Saudi Initiative adopted by Arab leaders in Beirut in March 2002. The Road Map falls in three phases, and is based on measures of building confidence between the two parties: the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Like the scores of decisions and projects on the Palestinian issue, the Road Map does not present a definite and final concepts on some core issues (Jerusalem, refugees, Jewish settlements, borders, and sovereignty). Likewise, it does not offer any real mechanism obliging the concerned party, the Israeli occupation, to fulfill its commitments. In other words, it gives the occupation the opportunity to manipulate and use delaying tactics to impose realities on the ground. Moreover, rather than securing the safety of the victims of the occupation, the Road Map occupies itself with guaranteeing the security of the occupier and the aggressor.

On 25 May 2003, the Israeli government approved the Road Map tentatively and with 14 reservations that had practically made the project void of content and heavily pro-Israel. The first reservation alone obliged the Palestinians side to end the *Intifadah*, and restructure their security organs that should do their best to prevent “violence.” Moreover, as a pre-requisite for engagement in the first phase, the Palestinians should dismantle the “terrorist” organizations (Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front, the Democratic Front (*al-Jabha al-Dimuqratiyyah*), al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and so on) and destroy their infrastructure, collect unlicensed weapons and prevent their smuggling, and stop all hostile calls against Israel. Nonetheless, the Americans expressed their serious understanding of these reservations.

This first reservation sufficed to paralyze the Road Map for years, as the Israelis were practically the ones who will give the “testimony of success” for the implementation of these measures. The other reservations required a new Palestinian leadership, which practically negated the time limit laid out in the Road Map, and made it virtually impossible to settle the final issues in the year 2005. They also marginalized the Saudi-Arab Initiative and the Security Council Resolution 1397 as a reference for the project. Moreover, these reservations stipulated that the Palestinians acknowledge the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state, and abandon the right of return to their homes and villages whom they were driven from in 1948 war.

On their side, the PA assembled the security organs in three, and created the post of Prime Minister, which was occupied by Mahmud ‘Abbas and by Ahmad Qurei’ consecutively. On 9 January 2005, after the death of Yasir ‘Arafat, the Palestinians in GS and the WB elected Mahmud ‘Abbas to the Presidency of the PA, which, on its part, made several reforms, especially in the financial and economic field, to ensure transparency. The Authority also persuaded the Palestinian factions to announce a truce with Israel. Municipal elections were held in phases, and the Authority made the necessary arrangements for the legislative elections, which were delayed to 25 January 2006.

However, the Israeli side, which considered the Road Map to be still in its initial phase, was not convinced by these measures. They insisted that the PA dismantles and destroys the infrastructure of Hamas and other resistance movements before Israel embarks on any positive steps. Their pretext, repeated almost daily, is the lack of a real Palestinian partner; and that Abu Mazin has not done enough to fight “terrorism”. Meanwhile, the Israelis continued throughout the year 2005 their policy of political assassination, expanding the settlements, demolishing houses and taking captives and detainees, which were all incompatible with the first phase of the Road Map.

Abu Mazin met Sharon on 8 February 2005 in Sharm el-Sheikh, where they agreed on a ceasefire and to activate the Road Map. Hence, Israelis had to withdraw from a number of the WB cities that should be handed to the Palestinian security (Jericho, Bethlehem, Tulkarm, Qalqilya, Ramallah) and to release 900 Palestinian prisoners. Meanwhile, Abu Mazin continued his reform of the security organs, which was commended by the American coordinator of security in the Palestinian territories, Mr. William Ward.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, Israel continued its pressure on the PA. On the other side, Sharon got, during his visit

to the US in the middle of May, more American support for his policies. Abu Mazin visited the United States of America during the period 26 – 28 May 2005, where George W. Bush promised him direct support to develop GS after the Israeli withdrawal.

On 21 June 2005 Sharon had a stormy meeting with Mahmud ‘Abbas, after which the latter appeared quite turbulent. ‘Abbas left the meeting disappointed and tense. Many issues, the Separation Plan, the Road Map, the Separation Wall, the prisoners, and Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian cities were discussed in this meeting, as well as Israeli protraction and retreat from their commitments. Though admitting some progress on the security issue and that a positive climate was founded by the truce, Sharon considered this to be insufficient. According to some Israeli sources, ‘Abbas told Sharon: “We have to work together. Every rocket launched against you is as if it is directed at me. I want to perform, but my ability is limited.” He added: “My position is so difficult and Israel requires much from the Authority, while most of the operations against it are sprung from territories under Israeli dominance.”⁵⁹

The Israelis repeatedly attempted to use the security commitments, pledged by the PA in the Road Map, to prevent the participation of Hamas in the legislative elections. They were so persistent in this demand that they publicly declared that they will not facilitate any election in which Hamas takes part. Likewise, they declared their boycott to any government led, or is affiliated, with Hamas, and launched a campaign to gain international support to their position, which was, however, publicly endorsed by a number of American officials. Sharon conditioned the participation of Hamas in the elections on the Movement’s disarmament, and threatened to stop the implementation of the Road Map if it did not.⁶⁰

Likewise, Mr. Shimon Peres, the deputy Prime Minister, declared that Israel would help Mahmud ‘Abbas, since a Hamas victory would mean “the end of the peace process.”⁶¹ Netanyahu, the Minister of Finance, also declared that both Tel Aviv and Washington do not want Hamas to come to power even through legislative election.⁶² Yuval Diskin, the head of Shabak, admitted that a victory of Hamas would place Israel in an embarrassing situation; for, if Hamas becomes a partner in the Authority and continued its operations, our position would be difficult and complicated.⁶³

However, Abu Mazin maintained that the issue of elections is an internal issue, and insisted on Hamas’s participation. His second meeting with Bush,

on 20 October 2005, seemed to have promoted this line, Hamas's participation in the political process was expected to weaken its ability to impede the peace process, and would transfer it in the long run into a political party. Moreover, it was generally believed that Fatah would win the elections, which would give it the necessary legitimacy to represent the Palestinian people as a whole, and confine Hamas into the position of an opposing faction. This very same forecast was behind the Israeli restraint on the issue of Hamas' participation in the general elections. It issued some noisy political statements that objected to this participation, but took no concrete measures to prevent it, though it arrested some of the cadre of Hamas to weaken the movement.

Unilateral Separation and Withdrawal from Gaza Strip:

The idea of unilateral separation was not Sharon's brainchild per se, though the policy was actually implemented during his rule. Discussions never ceased, since the occupation of the WB and GS, on the proper way to maintain the Jewish identity of the Zionist state, the land required for the waves of settlement, and the Palestinian demographic dangers. They also discussed the possible land that Israel may concede if a final settlement is reached. However, this debate gained momentum after the huge losses that the occupation forces suffered as a result of the resistance operations, most of which were carried out inside Israel. Furthermore, the Israelis have increasingly felt that the time for a settlement was approaching.

The theory of separation had first appeared after the "self-immolation" operation in Beit Leid on 22 January 1995. By then, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin commanded the formation of a security team to study the idea of separating the Palestinians from the Israelis. Moshe Shahal, the Minister of Internal Security, undertook this task. In October 2000, after the outbreak of the *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, and in consultation with the relevant authorities, Shaul Arieli and Moti Kristel tabled a separation plan to Ehud Barak, as a possible alternative to the failure of the negotiations with the Palestinians. Sharon was not at the time inclined to the idea, especially because it would ultimately compel him to concede what he considered to be part of "the land of Israel." Moreover, the idea was initiated and articulated by his rival party, the Labor Party. However, the increasing escalation of the *Intifadah* forced him to take the matter seriously, in particular, after a new plan of separation was prepared by the Ministers of Defense, Binyamin

Ben-Eliezer, and Security, Uzi Landau, that was tabled to Sharon on 6 June 2001. Since September 2001, this idea occupied the top agenda in the Israeli debate.⁶⁴ On 18 December 2003, Sharon declared in the Herzliya Conference his endorsement of the idea of unilateral separation, and by early February 2004, he presented his proposed separation plan. The plan entails the preservation of six settlement communities in the WB, in addition to the Israeli settlement zones in East Jerusalem. The plan was officially and strongly supported by America, as manifested in a joint press conference held by Bush and Sharon in Washington on 14 April 2004. Contrary to the previous formal American position towards the issue, and in contrast with international law, Bush preceded the outcome of the final negotiations to declare America's commitment to guarantee the security of Israel and its Jewish identity. Moreover, he declared, Israel can retain in the talks of final status control over the settlements in the WB. He stated that in the light of the new facts on the ground, including the main settlement blocks, it is unrealistic to expect, in the final status negotiations, a total return to the Truce Line of 1949.

The separation plan, which had been ratified by the Israeli government on 20 February 2005, provided for the Israeli withdrawal from GS and four isolated settlements in the WB. However, the phraseology of the plan entailed what would practically turn GS into a huge prison. For, it stipulated that Israel would police and supervise the external borders of GS, control its airspace and have continuous security activities on its shores.⁶⁵ Thus, GS would be, in effect, and by the terms of international law, under Israeli occupation.

The Israeli pretext for selling the separation plan was their rough claim of the lack of a real Palestinian partner with whom negotiation may be held. However, in reality this meant that Israel wanted to impose its own concept with regard to the final settlement. As long as there was no Palestinian who could accept Israeli demands and dictations, then, according to Israel, there is no Palestinian partner that Israel can negotiate with. Even if such a partner exists, the yardstick is whether he would be able to meet the standards set by the Israeli specifications. As Sharon puts it, "The conventions signed by the Arab leaders do not deserve the paper on which they are written."⁶⁶

In fact, the PA tried to make the Israeli withdrawal part and parcel of the negotiation process, but the Israeli side refused, and, instead, restricted itself to

asking the Authority to do its best to impose peace and tranquility so that the Israeli withdrawal would not appear as a surrender to the Palestinian resistance. Minister Sa'ib 'Uraiqat accurately depicted the difficult state of the PA by stating:

We do not know what will occur after the implementation of the separation plan ... no one answers our questions. They demand that we coordinate the separation process without knowing the course it takes. Indeed, we are tired of transitional conventions ... Everything has been destroyed during the years of the *Intifadah*. You shackle our hands and throw us into the sea. Unless we know how to swim, we are not your partners according to your view! However, if we are good at swimming, we are still not a good partner. It is time you clarify what you want from us.⁶⁷

While, on one hand, too weak to apply pressure on Israel, the PA did not, on the other hand, find comfort in the repeated changes that it made, nor in the visit of Abu Mazin to Washington in May 2005. He returned so empty handed, that he bitterly declared that the Americans were satisfied and “fascinated” by Sharon’s initiative of unilateral withdrawal from GS. They also agreed to the preservation of the large settlements and to the denial of the Palestinians’ right of return, he added.⁶⁸

Al-Aqsa Intifadah played an important role in pushing the Israelis to withdraw from GS that has become a great security and economic liability.⁶⁹ In accordance with statistics published in *Haaretz* newspaper, the total number of Israeli casualties in GS, since its occupation, was 230, including 106 only killed over a period of 33 years, since the occupation of 1967 and until the end of September 2000. However, during the five years of the *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, 124 Israelis were killed.⁷⁰ The elaborate process of protecting 8,000 settlers was extremely costly and tiring, for it necessitated the deployment of thousands of soldiers in an area inhabited by 1 million & 400,000 Palestinians.

Nevertheless, the Israeli government tried to utilize this withdrawal to achieve as much political and material gains as possible. First of all, it tried to get rid of the huge population burden in GS, which impedes the Israeli drive to preserve the Jewish identity of the state. In addition, it maintained, the withdrawal will reduce the material and security burdens, facilitate the redeployment of the Israeli army in a way that guarantees the end of actual friction with the population of GS, and decrease its vulnerability to attacks. Besides, it will deny the resistance in GS all excuses for military operations against Israel, at least in the view of the international community. The Israeli government also hoped

that the withdrawal will provide a cover and an understanding for any military operations, assassinations, or onslaughts that they may launch in response to possible attacks by the resistance. Moreover, the Israeli government strove to by pass the Road Map project and rule the WB single handedly, implement its plans to Judaize Jerusalem, construct the discriminatory Separation Wall, confiscate lands, and maintain the settlement communities in any coming political settlement. It, on the other side, tried to improve its image in the eyes of the international community by posing as the party that advocates peace and is willing to make “painful concessions” for this purpose. Moreover, Israel wanted to restore its previous warm relations with Egypt, Jordan and some other Arab countries, and to penetrate into the Muslim world, especially Pakistan.

Israel announced that it will begin the withdrawal in July 2005, but it soon delayed this to mid August. The actual withdrawal began in the midst of a strong propaganda campaign that stressed the “great concessions” made by Israel and the “pain” and “suffering” that the Jewish settlers experienced as a result of this withdrawal, to the extent that it would be difficult to imagine that any future Israeli withdrawal will ever take place. However, it was then leaked that the Israeli government had financed and supported the settlers’ publicity and protest campaigns.⁷¹ Moreover, each family that left received a compensation of \$250,000; which may be raised to \$400,000.⁷²

On 11 September, the evacuation of the settlements was completed, and Israel pronounced a unilateral end of its occupation of GS. This evacuation was, so to speak, a “five star” one that could not possibility be compared with the cruel Israeli demolition of Palestinian houses that threw their occupants in the open air, nor with their banishment and confiscation of properties from which about 57% of the Palestinian population had suffered during the 1948 catastrophe, (800,000 out of 1 million & 400,000 Palestinians).

Israel maintained control over the borders of GS with Egypt until an agreement was concluded with the PA on 15 November 2005, through American mediation led by the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. It provided for European supervision at the crossing point, and for the installment of monitoring cameras that directly transmit all occurrences to Israel. Furthermore, Israel was given the right to deny entry or exit and to detain whoever it may suspect. However, the European supervisors were to decide on the viability of the detention within 6 hours from its start. The PA celebrated on 25 November the opening of the crossing and the start of implementing the convention. However, this joy did

not last long, as Israel declared a part of Northern GS as a security area to which Palestinians were denied entry. This was done under the guise of preventing the firing of rockets on Israeli settlements.

Conclusion: Throughout the year 2005, Israel did not send any formal signal to show its keenness to conduct negotiations on the final settlement with the Palestinians and Arabs, neither in accordance with the Arab initiatives nor with the decisions of the international community. Instead, it kept hammering on the pretext of “the absence of a Palestinian partner” that enabled it to impose its concepts and conditions, and to achieve new realities on the ground. Israel also neglected the gestures of the elected President of the PA, and disregarded the truce pronounced by the Palestinian factions. It implemented unilateral withdrawal from GS without negotiation or coordination with the PA. This demonstrates that the mentality of the Israeli ruling elite has not absorbed, understood or accepted the idea of a real Palestinian state in the WB and GS that meets the Palestinian minimum demands, and which has already been accepted by the PA, and backed by the international community.

Thus, the problem lurks in Israel itself and not in any other party. From the very beginning, Israel has, indeed, been “an absent partner,” because it never looked for a real partnership. Rather, it wanted a defeated party to sign the terms of surrender.

Indeed, the changes that had taken place within the Israeli parties, and the formation of Kadima, along with the overwhelming Israeli support to the unilateral separation and the withdrawal from GS, reveal the crisis of the Zionist project. It also demonstrates the failure of the submission strategy that Israel pursues against the Palestinian people, as well as the frustration of its attempts to crush their *Intifadah* with a minimum loss in Israeli lives and property.

The Zionist crisis is expected to eventually escalate if the Palestinian party continues to insist on its legal rights, and actively rallies the Arab, Muslim, and human support behind its cause. However, no significant escalation is expected in the short run, as the Arab and Muslim apathy and weakness is continuing and the European-American support for Israel is ongoing.

Endnotes:

- 1 Dr. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh: Associate Professor of Palestinian Studies and Contemporary Arab History, General Manager of al-Zaytouna Centre and ex-head of department of History and Civilization, International Islamic University – Malaysia.
- 2 For the Israeli official statistics of the population in 2005, see: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il/yarhon/b1_e.htm
- 3 For the numbers of Jewish immigrants, see the site of the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption: <http://moia.gov.il/english/netunim/sikum.asp>
- 4 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il/yarhon/b1_e.htm.
- 5 The number of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (including Eastern Jerusalem) totaled about 3 million & 762,000. This estimation is after the deletion of the replicate in the number of Palestinians in Eastern Jerusalem. See the site of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics: <http://www.pcbs.org/portals/pcbs/populati/dem1.asp>
- 6 The Israeli Ministry of Immigrant: <http://moia.gov.il/english/netunim/sikum.asp>
- 7 The CIA's annual World Fact Book gives different figures: \$129 billion in 2004 and \$139 billion in 2005. See: <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/is.html>
- 8 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il/indicators/ind_table.shtml
- 9 See: World Fact Book, Last updated 10 January 2006: <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/is.html#econ>
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- 12 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il/fr_trade/td1.htm
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- 18 JCSS, 11 September 2005: <http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/balance/Israel.pdf>
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- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Al-Ayyam* newspaper, Palestine, 4 April 2005.
- 22 See: Fadel al-Naqib, "*Al-Iqtisad*," (Economy), *Dalil Israel al-'Am 2004* (Israel's General Guide 2004), p.197, 205 and 206; Muhammad Zuhir Dyab, "*Al-Muasasa al-'Askariyyah*," (Military Institution), *Dalil Israel al-'Am 2004* (Israel's General Guide 2004) (Beirut: Institute For Palestine Studies, 2005), p.206; and see also: *al-Hayat*, 18 September 2005, as it mentioned according to a report presented to the American Congress, the Israeli arm sales rank in the fourth place world wide after US, Russia and UK.
- 23 *Alittihad* newspaper, United Arab Emirates, 3 December 2005.
- 24 *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 4 July 2005, quoted from *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Israel, 3 July 2005.
- 25 *Al-Hayat*, 3 May 2005.
- 26 *Asharq Alawsat*, 15 May 2005.
- 27 According to a public opinion poll, published on 12 August 2005, Netanyahu superceded Sharon inside the Likud, 53% to 38%. Another poll conducted 10 days later showed that

- Sharon superseded Netanyahu, 36% to 28%. See the site of Arabs48, 12 and 14 August 2005.
- 28 Site of Arabs48, 25 August 2005.
- 29 *Al-Hayat*, 31 August 2005.
- 30 *Albayan* newspaper, United Arab Emirates, 31 August 2005.
- 31 Site of Arabs48, 16 September 2005.
- 32 Site of Arabs48, 27 September 2005.
- 33 *Assafir*, 23 September 2005.
- 34 Site of Arabs48, 29 December 2005.
- 35 Site of Arabs48, 28 December 2005. Also, it is published by *Ma'ariv* newspaper, Israel, 26 December 2005.
- 36 Arabic Media Internet Network (AMIN), 27 November 2005.
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- 39 *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 29 December 2005.
- 40 Palestinian National Information Centre, 2 February 2006:
<http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/quds/arabic/viol/22006-1-.html>
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- 42 Palestinian National Information Centre:
<http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/alquds/arabic/irid/irid-48.html>
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- 44 See: <http://www.terrorism-information.com/act=articles&id=211&sid=19&ssid=0>
- 45 *Haaretz* newspaper, Israel, 29 September 2005; and the report prepared by Shabak and published by *Ma'ariv*, also translated and published by *Assafir*, indicates that 1,513 Israeli died and 3,380 were injured.
- 46 Palestinian National Information Centre, October 2005:
http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/quds/arabic/viol/quds_viol_092005-.html
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- 49 The schedule is prepared by using the list of names of the Palestinian National Information Centre: http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/quds/arabic/shohada_aqsa/shohada_aqsa_killing.asp
- 50 The report of the Ministry of Prisoners Affairs for the year 2005:
<http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/social/prisoners/2005.html>; and according to Israeli security and the Army sources, the detained were 7,838 at the beginning of 2005, but the number reached 8,238 at the outset of 2006.
See: <http://www.btselem.org/arabic/statistics/detainees>
- 51 <http://www.arij.org/whatsnew/index.htm>
- 52 See, for example, the report of "The Peace Now Movement" published by *Haaretz*, 6 February 2006: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/679476.html>
- 53 Chris McGreal, "Israel Redraws the Roadmap," *The Guardian*, London, 18 October 2005.
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<http://www.btselem.org/arabic/Publications/Index.asp?TF=15>
- 55 On the suffering caused by the Wall in Jerusalem, see: 'Umar al-Karmi, "*Judran al-Fasil fi al-Quds al-'Arabiyyah: Manfa Thalith Lishsha'b al-Filistini*," (Segregation Walls in Arabic Jerusalem: A Third Exile for Palestinians), *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Issue No.62, Spring 2005, pp.137-146.
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 - 62 *Al-Khaleej*, 19 April 2005.
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http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/palestoday/dailynews/2005/may055_18_5/details3.htm#13
 - 64 For more information about the separation plan, see article: "*Shi'ar al-fasil wa Insha' al-Judran al-'Aliyah yusaytir 'ala 'uqul al-jami' fi Isra'il*," (Segregation Slogan and Erecting High Walls Dominate Minds of Everyone in Israel), *Asharq Alawsat*, 9 June 2001; and Hani Habib, "*Khuttat al-Fasil: Jidar min al-awham al-sha'ikah*," (Separation Plan: A Wall of Complicated Illusions), *Ru'yah* magazine, Palestine, Issue No.12:
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 - 65 <http://disengagement.pngo.ps/BG.php>
 - 66 *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 25 May 2005, quoted from AFP.
 - 67 *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 13 April 2005; and *al-Quds al-'Arabi*, [13] April 2005.
 - 68 Report of Shakir al-Juhari, *al-Sharq* newspaper, Qatar, 6 June 2005.
 - 69 Sharon confessed this in an interview with *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 12 August 2005, see the site of Arabs48, 12 August 2005.
 - 70 *Haaretz*, 23 August 2005: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/615867.html>
 - 71 Aloni's Interview in *Kul-Alarab*, Palestine, 29 July 2005; *al-Khaleej*, 30 July 2005; and report of The Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel, about deception and misleading perpetrated by Israeli media in covering the withdrawal, its summary was published by *Assafir*, 3 August 2006.
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Chapter Three

The Palestinian Issue and the Arab World

The Palestinian Issue and the Arab World¹

Introduction:

Although the official Arab concern for the Palestinian issue has been lately declining, Palestine remains the central issue in the Arab world. It will be simple and simplistic to maintain that this enthusiasm is primarily motivated by emotional reasons or sympathy with the Palestinian people, who have been experiencing Zionist colonial aggression for more than a hundred years. Rather, the importance of the Palestinian issue arises from the fact that this aggression targets both the Arab and Muslim nations. Therefore, the conclusion of an agreement between an Arab country and the Zionist state would not bring the Arab-Israeli conflict to an end. Rather, this dispute will last as long as Israel exists in Palestine, particularly so because of its acts of terror and racism against Arabs and Muslims, and its threat to the stability and security in the region.

At the beginning of this section, it is necessary to emphasize that the Arab world should be viewed as one single unit, as the Arab regional system still exists, notwithstanding the crisis that it is experiencing. The recurrent Arab League meetings, including those held at summit level, support this argument.

A regional system can be defined as “a group of neighboring units which have stronger bonds of harmony, compatibility and mutual interdependence than those they have with other external units, which, in turn, leads to more intensive interactions.”² This definition is true of the Arab regional system, because of the geographical unity of its members, and their interactions during different historical epochs, which proves the unique characteristics of this system.

The Palestinian issue has been instrumental in promoting national awareness among all Arab peoples, and it contributed to their belief that most of their problems are brought about by the presence of Israel at the heart of their region. Imperial powers, which transplanted Israel in the region to break it up and continue its domination, are still plotting against the Arab and Muslim nations in order to guarantee the survival of Israel, and to protect their own interests. Being pivotal, the Palestinian issue has always been a major item in all Arab gatherings, especially in summit meetings, which helped to form the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), and gave it permanent support.

Due to the direct relationship between the Palestinian issue and the Arab states, this chapter addresses the subject of “The Palestinian Issue and the Arab

World” through the following dimensions:

- The Algeria Summit and King ‘Abdullah’s Initiative.
- The position of the major axis’ states on the Palestinian issue.
- The position of the various Arab countries’ on the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip (GS).
- Developments on the issue of Arab-Israeli normalization.
- Official and popular Arab attitudes and their orientation.

The Position of the Algerian Summit and King ‘Abdullah’s Initiative:

The 25th Arab Summit was held in Algeria during the period

22 and 23 March 2005, in response to Jordan’s call to discuss a proposal to modify the Arab Peace Initiative. However, the Arab Monarchs and Presidents announced their commitment to the Saudi Initiative adopted by the Beirut Summit of 2002, known as Prince ‘Abdullah’s Initiative (King ‘Abdullah later) or the Saudi Initiative. It called for a just and comprehensive peace, which is the declared strategic choice of Arab countries, and is in line with the resolutions of the international community. However, this necessitates Israel’s full withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied since June 1967 in compliance with Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, reaffirmed by Madrid Conference in 1991, and the land-for-peace principle. Additionally, Israel should accept the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem. In return, normal relations will be established between the Arabs and Israel in the context of a comprehensive peace treaty.

Due to the conviction of the Arab countries that a military solution to the conflict could not achieve a lasting peace, or provide security for the concerned parties, the Arab Initiative includes:

1. Calling Israel to reconsider its policies and declare that a just peace is its strategic choice.
2. Calling upon Israel to affirm its acceptance of:
 - a. Complete Israeli withdrawal from all the territories that it occupied in 1967, including the Golan Heights, to the 4 June 1967 lines, and from the remaining occupied territories in Southern Lebanon.
 - b. A just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem to be agreed upon in accordance with UN General Assembly Resolution 194.

- c. The establishment of a sovereign independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian territories occupied since 4 June 1967 in the West Bank (WB) and GS, with East Jerusalem as its capital.
3. Thereupon, the Arab countries shall:
 - a. Consider the Arab-Israeli conflict to have ended, and enter into a peace agreement with Israel that provides security for all the states of the region.
 - b. Establish normal relations with Israel in the context of this comprehensive peace.
4. Guarantee the rejection of all forms of the Palestinian re-settling, which is incompatible with the special conditions of the Arab host countries.
5. Call upon the government of Israel and all Israelis to accept this Initiative in order to safeguard the prospects for peace, stop further shedding of blood, enable the Arab countries and Israel to live in peace and good neighborliness, and provide the future generations with security, stability and prosperity.
6. Call upon the international community and all the countries and organizations concerned to support this Initiative.
7. The chairman of the Summit is required to form a special committee, composed of some of the concerned member states and the Secretary General of the Arab League, to pursue the necessary contacts to secure support for this Initiative at all levels, particularly from the United Nations, the Security Council, the United States of America, Russia, the Muslim states and the European Union.

The Arab Initiative rejected the content of the two letters exchanged between the US President George W. Bush and the then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, as well as those letters that contained decisions that preceded the outcomes of the final status negotiations. The Arab countries also declared their commitment to continue their support to “the Palestinian Authority (PA) till it is able to shoulder the burdens and requirements of the coming phase.”

With regard to the Israeli withdrawal from GS, the Arab Summit stressed upon the necessity that the withdrawal should be carried out “within the framework of the Road Map, and be a starting point for implementing this Map. The Summit also emphasized the unity and regional integration of the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.”³

Though several other issues, like the Arab League reforms, the situation in Iraq and the Syrian-Lebanese relations, were on the agenda of the Summit, the Palestinian issue, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Jordanian proposal to activate this Initiative had the lion's share of these discussions. During this gathering, Jordan presented a proposal that linked the Arab-Israeli normalization with the unilateral pull out from GS, which had actually been achieved later in September 2005. The Jordanian delegation defended their country's call for normalization with Israel. To discredit those who objected to this move, the Jordanian Foreign Minister, Dr. Hani al-Mulqi said: "Anybody who accuses the Jordanian proposal could not have read it. He should rather go back to school to learn how to read." He argued that the proposal does not deal with the issues of refugees and Jerusalem because its aim is to polish and activate the Arab Initiative, not to change any of the items that were already approved by the Beirut Summit.⁴ To clarify the Jordanian position, the address of the Jordanian Monarch 'Abdullah II- who did not attend the meeting- emphasized the adoption of the Road Map as a peace initiative, Jordan's commitment to support the PA in all fields, and the necessity of reaching a comprehensive settlement based on the international legitimacy and the Arab Initiative.⁵ The Jordanian resolution on the Arab Peace Initiative stated:

The Arab League Council reaffirms Arab commitment to the principles of the Arab Peace Initiative, endorsed by Beirut Summit in 2002, and reemphasizes the strategic Arab choice of achieving a just and comprehensive peace. This shall be achieved in accordance with the international legitimacy, and with similar commitment on the Israeli part. Moreover, it reaffirms the belief of the Arab countries' that the military solution could not bring about peace or security to either side. Having reviewed the different international endeavors to revive the peace process, the Council affirms the Arab commitment to realize peace, security and stability in the Middle East, as a strategic option, in accordance with the terms of the Arab Peace Initiative. The Council also announces that the Arab countries are willing to end the Arab-Israeli conflict, and to establish normal relations with Israel, if a just, comprehensive and durable peace is achieved in accordance with the resolutions of the international legitimacy, the principle of land-for-peace, and the Madrid terms of reference.

However, the Jordanian proposal seems to be leading to the neglect of mentioning the General Assembly's Resolution 194 on the right of the Palestinian refugees' to return to their homes, which was included in the Arab Initiative, while it called for normal relations with Israel. Thus, it was rejected.

On their part, the Palestinians, represented by the head of the PLO Political

Bureau, Mr. Faruq Qaddumi, rejected the Jordanian proposal and modifying the Arab Initiative. The same stance was adopted by Syria and Lebanon, who refused any proposals that do not address the issues of the refugees and Jerusalem. Qaddumi said: "Rather than placing pressures on us (the Palestinians) and calling upon us to be more flexible, the Arabs should abstain from establishing normal relations with Israel."⁶

On the other hand, Egypt's position, as explained by Mr. Ahmad Abu al-Gheit, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, was in the middle between the Jordanian and the Palestinian-Syrian stands. The Minister said: "The Jordanian proposal affirms the Arab Initiative, which outlines the conditions for peace with Israel."⁷

Egypt considered the Palestinian Foreign Minister the only one who is directly concerned with the Jordanian proposal. However, it announced its solid commitment to the Arab Initiative concluded at the Beirut Summit, whose essence, irrespective of the phraseology, is the full withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories in return for normalization.

As for Syria, it turned down the Jordanian proposal, and affirmed its steadfast principles that reject any initiative that does not stipulate withdrawal from the Golan Heights and provide a solution for the refugee problem. It considered the Arab Initiative the minimum acceptable compromise on the basis of the international legitimacy resolutions and the Madrid terms. This concept was summed up by the Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Walid al-Mu'allim, who was quoted saying: "There is no Arab peace initiative except the one adopted by Beirut Summit in 2002."⁸

When expressing the Arab League stance on the issue, Mr. 'Amr Musa, Secretary General of the Arab League, said that there is no priceless peace, and there is no necessity to rush to establish normal relations with Israel. He warned that Israel was seeking to get unilateral Arab concessions, though its policy of expansion and building more settlements is ongoing. To reach to a balanced peace, Mr. Musa urged the Arab countries not to establish relations with Israel until it completely withdraws from the occupied Arab territories in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. Musa's statement was severely slammed by Israel.⁹

On their part, the Algerian officials stressed that their country, which sacrificed a million martyrs, should not be the venue for normalizing relations with Israel. Saudi Arabia, represented by the then Crown Prince 'Abdullah bin 'Abd al-'Aziz, insisted that the Arab Initiative, that he had personally articulated

at the Beirut Summit, should not be modified. However, Saudi Arabia contacted different Arab countries in an attempt to make the Summit a success, and to avoid “controversial points, including the modification of the Arab Initiative.” Hence, the Arab Monarchs and Presidents reaffirmed their support to the Arab Initiative endorsed by the Beirut Summit, thus rejecting the Jordanian proposal to modify it.

The Attitude of the Major Surrounding States on the Palestinian Issue:

The Egyptian Attitude:

Egypt has indeed the greatest influence on the Palestinian leadership and organizations. Though its role, which was most powerful during the era of President Nasser, has considerably retreated since its conclusion of Camp David Accords with Israel in 1979, the country has eventually regained its influence, and is now capable of giving more attention and support to the Palestinian issue. The Egyptian role on the Palestinian issue during the year 2005 will be discussed through four dimensions:

1. Playing a mediating role between different Palestinian movements in the Cairo-based meetings to reach a temporary truce with Israel.
2. Playing a mediating role between the PA and Israel to minimize the acuteness of their differences.
3. Negotiating with Israel the implementation of its plan for a pull out from GS, and on Rafah passage.
4. Bilateral relations between Egypt and Israel.

It is well known that Egypt played a key role in the intra-Palestinian dialogue, in which all Palestinian movements were involved, that resulted in a temporary truce with Israel which lasted until the end of 2005. The Egyptian capital witnessed intensive dialogue between the PA and all Palestinian resistance movements headed by Hamas. It was the Egyptian Intelligence Agency Chief, Major-General ‘Umar Sulayman, who exercised intense pressure to persuade the Palestinian movements to suspend their “self-immolation” operations against Israel in order to give the PA an opportunity to negotiate with the Israeli government in a violent-free atmosphere. Egypt managed to secure the agreement of 12 Palestinian movements to convene in Cairo on 15 March 2005.

The congress was attended by President Mahmud ‘Abbas, the then Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmad Qurei’, secretaries general of these movements, Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Gheit and Mr. ‘Umar Sulayman. During the three-day congress, an Egyptian proposal, calling for a cease-fire and the commitment of Palestinian movements’ to a truce with Israel until the end of 2005, was discussed. Egypt seemed keen to support the position of the Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas’ vis-a-vis Israel before proceeding to negotiate a final solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The congress resulted in the Cairo Declaration, to which all the convening Palestinian movements and parties agreed. It stressed commitment to the Palestinian fundamentals: the right of the Palestinian people to resist the occupation forces, establishing a sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and the refugees’ right to return to their homes and properties.

The convening parties also agreed on a program of action for the year 2005, based on continuing commitment to the truce, in return for a mutual Israeli commitment to stop all forms of aggression against the Palestinians, and to release all the Palestinian prisoners. In addition, the Declaration viewed any steps taken by Israel to proceed with its policy of establishing more settlements, building the Wall or Judaizing East Jerusalem as time bombs. The convening parties also highlighted the necessity of pursuing comprehensive reforms in all fields, supporting different aspects of the democratic process, and holding municipal and legislative elections as scheduled, and in accordance with a generally accepted electoral law. The Declaration also stipulated the activation and updating of the PLO, the only legal representative of the Palestinian people, by expanding it to include all the Palestinian parties and movements. The Palestinian consensus in this Declaration has been considered an important achievement that would not have been materialized without Egypt’s efforts. Furthermore, Egypt exerted tremendous efforts, as demonstrated by the shuttle visits of the Egyptian envoy, ‘Umar Sulayman, to both the PA and the Israeli government, to pave way for holding rounds of meetings and negotiations between the two sides. But Israel did not implement what was agreed upon in these meetings.

Egypt’s other role laid in conducting negotiations with Israel to facilitate the latter’s unilateral pull out from GS. The two parties agreed to allow the presence of some Egyptian police patrols along the border between Egypt and GS, near Rafah passage, (though Camp David Accords disallowed Egypt to station

troops near the Palestinian borders). Thereby, Israel agreed that Egypt sends 750 soldiers to guard its frontiers with GS. At the same time, Egypt stressed that the Israeli withdrawal from GS should not make it a big prison for the Palestinians, as Israel insisted on dismantling the Rafah passage that connects Egypt with the Palestinian territories.

On the request of the PA, Egypt hosted and trained 49 Palestinian police officers, to shoulder the responsibilities of providing security and maintaining discipline as soon as Israel withdraws from GS.

Previously, Egypt had offered to train the Palestinian police officers, but Israel had always objected; however, after the demise of President Yasir 'Arafat, Israel changed its passive stance on the matter.

Moreover, Egypt assisted in holding a Quartet Summit meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh in February 2005, attended by the Jordanian King 'Abdullah II, the elected Palestinian President, Mahmud 'Abbas, the Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, and the Egyptian President Husni Mubarak. Egypt was always keen to host conferences on its land to revive the Middle East peace process. In this connection, it is noteworthy that Egypt has played the role of a mediator between the PA and Israel, rather than itself being a key party in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It even sent a new Ambassador, Mr. Muhammad 'Asim, to Israel on 17 March 2005, to replace the former one who had been recalled more than four years ago. Egypt and Jordan, the first two Arab countries to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, had recalled their Ambassadors from Tel Aviv in November 2000 in protest against Israel's "excessive use of force" to suppress *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, which broke out in September the same year.

The two countries (Egypt & Jordan) announced the return of their Ambassadors to Israel in Sharm el-Sheikh Conference. The Jordanian Ambassador returned on 20 February 2005. The Israeli *Haaretz* newspaper quoted the Egyptian Ambassador, Muhammad 'Asim, on his arrival in Tel Aviv, as saying that he is so proud that President Mubarak entrusted him with the responsibility of representing Egypt in Israel, and he is looking forward to promote relations between the two countries. The Ambassador reportedly added that he is entrusted with a message of peace and cooperation, and expressed his hope that a just and comprehensive settlement for the Arab-Israeli conflict be reached.¹⁰ While presenting his credentials to the Israeli President Moshe Katsav, the Egyptian Ambassador said:

The Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to pull out from GS

is the first step towards implementing the Road Map, and the recent developments on the Palestinian arena show a glimmer of hope at the end of the tunnel, which Egypt has detected and is trying to take advantage of. Therefore, Egypt decided to send an Ambassador to find out what is going on, and to improve relations whenever possible.... Of course, there are reasons that justify why Egypt is keen to have an Ambassador in Israel, and to establish normal relations with it. Yet, boosting or weakening this tendency depends on the status of the Palestinian-Israeli relations, and the Arab-Israeli relations in general.... If we manage to achieve progress in the Palestinian-Israeli relations, Israel will immediately see more progress in its relations with the Arab and Muslim world.¹¹

With regard to the Egyptian-Israeli normalization activities, the two parties, along with the US Department of State, signed a cultural cooperation protocol to promote cooperation between Israeli educational institutions and four Egyptian universities: Cairo, Alexandria, 'Ain Shams and Asyut. Cooperation programs listed under this protocol included: visiting Israeli professors to deliver lectures at these universities, organize joint symposiums and conferences, and exchange of the curricula.¹²

With regard to economic normalization, Egypt, Israel, and the USA signed the Qualified Industrial Zone (QIZ) Agreement, which allows Egypt to export its textile products to American markets exempted from customs duties on condition that not less than 11.7% of its components are manufactured in Israel. Accordingly, Egypt imported 2500 tons of cotton from Israel for the first time. In addition, Egypt and Israel concluded a \$2,500 million deal to export Egyptian gas to Israel, through a pipeline starting from al-Sheikh Zuwaid area (Eastern al-'Arish) to 'Asqalan (Ashkelon), for 14 renewable years.¹³

But a number of Egyptian investors demanded that Israel's percentage in the QIZ Agreement be reduced from 11.7% to 7% only. Speaking to the press, Mr. 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Sharqawi, a member of the board of the Federation of Egyptian Industries' Chamber of Textile Industries, said that Israel raised the price of the materials used in the Egyptian textiles that will be exported to the US. Moreover, Israel has not committed itself to provide the percentage specified by the Agreement. Mr. al-Sharqawi stressed that a new mechanism should be developed to stop the Israeli manipulation and lack of commitment to the specified percentage, and to check its practice of raising the price of materials. He pointed out that the US does not accept any products with less than 11.7% Israeli component, adding that the only alternative is to follow the example of other countries that set up preferential trade areas with the US, as

this would guarantee the Egyptian products a fair opportunity to compete in the American market. Mr. al-Sharqawi went on to say that if Israel is unable to provide the percentage specified in the QIZ Agreement, it should reconsider the matter, and reduce the percentage to the level it could meet. He expected that the coming period would witness a recovery in the Egyptian textile exports through the QIZ Agreement. The Egyptian investors indicated that the materials and other industrial requirements (components of the textile) imported from Israel within the framework of the QIZ Agreement cost \$5 million & 600,000.¹⁴

Anti-normalization Egyptian groups have criticized the agreement between Cairo and Tel Aviv to export Egyptian gas to Israel. They expressed their rejection of the gas deal on the website www.boycott.com, and by means of a myriad of e-mails that dismissed it as a deal at the “expense of the Palestinian martyrs.”¹⁵

The Israelis frequently tried to activate normalization with Egypt, but the Egyptians, especially the educated public, resisted these attempts. Dr. Faruq Husni, the Egyptian Minister of Culture, admitted that the Israeli Ambassador to Cairo, Shalom Cohen, requested him to promote joint cultural programs between Egypt and Israel, and to encourage exchange of visits by the educated elites of the two countries. The Minister told the Ambassador that it was impossible to take any steps towards cultural normalization owing to the Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territories. Dr. Husni explained to Mr. Cohen he, being an Egyptian artist by profession and interest, very well understands the feeling and position of the Egyptian educated public that reject such normalization until a comprehensive and just solution of the Palestinian issue is concluded, and the Arab territories are liberated.¹⁶

The Egyptian policy towards the Palestinian issue was clearly stated by its Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Gheit in an interview with the Israeli *Haaretz* newspaper. Mr. Abu al-Gheit slammed Knesset members who opposed plans to deploy Egyptian soldiers at Philadelphi route, describing them as irresponsible provocateurs. He mentioned that those members aim at complicating the peace process between Israel and Egypt and hindering the efforts to reach an agreement with the Palestinians. The Israeli daily noted that reports to the Israeli Embassy in Cairo indicated warm Egyptian-Israeli relations in all fields. Mr. Abu al-Gheit added that there were several factors that helped the promotion of better relations between Egypt and Israel. He stressed Egypt was using its influence to take the Palestinians to a point where they could settle their differences with

Israel, and thereupon Egypt would try to convince Israel to accept a settlement. He said that they have to realize that Israel is already existing in the region, and consequently we have to deal and work with it, we should try to convince it of the principle that in order to have full-fledged normalization with the Arabs, it should take the necessary steps to enable the emergence of a Palestinian state. He added that Egypt, Palestine and the whole Arab world are willing to normalize relations with Israel, but this depends on the Israeli actual performance on the peace track, that should be formulated in such a way that enables the Arabs and the Muslims to build confidence.¹⁷

Yet, Israel still regards Egypt a danger. The Israeli media endlessly attacks on the Egyptian policy towards Israel, maintained that Egypt, not Syria or Iran, is the real and fundamental danger that threatens their country. These fears emanate from Egypt's continuous armament of its military forces. The Hebrew newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* quoted an Israeli security source as saying:

The Egyptians are boosting their armament capacity, increasing their strength and building a bigger, more state-of-the-art army. However, some people in Israel tend to think that they (the Egyptians) do not have an enemy that justifies such an armament. Yes, the desert separates us from them, which, in today's war, will be a field for destroying any force that attempts to march towards Israel. Yes, the Egyptians purchase American planes just to be kept in store, while Israel improves its purchases and makes them completely different. And yes, during his 24 years in power, the Egyptian President Mubarak abstained from violating the agreement with Israel, even when we invaded Lebanon and assaulted the Palestinians. But, as they (the Arabs) always like to remind us, the policies of the Arab regimes could be changed by a single shot. Moreover, there are many friction points between Egypt and us, like Rafah borders, relations with the Palestinian rejection movements and the illegal smuggling between Netsanet and Eilat. Each of these points may trigger misunderstanding, which could be taken as a threat, contrary to the writings of those who listen to the Israeli finance officials. Then the Arab gun will be ready to shoot at any time. I am talking about fears arising at a time when we understand that we have built a mighty military force at an expensive price. Yet this force, which is exceedingly more powerful than the zero-potential threats, is not able to secure victory in real battles, because victory cannot be obtained as long as the goals are not identified. We are going to start asking many questions, including the simplest, the normal, and the most persistent ones. We are warning of the old battlefields. So, be prepared! In the near year, you will most probably hear much about Egypt.¹⁸

The Jordanian Attitude: Jordan is an Arab country that is closely associated with the Palestinian issue. The year



2005 witnessed some important Jordanian moves, including the abovementioned proposal presented at Algeria Summit, as well as Jordan's position on the issues of Israeli withdrawal from GS and normalization of relations with Israel.

The Jordanian stance was made clear during an interview that King 'Abdullah's gave to the Israeli TV's second channel before the convention of Algeria Summit, in which he announced a Jordanian Initiative to activate the "modified" Arab Initiative for peace with Israel. He said that Jordan, along with Egypt and Saudi Arabia, aims to get the Arab Peace Initiative moving "in such a way that it could receive better acceptance from Israel." He added that the major problems in the Arab-Israeli conflict could be settled, especially the refugee and East Jerusalem issues, after Mahmud 'Abbas' assumption of the Palestinian Presidency and Ariel Sharon's announcement of a plan for withdrawal from GS in 2005. But 'Abdullah warned that the peace process would not succeed unless the Palestinians got a viable independent state. He stressed: "To ensure the Palestinians a (good) future, they should have a viable state, I mean in geographical terms."¹⁹

As for the Jordanian-Israeli normalization, the year 2005 witnessed a significant development. At the beginning of this year, Dr. Hani al-Mulqi, the Jordanian Foreign Minister, visited Israel, and met Prime Minister Ariel Sharon after a four-year suspension of relations caused by *al-Aqsa Intifadah*.

Al-Mulqi's visit, which came two weeks after the return of the Jordanian Ambassador to Israel, was part of a Jordanian-Egyptian-Israeli agreement hammered out at Sharm el-Sheikh Quadrilateral Summit, in which the Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas and the Israeli Premier Ariel Sharon, jointly vowed to revive the settlement talks and return to the negotiation table. During this visit, Dr. al-Mulqi discussed with senior Israeli officials the Jordanian-Israeli agreement on the project of a canal that links the Red Sea with the Dead Sea. Jordan also presented an Initiative at the Algeria Summit to normalize the Arab-Israeli relations.

In addition, a symposium was held at the Jordanian territory of al-Baqura, which was attended by an Israeli delegation. The gathering, attended by the Israeli Minister of Environment, Shalom Simhon, and former Jordanian Minister of Water and Irrigation, Munthir Haddadin, discussed regional water investment in the Jordan River basin.

Previously, the former Jordanian Minister of Finance, Basim 'Awadallah, had called for cooperation with Israel. In an interview with the Israeli newspaper

Yedioth Ahronoth, 'Awadallah was quoted as saying: "We have to look for new channels of cooperation, build together, find investors, and export joint products." He added that business sectors in the two countries are not active enough, Mr. 'Awadallah indicated that Jordan could help Israel to establish economic relations not only with Iraq, but with all Arab countries as well, provided that a solution to the Palestinian issue is concluded. However, he slammed Sharon's advisor for fighting "terrorism" for warning Israeli tourists and businesspersons against visiting Jordan.²⁰

An international fund offered by a Zionist businessman sponsored a technical scientific congress, attended by scientists from Israel, America and Jordan, that was held on 10 September 2005 near the Dead Sea. The participants discussed the prospect of setting up a joint project for education and cultural literacy, that was planned to serve as a basis for a scientific and technical normalization in the fields of agriculture, tourism, pharmaceutical and cosmetic industries.

Concerning the commercial relations, which are essentially based on the QIZ Agreement, official Jordanian estimates indicate that in 2003 the total Israeli exports to Jordan amounted to \$134 million, while Israel imported \$108 million worth of Jordanian goods. In 2004, Jordan's imports from Israel increased to \$164 million, while the Jordanian exports to Israel increased slightly to reach \$116 million. During the first eight months of the year 2005, Israeli exports hit \$99 million, compared to \$79 million worth of Jordanian exports. More than 60,000 Jordanian people, mostly of Palestinian origin, illegally work in Israel, largely in restaurants and gardens, and a great number of them married and settled there.

Jordan held talks with the PA and Israel on the possibility of allowing the Jordan-based nearly 5,000 soldiers of Badr troops, who belong to the Palestinian Liberation Army, to enter the WB. Israel maintained that it would allow them to do so in the near future. 'Atallah Khayri, chargé d'affaires of the Palestinian Embassy in Amman, said that Jordan had recently started training those Palestinian forces (Badr troops) to qualify them to join the Palestinian security forces in the WB and GS. He said that: "Jordan is preparing Badr troops to join the Palestinian security force in the WB and GS to do their job in protecting citizens and maintaining discipline." Khayri added: "Badr soldiers will not be stripped of Jordanian nationality." On its part, Badr troops opened the doors to Jordanians of Palestinian origin to be enlisted and take part in this 3 month training that was provided by Jordan, before these forces would be sent to the

Palestinian territories. It is worth mentioning that the Jordan-stationed Badr troops are divided into four battalions, not exceeding 5,000 persons. These developments took place at a time when the Israeli forces were getting ready to withdraw from GS, while the PA was gearing to take up security responsibilities. Formerly, Jordan refused to get involved in any activities related to security in Palestine; although there were expectations that Egypt will play a role in GS.²¹

Badr troops, which include a small company responsible for guarding four Palestinian buildings in Amman, announced, through some ads published in Jordanian newspapers, that it needed to recruit Jordanian young people of Palestinian origin to be trained under the supervision of the Jordanian army. However, Jordan's declared intention to send Badr troops, in their capacity as Jordanian forces, to the WB did not trigger any Palestinian doubts or sensitivities, which reflected the strong relations between the Jordanian government and the PA.

In addition, a delegation from Fatah Movement in Amman, headed by a Fatah key member, Muhammad Ghunaim, discussed with the Jordanian government, represented by the Minister of the Interior, Samir Habashaneh, the request of re-opening the movement's offices in Jordan and reviving its activities there. Jordan agreed to Fatah's request on condition that only those offices situated in Amman would be opened, thus rejecting the re-opening of other offices located at Palestinian camps in Jordan. Jordan King 'Abdullah II also met Fatah delegation.

The deposition of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, Irineos I, who was accused of selling Church property to some Jewish investors, was a concern for Jordan. On 10 May 2005, the Jordanian cabinet approved the dismissal decree. Jordan had also been concerned about the status of tens of Jordanian prisoners in Israeli jails, who were detained there for being involved in some attacks against Israel before the conclusion of the peace treaty between the two countries. While refusing to release these prisoners as a gesture of goodwill to Jordan, Israel had, however, released on 29 January 2004, other prisoners, belonging to its traditional enemy Hizbullah. This was through a political deal that caused much embarrassment to the Jordanian government.

The Syrian Attitude: The Syrian stance in 2005 on peace with Israel did not change from what it was throughout the previous years, particularly so because the Golan Heights are still under Israel

occupation, and Israel continued to refuse negotiating their status. Therefore, Syria vetoed any amendments to the Arab Peace Initiative during the Algeria Summit. Syria feared that such amendments could lead to normalizing Arab relations with Israel before the latter's withdrawal from all the Arab territories it occupied in the 1967 war. Walid al-Mu'allim, the Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister, stressed the necessity of sticking to the original Arab Peace Initiative approved by the Beirut Summit, and rejected any amendment to it. He indicated that the Jordanian proposal to modify the Initiative was motivated by the desire for normalization, and the denial of the Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homes. Hence, the Syrian President, Bashar al-Asad, affirmed his country's insistence to abide by the Arab Peace Initiative "to solve all problems in the region."

On the other hand, Syrian-Palestinian relations have improved after the death of the former Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat. Syria invited the incumbent Palestinian President, Mahmud 'Abbas, to visit Damascus. During the visit, which took place in July 2005, Syria showed its support to the intra-Palestinian dialogue, and to all efforts that aimed at promoting national Palestinian unity. On his part, Mr. 'Abbas said: "Syria has a key and basic role in the Middle East peace process, especially the Palestinian-Israeli peace track." In a welcoming statement, the Syrian Foreign Minister, Faruq al-Shar', said: "We feel comfortable by Abu Mazin's visit. Today's talks between the two Presidents will be in the interest of the Palestinian issue and in the pursuit of a just and comprehensive peace." During this visit 'Abbas also met the leaders of Hamas and other Palestinian movements residing in Damascus.²²

The Syrian media gave noticeable attention to the visit, particularly to President al-Asad's meeting with the leaders of all Palestinian movements, including Khalid Mish'al, Ramadan Shallah, Ahmad Jibreel, 'Arabi 'Awwad, colonel Abu Musa and Khalid al-Fahum, in addition to the official leaders of the Palestinian delegation headed by Mahmud 'Abbas. It was the first time that all the Palestinian movements' gathered around one table in a meeting attended by the Syrian President, which indicated Syria's keenness in the Palestinian issue at all levels, and to support the national Palestinian unity, without intervening directly in the Palestinian internal differences. The meeting also highlighted the Syrian role in the Palestinian cause, despite its rejection of the Oslo Agreement. Moreover, in a gesture of goodwill towards the PA, Syria released the last two of Fatah Syrian prisoners in its jails, who were kept behind bars for two decades.

The Lebanese Attitude:

A myriad of intertwined issues had affected the Lebanese stance on the Palestinian issue in the year 2005. This is due to some internal developments in Lebanon, the Security Council Resolution 1559, and the assassination of the Lebanese former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri. Some quarters argued that the Security Council Resolution included the demilitarization of the Palestinian resistance, while others, like the Lebanese Cedar Guardians, renewed old calls for deporting the Palestinians from Lebanon, and confiscating their properties. But the majority of the Lebanese people, especially Hizbullah, regarded the Palestinian issue a main concern for the Lebanese, and stressed the importance of allying with the Palestinian movements against their common enemy Israel.

In this atmosphere, and after Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon, the Lebanese Prime Minister, Fu'ad al-Sanyurah, held in October 2005 a dialogue with the Palestinian movements in Lebanon in order to have a fresh start of mutual understanding between Lebanon and the PLO, and to coordinate Lebanese-Palestinian relations. The dialogue sessions resulted in setting up a follow-up committee to deal with all relevant issues, including the humanitarian conditions in the Palestinian refugee camps. Al-Sanyurah stressed that the Palestinian weaponry should be orderly retained inside the camps, but controlled by a single Palestinian authority with which the Lebanese government and security agencies could coordinate. He added that the Palestinians are required to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and independence, while Lebanon should also respect the Palestinians' security and special circumstances until a solution to their cause is found, and the Palestinian refugees return to their homes. In another statement, Mr. al-Sanyurah stressed upon the necessity of:

easing the tense atmosphere and paving the way for a Palestinian-Lebanese dialogue to kick off. But our success, meaning the Lebanese and the Palestinians, to defuse the explosion and prove the falasity of those who bet that we will go backwards doesn't mean that the problem is over and that we consequently relax. No, because we think that what's more important is to go on with the dialogue by means of continuous communication with all the Palestinian movements.²³

However, the Lebanese-Palestinian relations became tense after clashes between some members of the Popular Front-General Command (*al-Jabha al-Sha'abiyyah al-Qiyadah al-'Ammah*) and the Lebanese army. The Lebanese authorities asked that the Palestinian elements behind these clashes be extradited. But the accident was swiftly contained. The Palestinian President Mahmud

‘Abbas flew to Lebanon, and met leaders of the Palestinian movements. Furthermore, he discussed the Palestinian-Lebanese relations, as well as the possibility of re-opening the PLO’s office in Beirut.

In June 2005, the Lebanese Labor Minister, Tarrad Hamadah, agreed to allow Palestinians residing in Lebanon to work to improve their deteriorated living conditions. He stated that he was working on new laws that would give the Palestinians the right to work without having to get a permit. Hamadah added that there were plans to provide the Palestinians with job opportunities and social security. In this connection, it is worth mentioning that the Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon are not allowed to take 73 types of jobs; they are permitted to work only in cheap handicraft activities. The Lebanese Labor Minister refused the notion that his decision was related to the prospect of settling the Palestinians in Lebanon. The Palestinians in Lebanon lauded the decision. Salih al-’Adawi, head of the Union of Palestinian Workers in Lebanon, said that: “The decision will help provide job opportunities for a work force of 325,000 Palestinians living in Lebanon.” Similarly, the PA welcomed the decision, which expressed:

spirit of responsibility and brotherly bonds between the Palestinian and Lebanese people. It will help easing part of the economic strain and difficult circumstances which our Palestinian people suffer in refugee camps in Lebanon, until a solution based on the resolutions of the international legitimacy is found.²⁴

The Attitudes of the Arab Countries on the Israeli Withdrawal from Gaza Strip:

Although the Israeli pull out from GS was

unilateral, which means that it was carried out without coordination with the PA, Israel involved some Arab countries, like Egypt and Jordan, in the developments of the withdrawal process. For example, Israel held talks with Egypt on deploying Egyptian forces on borders near the Rafah passage. In implementation of the Road Map, the Arab countries called for full withdrawal from GS as a preliminary step for another withdrawal from the WB, and emphasized that the Palestinians should gain mastery over the borders and passageways, and that GS should not be made into a big prison. The Arab states also called on the Palestinians not to lose any chance to regain any area of land however small it may be, and regardless of the Israeli government’s ulterior intentions.

The Egyptian Attitude:

Due to Egypt's geographical, historical and political links with GS, the Egyptian stance on the Israeli pull out from GS was most important and remarkable. In this connection, we should recall that GS was occupied in 1967 while it was run by the Egyptians. Since the very beginning, President Mubarak declared Egypt's stance on the issue by saying: "We hope that withdrawal from GS is carried out in coordination with the Palestinians. If Israel abruptly pulled out from GS without prior consultation with the PA, it would bring about a state of chaos and disorder." He called on both sides to implement the Road Map.²⁵

Egypt showed a tendency to support the PA as it offered to train the Palestinian forces and contribute to the success of the intra-Palestinian dialogue. Generally, the Egyptian position on the issue of withdrawal from GS may be summed up in the following points:²⁶

1. A complete and comprehensive Israeli pull out from GS as well as some northern parts of the WB.
2. GS should not be made into a big prison and the harbor and airport should operate.
3. This withdrawal should be part of the Road Map, not an alternative to it, so that a Palestinian independent state could be eventually established.

The then Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, realized that Egypt could not be ruled out from the withdrawal process, though he had previously, when floating his project in December 2003, objected to any Egyptian involvement in this respect on the pretext that Egypt would be biased towards the Palestinians.²⁷

Egypt's stance on the withdrawal plan was in harmony with its declared policy that it should have a role in the Palestinian issue, and in maintaining peace and stability within GS and on its eastern borders. An Israeli proposal to move the Rafah passage to "Kerem Shalom" was rejected by Egypt. On 25 November 2005, the passage, which connects Egypt with the Palestinian territories, was for the first time run without Israeli direct control. Israel only fixed monitor screens connected with a central computer at the passageway between Egypt and Israel. Israel has also reserved the right to object to the entry or departure of some persons, provided that the Europeans, the Egyptians, and, later on, the Palestinians are notified.

The PA appreciated Egypt's stance, and considered it close to its own position. It appreciated the Egyptian role in conveying its viewpoints to Israel, though there was no direct coordination between the two sides.

The Jordanian Attitude: Jordan's role in the Israeli withdrawal from GS was not that substantial. For, contrary to Egypt, Jordan is geographically far from GS. In addition, Israel was not enthusiastic about a Jordanian role. However, Jordan declared its support to the withdrawal on condition that it should be accompanied by the implementation of the Road Map, and withdrawal from the WB, which is in harmony with the Jordanian policy that encourages all peaceful solutions in the Middle East, and the establishment of the Palestinian state. But Jordan is expected to play a greater role in future, in case Israel shows willingness to pull out from the WB. This is because of the historical connection between Jordan and the WB, which started at the Jericho Conference of 1950, in which the West Bank was annexed to the East Bank of Jordan. Subsequently, in 1988, the legal and administrative unity of the two Banks was dismantled by a Jordanian decree. Israeli newspapers and decision-making centers circulate from time to time reports that claim the Jordanian role in the WB would be revived to be as strong as that of the Egyptian in GS. Yet, the Jordanian King, 'Abdullah II, said in an interview that he is not willing "to play any role, or take any action, that would raise doubts or accusation of treason against Jordan, as happened in the past. Now, Jordan's role in the Palestinian issue is similar to that of any other Arab country."²⁸

The Syrian Attitude: Whenever the Syrian stance on the Palestinian issue is reviewed, it is found that Syria relates any progress towards a solution to the issue of the liberation of the Golan Heights from the Israeli occupation. Therefore, Syria seeks to reach a settlement with Israel to regain its land.

As leaders of some Palestinian movements, including Hamas and the Islamic Jihad, are based in Damascus, Syria has an effective role to play in the future of GS. Mahdi Dakhilallah, the Syrian Minister of Information, said that the Israeli withdrawal from GS is not a favor, but an outcome of the struggle of the Palestinian resistance. "Had Israel felt comfortable in GS, it would not have withdrawn from it," he said.²⁹ In addition, the Syrian press warned that GS could be made into a big prison, as its borders, water resources and passageways are all under Israeli control.

Developments of Arab-Israeli Normalization:

The 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty - which stipulated that relations be normalized and

diplomatic representation be exchanged - marked the beginning of normalization between Israel and an Arab country. The third paragraph of Article (5) of the Camp David Treaty provided that “the two parties should work together to establish cultural ties, which helps to create a conducive climate for understanding and cooperation,” notwithstanding a previous boycott resolution taken by the Arab League at the time of the very emergence of Israel. The Arab League set up a Damascus-based bureau to follow up the implementation of its resolutions on boycotting Israel, including identifying and properly handling foreign companies that deal with Israel. In 1994, Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel (known as Wadi ‘Araba Accord), which stipulated that relations should be normalized and diplomatic representation be exchanged. The third Israeli infiltration into the Arab world was through Mauritania, which normalized its relations with Israel, and recognized it as an independent state. Other Arab countries, like Tunisia, Morocco, Qatar and Oman, opened representation offices, for exchanging commercial visits with Israel, under the pretext of promoting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. It was *al-Aqsa Intifadah* that stopped the rush of the Arab countries’ to normalize relations with Israel. Some of the above-mentioned countries recalled their Ambassadors and representatives from Israel. Yet, due to some recent developments, including the abatement of the *Intifadah*, the election of Mahmud ‘Abbas as a new Palestinian President, and the convention of the Sharm el-Sheikh Conference, Egypt, Jordan and other Arab countries resumed their diplomatic relations with Israel. In the Arab Summit held in Algeria in March 2005, Jordan floated a proposal to modify the Arab Peace Initiative and normalize relations with Israel on the assumption that this would encourage the latter to pull out from the occupied Palestinian territories. On its part, Israel used its withdrawal from GS to persuade other Arab countries to establish relations with it. The international and Arab media quoted a statement by the Israeli Foreign Minister, Silvan Shalom, to the effect that 10 Arab countries will normalize relations with Israel after its withdrawal from GS. Furthermore, there have been reports of an Israeli commercial representation office to be opened in Dubai. Other reports maintained that Libya is expected to start relations with Israel soon. The weekly newspaper *Afaq ‘Arabiyyah* indicated that Major-General Musa Kusa, head of the Libyan Intelligence Agency, had a

meeting with Sharon in which they agreed to open an Israeli Embassy in Libya, and establish commercial relations between the two countries. The weekly newspaper claimed that the calls for economic normalization with Israel, issued by four Arab countries: (Morocco, Libya, Qatar and Kuwait), came as a reaction to Egypt's signature of the QIZ Agreement with Israel and the US.³⁰

The conclusion of the QIZ Agreement in 2005 was a key event towards the economic normalization between Israel, on one hand, and Egypt and Jordan on the other hand. Previously, in 1996, Jordan had signed a similar agreement, which was re-activated in the year 2005. The underlying danger of this agreement is that it could be used by the US as a tool to exert pressure on the Arab countries to normalize their relations with Israel. For, according to the agreement, the Arab products should contain components manufactured in Israel if they are to find an access to the American markets. Thus, the QIZ Agreement serves as an Israeli visa, to put it bluntly, for Egypt to enter the Free Trade Area, as had been the case with its access to it got involved in the European partnership Agreement. Dr. Isma'il Sabri described the QIZ Agreement as "an economic Camp David," in the sense that it will have passive effects on the Egyptian economy, and will lead to malicious infiltration into the Arab world under the guise of normalization.³¹

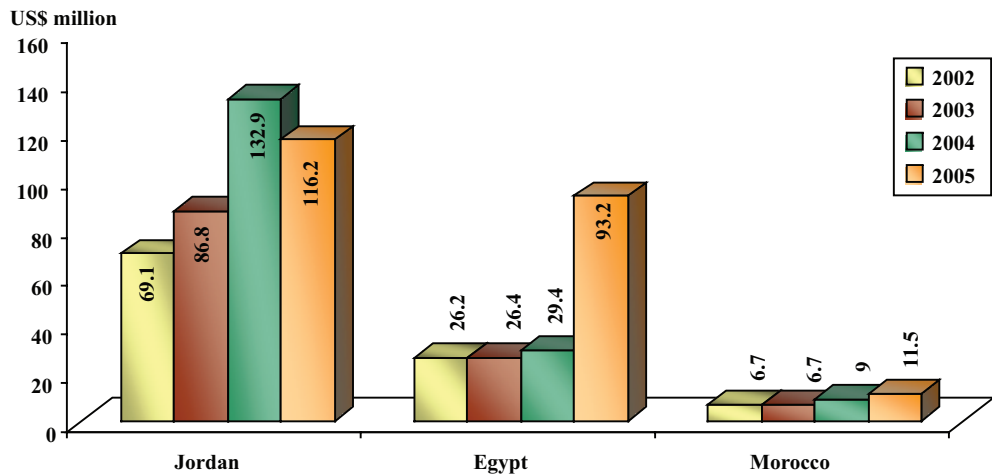
Furthermore, Morocco and Bahrain signed Free Trade Agreements with the US, which allowed Israeli companies to freely deal with these two countries.

The following table, based on Israeli sources, displays the volume of trade between Israel on one hand and some Arab countries on the other hand.³²

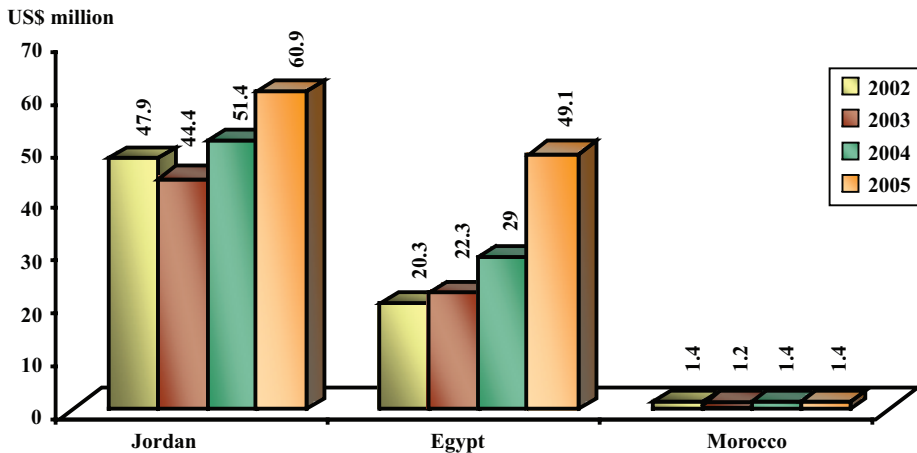
Table 1/3: The Israeli Trade with the Arab Countries (US\$ million)

Year	The Israeli exports					The Israeli imports			
	2005	2004	2003	2002		2005	2004	2003	2002
Jordan	116.2	132.9	86.8	69.1		60.9	51.4	44.4	47.9
Egypt	93.2	29.4	26.4	26.2		49.1	29	22.3	20.3
Morocco	11.5	9	6.7	6.7		1.4	1.4	1.2	1.4

The Israeli Exports to Arab Countries 2002 - 2005



The Israeli Imports from Arab Countries 2002 - 2005



The Attitude of the Arab Masses:

The Arab masses still consider the Palestinian issue the primary and central issue in the Arab world, and they view Israel as their traditional arch enemy. They always react to developments in Palestine, and exert as much pressure as they can on their governments to support the Palestinian people and their just cause. Moreover, the position of the Arab masses towards foreign countries depends on their stance on the Palestinian issue. Hence, is their persistent anti-American attitude as the US is the permanent supporter of Israel. The support of the Arab peoples to the Palestinian struggle

is demonstrated by their rejection of the Arab-Israeli normalization, which is in contradiction with the official view of some Arab countries. This rejection emanates from the belief that normalization is detrimental to Arab interests and national security. It, moreover, serves the imperial Israeli project and creates an Arab social and economic base that has common interests with Israel. Although some Arab states attempted to normalize their relations with Israel at official levels, normalization at the peoples' level is a big failure, which means that Israel could not possibly achieve its goals. This failure had been clearly seen during the *Intifadah* when the Arab peoples boycotted Israeli and American products, which was a powerful means of resistance against Israel. Extensive campaigns were organized in various Arab countries to promote this boycott as a kind of public support to the Palestinian *Intifadah*. This widespread culture of boycott among the Arab masses aspires to achieve the following goals:

1. Expanding the Arab public base which supports the Palestinian people in their conflict with Israel, and enhancing the confidence of the masses that can resist and help in the struggle against Israel and its allies.
2. Adopting boycott plans that identify the products and the countries that should be boycotted.
3. Communicating with civil society organizations to encourage them to join the boycott activities, and contribute in the spread of the boycott culture among the people.³³
4. To aggravate the economic crisis in Israel, and enhance the cost of its occupation of the Arab territories.
5. To punish America economically for its pro-Israeli and anti-Arab stances, while rewarding friendly countries for their support to the Arab cause, and encouraging them to pursue this policy.

These campaigns managed to create an Arab public awareness of the importance of boycotting the products as a reaction against the US pro-Israel politics, and the Israeli aggressive practices against the Palestinians.

In Jordan, the public move against political and economic normalization with Israel has been a hotly debated issue since the government's signature of Wadi 'Araba Agreement in 1994. The Jordanian parties and unions called for establishing "the Jordanian People's Congress for Protecting Home and Defying Normalization", which publishes "*Defiance*" newsletter. There is also the "Jordanian Committee for Resisting Normalization", which publishes "*Resistance*" newsletter, in addition to some committees affiliated to the union

of engineers, and some student forums which publish “*Resist*” newsletter.³⁴

The public move to resist the Jordanian normalization with Israel continued vigorously in 2005. The people’s committees organized prior protest movements to oppose the return of the Jordanian Ambassador’s to Tel Aviv, and to express public rejection to all joint Israeli-Jordanian projects. Professional unions also released a statement that denounced Jordan’s absence from the meetings of the Arab Bureau for Boycotting Israel. Furthermore, anti-normalization committees, which include representatives of political parties and professional unions as well as patriotic figures, were set up. They called upon the Jordanian people to boycott Israeli and US goods. Some Jordanian university students distributed lists containing names of commodities produced by Israeli and American companies, attached with domestic alternatives. The declared volume of investments in Jordan amounted to about \$25 million, distributed among 28 companies. The boycott resulted in the shutdown of Kitan Company’s spinning and textile factories, as it had sustained huge losses. In addition, 1,350 workers from a clothing company, which used to cooperate with Israeli companies, were laid off because of considerable losses. Another company went bankrupt after the dismissal of 850 workers.³⁵

In Morocco, the year 2005 witnessed an escalation in public opposition to normalization with Israel. Mr. Khalid al-Sufyani, former chief of the “Moroccan Association for Supporting the Palestinian Struggle” stressed: “Morocco is one of the important countries for fighting normalization and boycotting US and Israeli goods.” On the first anniversary of the assassination of Hamas’ founder, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, a speech festival was held in the Moroccan Western city of Meknas. During the festival, a student’s anti-normalization initiative was announced. The head of the Students’ Organization, Mustafa al-Khalafi, said: “The entire Moroccan people, with its student and youth powers, stand against this tendency towards normalization.”³⁶

In the Arab Gulf states, “the People’s Conference for Resisting Normalization with the Zionist Entity” was held in Bahrain under the slogan “Towards Practical Public Mechanisms for Fighting Normalization and Supporting the *Intifadah*.” The congress resulted in setting up two permanent Committees:³⁷

- Committee for Supporting the Palestinian *Intifadah* and Steadfastness.
- Committee for Fighting Normalization with the Zionist Entity.

In Bahrain, the campaign for fighting normalization and boycotting Israeli goods is led by the “Bahraini Association for Resisting Normalization with

the Zionist Enemy”, which publishes newsletters and articles, and launches demonstration, pickets and social events. It also publishes a newsletter titled: Resistance-Boycott.³⁸

The 4th People’s Conference for Resisting Normalization with Israel, held in Doha on 26 December 2004, called for developing new mechanisms to prevent normalization with Israel and keep it away from the Arab Gulf region.

The 14th Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in the city of Durban, South Africa, on 17 August 2004, issued a resolution that calls for boycotting all products coming from the Israeli settlements that are established on the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, banning the entry of the Jewish settlers to the states of the Non-Alignment Movement and imposing sanctions on companies which take part in building the Israeli Apartheid Wall. In a Paris-based meeting, held on 23 February 2005, the World Council of Churches, the biggest international non-Catholic Christian organization, urged its members to withdraw their investments in companies that profit from the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Bernard Lewis, a well-known Jewish British historian living in America and a staunch supporter of Israel, admitted: “Arab academic circles and professionals are hostile to Israel and will likely continue to be so for a long time. This also applies to the Arab media as well.” He added that the Arab countries which established relations and treaties with Israel are themselves facing strong opposition against normalization. “Those who express different opinions in these countries are severely slammed by their more stubborn fellows,” he said.³⁹

Should the Arab people have the opportunity and the freedom, their stance on the Palestinian issue would be more powerful and influential in deterring the future course on the developments of the Arab-Israeli conflict. After all, official Arab pressure could not prevent the Arab people from showing and expressing their enthusiastic support to the *Intifadah* and the struggle of the Palestinian people, and their categorical denunciation of the Israeli aggressive practices.

Conclusion: The Arab attitude towards the Palestinian issue in 2005 remained basically the same as in previous years. The conditions of helplessness, disarray and inward looking prevailed. The Arab countries continued to patronize the traditional policies of a peaceful settlement with Israel based on the Saudi Initiative. Meanwhile, the Israelis managed

to develop their political and economic relations with Egypt and Jordan, and achieved a measure of success on normalization elsewhere. But the Arab masses still constitute a powerful support to the Palestinian steadfastness and resistance, though spectacular changes in the official Arab positions are highly unlikely, at least in the near future. Yet, the public vigorous zeal and rush to establish more transparent and democratic political systems may give a glimmer of hope that the Arab regimes will eventually be prompted to shoulder their responsibilities towards Palestine more effectively.

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Chapter Four

The Palestinian Issue and the Muslim World

The Palestinian Issue and the Muslim World¹

Introduction: The Palestinian issue has been characterized by two elements that hardly co-exist in any other Arab-Muslim issue in our contemporary world. First: it is an issue on which there is a general consensus among the Arabs and Muslims. Second: it is the touchstone, or “thermometer”, that truly reflects the conditions of the *Ummah* (Nation). Whenever other circles are constricted, the Islamic circle remains the major source of support for the Palestinian issue. The wide Islamic environment represents the strategic depth for the liberation of Palestine, and it constitutes one of the most significant means for exerting pressure on regional organizations.

Though geographical concepts are the easiest in the course of the methodological definitions, the concept of the Islamic circle, which has both ideological and geographical dimensions, remains considerably equivocal, even liable for development. This study is an attempt to evaluate the role and activities of this circle at the level of the Palestinian issue, which is largely related to its size, its natural human and civilizational components and its relation with the other circles of conflict.

The Palestinian issue occupies a paramount position in the priorities of the foreign policies of the Muslim countries, which view the Palestinian issue not only as an Arab concern but the cause of the entire Muslim world. However, since the establishment of Israel in 1948, the concerns and orientations of the Muslim countries towards the conflict have been different and incongruous because of the lack of genuine cooperation between them, and their disparate interests and alliances. A reflection on the positions of some major Muslim countries may provide a scenario that is incompatible with official Muslim policies toward the Palestinian issue. This chapter will focus on three countries: Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, along with a preliminary overview on the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC).

The Organization of the Islamic Conference:

The bilateral relation between the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and Palestine has some historical roots, for the former was established in Rabat (Morocco) in the aftermath of the arson of the blessed *al-Aqsa* Mosque in the occupied city of Jerusalem on

21 August 1969. This heinous crime against Muslim sanctuaries and places of worship was faced by a clear and firm reaction by the Muslim leaders that took shape in the establishment of an organization to assume the burden of defending the blessed *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the first *Qiblah* (the direction to which Muslims offer their prayers) and the third of the two noble shrines (in Mecca and Medina). The charter of the OIC embodied an undertaking to strive by all political and military means to liberate the noble city of Jerusalem from the Zionist occupation, and to achieve coordination to protect the sacred places. Moreover, it pledged to support the struggle of the Palestinian people, help them to regain their rights and to liberate their land, and work to uproot all forms of apartheid and colonization.

The year 2005 witnessed the convention of the third extraordinary session of the Islamic Summit Conference in Mecca (on 7 – 8 December),² which focused, in general, on combating “extremism and terrorism”. However, the speech delivered on this occasion by Akmal al-Din Ihsan Uglo, the Secretary General of the OIC, included a whole passage on the Palestinian issue. But, it did not go beyond the repeated, official policies that the OIC had followed for several years. He said:

The whole world has now realized that the most serious cause of tension and turbulence in the Middle East region, even in the entire world, lies in the repercussions of the ongoing tragedy in Palestine, particularly in the noble city of Jerusalem. On a daily basis Israeli practices violate international covenants, norms, and laws as well as human values, of which human rights are at the top. This has necessarily resulted in an explosive situation that has incurred tragedies and suffering in the region and tension, insecurity and multiple dangers in the world.

He, furthermore, emphasized his support for the Arab Initiative launched by King ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, and concluded by saying:

We have mentioned that the option of peace is the strategic choice to solve the problems of the Middle East. On the basis of this perspective, we call upon the international community to impose on Israel full commitment to the application of the Road Map. We also insist that Israel give up its policy in Jerusalem, the central and first concern of the whole Muslim world.

Perhaps the reverberation of the Palestinian issue in the final statement³ of the Summit was clearer, as it focused on the political aspect, stating:

The Conference has stressed the importance of the Palestinian issue as the pivotal concern of the Muslim *Ummah*. Hence, the termination of the Israeli occupation of Arab and Palestinian lands captured since 1967, including Eastern Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, and the completion

of the Israeli withdrawal from the rest of the occupied Lebanese lands according to Security Council Resolution 425, are essential demands of the entire Muslim *Ummah*.

The statement called for concerted efforts to recuperate Jerusalem and maintain its Islamic and historical nature, to provide the necessary resources to sustain and safeguard *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the other holy places, to withstand the policy of Judaizing the sacred city and support Palestinian institutions therein, and to establish *al-Aqsa* University in Jerusalem. It also called for “fostering the Endowment Fund of Jerusalem by a contribution of one dollar from every Muslim, in addition to contributions of member states.”

Though including some practical suggestions, the final statement, lacks seriousness and mechanisms of follow up and execution, a habitual negative aspect that accompanied the OIC since its foundation.

On the occasion of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip (GS), the OIC issued a statement on 21 August 2005 calling for the Israeli withdrawal from all the Palestinian lands seized in 1967, and for an immediate drive to confront the Israeli methods of Judaizing Jerusalem. The OIC’s Secretary General, Akmal al-Din Ihsan Uglo, said:

We are looking forward to work for the removal of the Separation Wall and all settlements, to lift the blockade and isolation imposed on the noble city of Jerusalem, stop the aggression and constant threats against the sacred places, particularly *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and to enable the Palestinian people to move freely inside and outside their country.

Uglo also laid special stress on the dangers and the miserable status in which the noble city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants live, as a result of the illicit procedures and practices that Israel pursues to Judaize the holy city and alter its civilizational, historical, and demographic features. He called upon the international community and the Quartet Committee to take immediate action to propel Israel to stop its transgressions and procedures, and to respect and implement the Jerusalem-related resolutions.

In response to the call of extremist Jews, which had sharply increased during the past two years to demolish *al-Aqsa* Mosque and set up their alleged Temple,⁴ the OIC issued a statement expressing its deep concern for the alarming conditions of the religious and historical places in Jerusalem, which resulted from the Israeli excavations. They call upon the international community to bear its responsibility and compel Israel not to change the landmarks of the holy city. The OIC’s Secretary General paid special attention to the excavations carried

out by the Israeli occupation authorities under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the walls of the old town in Jerusalem. The statement warned of the seriousness of the recent Israeli declaration that the old walls surrounding the old town are getting cracked, and considered this as a new Israeli attempt to meddle in the affairs of the Islamic endowments, and alter the identity of the city of Jerusalem.⁵

Regrettably, the sizable OIC, which includes 57 member states, has been a helpless observer of the tragedies and Judaization projects of Palestine. However, the OIC is a mere reflection of the state of Arab and Muslim weakness and disunity. Therefore, it is not expected to play an effective role in the near future.

Turkey: Once the Justice and Development Party assumed power in Turkey, there has been a measure of equilibrium in Turkish relations with Israel and Palestine, even an inclination to be more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, as seen in the increasing visits of Turkish official to Palestine.

However, the Justice Party has found itself in a state of polarization between two opposing directions. Its electoral base is strongly inclined to support Arab and Islamic issues, especially those related to Palestine, and to antagonize Israel, while, the Party's leadership realized that there are other factors that force them to retain relations with Israel, i.e., the powerful sway of the Turkish military institution, and the Party's desire not to provoke America, and to have distinguished relations with Europe, that would facilitate Turkey's bid to join the European Union. Moreover, the strict secular composition of the state and the influential media clout of other trends impede the adoption of a clearer and more open Islamic policies.

In 2005, Turkey tried to adopt "balanced" policies, according to its own criteria. Early in 2005 'Abdullah Gul, the Turkish Foreign Minister, visited the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in Ramallah. In his welcoming speech, Nabil Sha'th, the Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister, said that the delegation had come to open a new page in the historical Palestinian-Turkish relations, and added that Turkey is the first non-Arab state that recognized the Palestinian state, and has always been on the Palestinian side in all international forums. Sha'th also disclosed that an agreement of cultural, educational and economic cooperation will be signed with Turkey.⁶

In an attempt to strengthen Turkish-Palestinian relations, Erdogan arrived

in his first visit to Ramallah on 2 May 2005. He described, in a joint press conference with ‘Abbas, Turkish-Palestinian relations as historical, and that they “draw their strength from common values and culture and from a long history that we are proud of.”⁷ Erdogan declared that Ankara is ready “to do its utmost” to encourage the peace process if the Israelis and the Palestinians ask for its help. At the end of his meeting with Mahmud ‘Abbas, Erdogan commended his country’s “excellent relations with both the Israelis and the Palestinians,” and added: “We informed both parties that we are fully ready to do our best to contribute to the peace process, and it is up to the two parties to pinpoint the kind of assistance we may offer, and we will extend it.”⁸

In the past few years, Turkey has tried to play the role of a mediator between Palestinians and Israelis. In 2001, it acted, within the frame of a United Nations Committee, as a mediator to settle disputes over lands, and it contributed in preparing the report of that Committee. Turkey, represented by its ex-president, Sulayman Demirel, together with five other members, was also in the United Nations fact-finding Committee known as Mitchell Committee. Turkey was allowed to participate in this Committee on a personal demand from Yasir ‘Arafat. It also participates, again within the frame of the United Nations, in the International Committee for the Preservation of the Acquired Rights of the Palestinian People, besides its membership in the Jerusalem Committee of the United Nations, and in the international force of monitors in the city of Hebron.

During the years 2003 and 2004, a palpable development in the bilateral economic relations between Turkey and the PA took place. A free trade agreement between the two sides was signed during the visit of the Palestinian Minister of Economy, Mr. Mahir al-Masri, to Turkey on 20 July 2004. During the period 7 and 9 June 2004, the second periodical meeting of the Turkish-Palestinian Council of Work convened in Istanbul. An agreement of mutual cooperation between the chambers of commerce in both countries was also signed. The Turkish authorities directed their consuls all over the world to promptly issue entry visas to all holders of different Palestinian passports.⁹

Nonetheless, despite the Islamic orientation of the ruling Justice and Development Party, and the strive of its leaders to promote relations with the Palestinian side, the Party’s government was unable to depart from the traditional policy of strong ties between Ankara and Tel Aviv that has been established and

actively pursued by successive Turkish governments. However, the relations between Turkey and Israel have become rather cool and unstable during the last two years, up to the end of 2005, due to the following reasons:

1. The Justice and Development Party tried to implement a new foreign policy that keeps Turkey away from polarity, and to establish, as far as possible, good and peaceful relations with all regional and international powers. Hence was its drive towards Syria, Iran, Russia and Cyprus. This was interpreted as constraining relations with Israel, while, in fact, it was no more than an attempt to regulate the relations between the two parties. For Turkish-Israeli relations have remained active in the economic, investment, cultural, military, and security fields.
2. While the Iraqi war and the American occupation of Iraq strained the relations between Ankara and Washington, the Israeli infiltration into Northern Iraq and their support to Iraqi Kurds provoked the sensitivity of Ankara. Although Gul mentioned during a visit to Israel that he accepted the Israeli negation of infiltration into Northern Iraq, the Minister described the issue as more complicated, which indicates that he was not really satisfied with the Israeli denial. The support of Israel to Kurdish aspirations to break away from Baghdad is, in fact, regarded by Turkey as a serious threat to its national security. Hence, an overall Turkish anger, from the government as well as the military establishment, against the Israeli policies toward the Kurdish issue could arise.¹⁰

Mustafa Kabar Uglo, a Turkish researcher, suggested in a study that though Turkish-Israeli relations had been flourishing until a short time ago, the American war in Iraq revealed that the “old allies” still have conflicting goals, incompatible interests, and contradictory concerns with regard to the future Iraq. The study adds that Turkey fears the establishment of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq, while Israel welcomes this from a security point of view as such a development (leading to weakening and dividing Iraq) would help in protecting it against highly possible threats from countries like Iran, Pakistan, and those beyond them.¹¹

3. It is true that the Justice and Development Party came with a moderate formula of conciliation between political Islam, secularism, and relationship with western powers. Yet, it was not possible to ignore the

fact that the Party's root and rank and file is basically Islamic. Thus, it is extremely sensitive to Israeli general policies towards the Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims. The aggravation of the Zionist practices against the Palestinian *Intifadah* embarrassed Erdogan's government, and forced him to take critical position against Israel in order to avoid an uproar in the Party. The ruling Party took a particularly strong position on Israel's actions against the Palestinians during *al-Aqsa Intifadah*. For instance, Erdogan, the Prime Minister, described Israel's assassination of Hamas leader, Sheikh Ahmad Yasin, in 2004 as "a terrorist act".¹²

The visit of the Foreign Minister of Turkey, 'Abdullah Gul, to Israel, early in 2005 triggered exceptional interest among all the concerned parties. For, it was the first visit of a high-ranking Turkish officer to Israel since the Justice and Development Party took power more than two years ago. Moreover, it came after the refusal of the Prime Minister, Rajab Tayyib Erdogan, to receive the Israeli Prime Minister, Sharon, and his dismissal of Sharon's practices against the Palestinians as "state terrorism". Although the declared objective of the visit centered on Turkey's readiness to play a mediatory role in the peace process between Syria and Palestine on one hand and Israel on the other, the key objective was to revive Turkish-Israeli relations, which seemingly attained a measure of success.

On 1 May 2005, the Turkish Prime Minister, Rajab Tayyib Erdogan, visited Israel for the first time since his rise to power two and half years ago. It was announced that Erdogan's visit aimed at improving relations between his country and Israel, and to participate in the then peace efforts in the region. The economic dimension of the visit was clearly demonstrated by more than one hundred Turkish businessmen accompanying Erdogan.¹³

During the visit, according to an Israeli source, the Prime Minister, Erdogan, discussed with Israeli officials a military deal of about half a billion dollars, which centred around a plan by which the Israeli military industry would develop and improve about 30 war aircrafts, branded F-4 Phantom, that belonged to the Turkish Air Force.¹⁴ Ragaie Qutan, the President of the Turkish Islamic Happiness Party (*al-Sa'adah Party*), revealed that the Turkish Prime Minister, Rajab Tayyib Erdogan, and Israel endorsed an agreement during this visit on selling the water of the Turkish river "Manavgat" to Israel.¹⁵

In May, the Turkish Defense Minister, Vecdi Gonul, had also visited Tel

Aviv to discuss plans to develop Turkish military aircrafts and provide Ankara with far-reaching pilotless aircrafts. The Director General of the Israeli Defense Ministry, Amos Yaron, described the relations between the defense institutions of both countries as excellent. The spokesman of Israel Aircraft Industries, Doron Suslik, talked about Turkey's interest to develop F-4 aircrafts, and indicated that it is Israeli second largest military customer after India.¹⁶

In October 2005, the Turkish Minister of Energy and Natural Resources, Hilmi Guler, held talks in Turkey with his Israeli counterpart, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, on projects of bilateral cooperation in the fields of energy and water. On the other hand, the Turkish Minister mentioned an existing agreement for the export of water from Turkey to Israel, and that Ankara is planning to extend the water pipeline to include both Jordan and Palestine in this agreement.¹⁷ Before the end of the year the Israeli Chief of Staff, Dan Haluz made a visit to Turkey, which triggered much heed because it came at a time when relations between the two countries became tense and complicated as result of some developments in the region, specially the war in Iraq and the Iranian nuclear program.¹⁸

Relations between the two countries had flourished during the 1990s. Many agreements on military cooperation, including common maneuvers and opening of Turkish airspace to train Israeli aircrafts, were signed while Tel Aviv embarked on updating F-16 and F-15 Turkish aircrafts. The two parties also signed initial agreements to manufacture Arrow missiles, Israeli Merkava tanks, and Israeli-Russian helicopters in Turkey.

However, the Turkish-Israeli relations became rather tense and cool when Bulent Ecevit, the former Turkish Prime Minister, accused Israel of committing ethnic massacres against the Palestinian people during the events of Jenin camp in 2002. This tepidity and tension increased after the Islamic-oriented Justice and Development Party came to power in Ankara late in November 2002. In 2004, its government decided to freeze all the afore-mentioned agreements,¹⁹ but soon thereafter the relations improved.

Bilateral trade, which totaled \$54 million in 1987, went up to \$2 billion in 2004, apart from weapon sales. This boom gave rise to business lobbies in both countries that exercise pressure for stronger ties. Tourism plays an important role as well. 3 million & 298,000 Israeli tourists visited Turkey between 1990 and 2004, a considerable influx from a country, Israel, whose total population is less than 7 million. They spent about \$2,400 million.²⁰

Below is a table of Israeli trade with Turkey from 2002 to 2005:²¹

Table 1/4: Israeli Trade with Turkey from 2002 to 2005 (US\$ million)

Year	Israeli exports to Turkey	Turkish exports to Israel
2002	383.1	813.7
2003	470.3	951.5
2004	813.5	1,166.9
2005	919	1,221

On the other hand, Turkey was used as a bridge to normalize relations between Israel and some Arab and Muslim countries, especially Pakistan. Turkey hosted a meeting between the Israeli Foreign Minister, Silvan Shalom, and his Pakistani counterpart, Khurshid Kasuri. It seems that Turkey promised, on the request of Israel, that Rajab Tayyib Erdogan would explore in some Arab and Islamic countries the possibility of establishing Israeli commercial and cultural attaches in the Turkish Embassies in these countries. It was even reported that he would bring up this issue during his meetings with some leaders of the region during his visits to the Gulf countries. The spokesman of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, Nameq Tan, refused to comment on this Israeli request, which he did not negate it, particularly as other sources claimed that Erdogan instructed his Deputy, Mehmet Aydin, to take up this matter with Arab and Muslim countries, including Algeria, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Yemen.²²

Thus, the Turkish interests and private concerns constituted in one way or another a step backward, particularly as this comes from a ruling party whose electoral base sympathizes with Palestine.

Iran: The year 2005 witnessed increasing Iranian support for the Palestinian issue, especially after Ahmadinejad's success in the Iranian elections, and the completion of the "conservatives" firm grip on the State. This has led to the reinforcement of the dogmatic discourse and the rapid promotion of Iranian-Palestinian relations in line with the original principles of the Iranian Islamic Revolution.

A discussion of the Iranian-Palestinian relations requires reference to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the subsequent tension in the Iranian-American relations. The Islamic Revolution in Iran promptly declared its rejection of the legitimacy of the Hebrew state, severed relations

with it, and handed the Israeli Embassy in Tehran to the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). Though the support of Muslims all over the world, including the Palestinians, was one of the main objectives of the Revolution, the Iranian inclination towards the PLO started to wane in the aftermath of the Iraqi-Iranian war in which the PLO sided with Iraq. However, Iran distinguished between the PLO, and the ideological commitment of the Iranian Revolution to the Palestinian cause. Hence, Iran directed its attention and support to other Palestinian organizations.

However, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the initiation of the process of peaceful negotiation early in the 1990s led to a change in the Iranian political discourse regarding the Palestinian issue. Iran, while openly rejecting in the past the Middle East peace process, it now declared that it would not withstand or put obstacles in the way of negotiation, despite its conviction that this course will not usher in a just peace in the region. This attitude, crystallized during Khatami's long presidency over the Republic, has obviously altered since Ahmadinejad took the presidency. He escalated the discourse against the Hebrew state, specifically because of the latter's key role in the Euro-American opposition to Iran's possession of nuclear technology.

Iran provides different kinds of aid to the Palestinian people, including humanitarian aid and support to the Islamic resistance factions (Hamas and the Islamic Jihad). Iran stood beside the Palestinian resistance which it considered the most successful means in the face of the occupation, and it has even encouraged the Palestinian factions to continue their resistance. This was expressed by the call of the Supreme Guide of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to Hamas to continue the resistance.²³ Khamenei maintained that the Israeli withdrawal from GS was achieved by virtue of the resistance,²⁴ and Ahmadinejad, the Iranian President, emphasized the centrality of the Palestinian issue to Iran.²⁵

On the other side, the Palestinian resistance stood by Iran on the nuclear issue. Khalid Mish'al, the head of the Political Bureau of Hamas, threatened to respond if Israel attacks Iran. Mish'al said: "We are part of a united front against the enemies of Islam, of which every element will defend itself by its own means." He declared his support for the Iranian nuclear program saying: "If we assume that Iran has a military nuclear program, so what is wrong with this since Israel and others do have it?"²⁶

The Iranian attitude towards Israel should not be separated from the Iranian-

American relations because of several historical and strategic reasons. The election of Ahmadinejad to the presidency was met by stormy reactions from the United States and Israel. Israel regarded his success a setback to the reform movement, as reiterated by Amos Gilad, head of the Political Department of the Israeli Defense Ministry. The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* commented on this election by saying: “his election [Ahmadinejad] is a significant regional development, for his attitudes may infuriate enmity between Iran and Israel.”²⁷ On forming his government, Ahmadinejad rapidly shaped his foreign policy that excluded the establishment of any relation with Israel and the United States of America.²⁸

Ahmadinejad took part in “The World without Zionism” Conference, organized by the Students’ Islamic Committees in Iran on 26 October 2005, where he said: “As *al-Imam* al-Khomeini said: Israel has to be wiped out from the map”; and added “the Muslim *Ummah* will not allow its historical enemy to live in the heart of its land.” He continued to say that battles on the occupied lands constitute part of a war that would determine the destiny of Israel. In a reference to the anger of the Muslim peoples, he said: “The leaders of the Muslim *Ummah* who will recognize Israel will be burned by the fire of their peoples’ fury,” but cautioned that they will sign “the surrender of the Muslim world.” Ahmadinejad talked about “a historical war of several centuries between the oppressor and the Muslim world” and hinted that “the downfall of the last stronghold of Islam, about a century ago, took place when the oppressors committed themselves to establish the Zionist regime.” He continued by saying: “They used it [Israel] as a forefront to disseminate their ideas in the heart of the Muslim world.”²⁹

These statements in general, and their call for blotting Israel from the map are not odd, but they, in fact, reflect a basic conviction of the Iranian Revolution that had already been articulated by its Guide Ayatollah al-Khomeini. Western and Israeli reactions against Ahmadinejad escalated when he questioned, in his statements on 8 December 2005, the legitimacy of Israel on the Palestinian land, belied the Jewish Holocaust in Europe and called for moving this “entity” to Europe.³⁰ These statements provoked different reactions inside and outside Iran, and intensified Israel’s campaign to rally world opinion against the Iranian peaceful nuclear program. Reformists in Iran criticized Ahmadinejad’s statements about Israel. Muhammad Rida Khatami, brother of the Iranian ex-president, Muhammad Khatami, argued that they will contribute in changing the positions of some friendly powers towards Iran, particularly among western

parties, and be detrimental to Iranian economic interests.³¹ Soon European apprehensions of Ahmadinejad's statements increased.³²

Israel intensified its effort to persuade the United States to launch a military strike against the Iranian nuclear infrastructure in order to abort the Iranian efforts to complete its nuclear program, which Iran considers a legitimate right endorsed by international treaties.³³ In this context, the Israeli Foreign Minister demanded that Iran should be regarded as a real and imminent danger, and called for an emergency session of the Security Council. Israel also rushed to petition the United Nations to expel Iran from its membership on the grounds that "any country, which calls for violence and destruction, as the Iranian President did, does not deserve a seat in this civilized Organization."³⁴

Iran, on its part, did not yield to these successive threats. Rather, its Defense Minister, Ali Shamkhani, assured that Iran is ready to confront and contain any military attack launched against it by any foreign forces. But he ruled out an American attack, since Washington is "already drowning in the Iraqi river and a person drowning in a river cannot move to swim in a sea", deeming Iran to be "a military and security sea that America can not swim in."³⁵

During a meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations on 31 August 2005, the representatives of Iran and Israel exchanged accusations of exciting terrorism and threatening the peace and security of the Middle East and the whole world through their nuclear programs. The Israeli Foreign Minister, Shalom, stated that Iran and its nuclear ambitions constitute a pivotal threat to international security, and to progress toward dialogue and peace in the Middle East. The Iranian response, voiced by its representative Ahmad Siddiqi, maintained that these were baseless claims. He said that rather, it is the Zionist state that has a dark history, and still commits war and other crimes against humanity. Late in October 2005, the Israeli Foreign Minister asserted in Paris that his country is fully aware of the Iranian intentions towards it, and that Israel is doing its utmost to persuade the world to fight Iran. He tried to link between the threat of Iran to Israel and its hazard to international security, by saying: "This danger not only menaces us but also reaches the European continent itself." Meanwhile, the Israeli Center of Documents and Information held in The Hague an extraordinary conference that was attended by senior officials from the European Parliament and representatives of the Netherlands parties as well as minority Iranian organizations and the opposition abroad. The goal was to discuss international measures to be taken

against Iran to trim its ambitions and to confront Ahmadinejad's statements. The Conference passed a set of recommendations that called for the isolation of Iran from the international community and its dismissal from the United Nations as the least possible recompense against a country that calls for wiping out another member of the United Nations.³⁶ It also demanded that Europe takes decisive measures to end Iran's nuclear hazard, and violation of human rights. It, moreover, called upon the western countries to take proper steps to stop Iranian "terrorist" activities, particularly its support for "terrorist" elements, groups, and organizations.³⁷

The year 2005, witnessed the resumption of popular celebration on the occasion of the "International Day of Jerusalem." The Iranian President himself took part in this demonstration, where he insisted on his previous statements on the Hebrew state. These demonstrations culminated in a declaration that fully supported President Ahmadinejad, and warned Israel against its continuous aggression on the Palestinians that provoke Muslims' sentiments. It also threatened countries seeking normalization with Israel that they risk the outbreak of a popular fury and jeopardize the future of their countries that will experience turmoil and violence, because Muslims will not be satisfied with anything less than the elimination of Israel.

Pakistan: Since its formation in 1947, Pakistan has been taking positive stances towards Arab issues, particularly the Palestinian issue which it viewed as an Islamic and a just cause. The Pakistani Foreign Minister supported the Arab group against the November 1947 partition resolution of the United Nations. Pakistan also stood against the invitation of Israel to the Afro-Asian Conference in 1954, and later Bandung Conference in 1955. Pakistan continued support to the Palestinian issue stems from two considerations:

- The importance of the Palestinian issue as a central concern for the Arab world.
- The strong Islamic entity of Pakistan requires it to support Arab and Muslim issues.

Undoubtedly, Pakistan's support to the Palestinian cause has been somehow politically beneficial to the country in its conflict with India. Besides, it gave it some economic advantages in the Arab world. Though Pakistan has not recognized Israel, and supported conventional Arab rights, its relation with



Israel remains to be a problematic and paradoxal issue. For the foreign policy of Pakistan distinguishes between recognition of Israel and having actual communications, with it. Thus, Pakistan does communicate with Israel, and has different forms of secret cooperation with it.

The Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, held a press conference during the extraordinary Summit Conference held in Mecca in December 2005, where he spoke on several issues top of which was the issue of Palestine. He called for a strong stance to save Jerusalem from the Judaization operations, and emphasized the sensitivity of the Palestinian issue for the Muslims.³⁸ However, this seems to be the only main statement by the Musharraf government on the Palestinian issue throughout the year 2005. Unlike many other Muslim countries and former Pakistani governments, no official in the Musharraf government had visited the autonomous Palestinian territories. Though November 2005 was fixed for a visit, it was postponed due to the earthquake that hit Pakistan on 8 October.³⁹ This was preceded by a visit of Mahmud 'Abbas, head of the PA, to Pakistan on 19 May 2005, in which he said to the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf: "We hope that President Musharraf will throw his political weight behind the efforts aiming at reaching a just solution for the conflict." Musharraf responded: "We will offer our political support to the Palestinians in order to settle the conflict."⁴⁰

The Pakistani foreign policy is, in general, committed to support the Palestinian cause as well as all Muslim issues. It adheres to resolutions of the Islamic Office for the Boycott, and had signed the declaration of the mail boycott against Israel. Nevertheless, Pakistan has actually established direct and indirect commercial relations with Israel, including a deal in 1995 between the Pakistani airlines and the Israeli company of Aircraft Industry to purchase planes' spare parts. There are also some other commercial deals between the two countries through a third party, Jordan in particular.⁴¹ The issue of the Pakistan's recognition of Israel came to the forefront when Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto announced a visit that she would pay to GS on 4 September 1994 before heading to Cairo to attend a conference on population and development. But Israel refused to allow the visit unless Pakistan coordinates directly with it, while Benazir insisted that all the arrangements of the visit be made by the PA. The crisis wound up with the cancellation of the visit, but this provoked a heated and extensive debate in Pakistan over the issue of recognition of Israel.

Yet none of Pakistan's rulers dared to establish diplomatic relations with Israel as Pervez Musharraf did. In 2003, a Pakistani businessman close to Musharraf visited Israel to explore the possibility of full normalization between the two countries. The visit coincided with statements that Musharraf's made, before heading to America, on the issue of reconsideration of relations with Israel, which he reiterated on his return from Washington by saying: "Do we have to be more Catholic than the Pope, or more Palestinian than the Palestinians themselves?" In June 2003, Pervez Musharraf addressed his people by saying: "We should give serious attention to this issue. We engaged in three wars with India, yet we still have diplomatic relations with it, but with Israel we have not been engaged in any war."⁴²

These statements paved the way for the first high-ranking public meeting, on 1 September 2005, in Istanbul between the Pakistani Foreign Minister, Khurshid Kasuri, and his Israeli counterpart, Silvan Shalom, which took place through a Turkish intermediary.⁴³ Kasuri emphasized that his country decided to become diplomatically "associated" with Israel,⁴⁴ while Silvan Shalom declared that the two sides had decided to hold all their future meetings in public as a prelude to normal bilateral relations.⁴⁵ Kasuri tried to rationalize this development by claiming that it will enable Pakistan to play a greater role in the Middle East peace process to the benefit of the Palestinians and the establishment of their state.⁴⁶ But this justification is totally unfounded as Israel does not allow any country in the world (apart from America) to interfere in the peace process. Moreover, in less than 48 hours after the conclusion of the meeting, the Pakistani governmental and pro-governmental media spoke of the great benefits that Pakistan would gain from establishing diplomatic ties with Israel, notably American favour,⁴⁷ and the neutralization of Israel that has developing relations with India.

After the meeting of the Foreign Ministers, Islamabad declared that the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, would meet leaders of the Jewish-American community to bridge the gap between the Jews and Muslims. David Twersky, the Director of the International Affairs at the American Jewish Congress, announced in New York that General Musharraf accepted the Congress's invitation to clarify his policy that calls for moderation in the Muslim world, and Musharraf's spokesman, General Shawkat Sultan, confirmed this. General Sultan also stated that this clarification will provide a good opportunity to bridge the gap (...), and get rid of misconceptions and misunderstandings.⁴⁸

The meeting took place, and Musharraf delivered a speech in which he said that the establishment of a Palestinian state would help to end the Islamist's "terrorism", and lead to full diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Israel. Musharraf said that Islamabad had no dispute or conflict with Israel, but the Pakistani people strongly sympathize with the aspirations of the Palestinians to set up their own independent state. The Israeli Ambassador at the United Nations described President Musharraf's speech as a "very brave" move, and hastily emphasized that the time has come for the Pakistani government to take a step forward through opening an office for Pakistani interests in Israel.

The official Palestinian position on this meeting was markedly lukewarm. The Palestinian presidency was aware of it as its spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudainah, indicated in a press statement "that the Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, informed President 'Abbas in a phone call two days ago that the Pakistani Foreign Minister would meet his Israeli counterpart in Turkey." The Palestinian presidency had seemingly tried to justify the meeting through a Presidential Press Release, dated 2 September 2005, that claimed, that "any connection between a friendly state and the Israeli government would be beneficial to the national rights of our people."⁴⁹

Palestinian resistance factions opposed this normalization. The National Committee for Resisting Normalization in Palestine described the meeting as a black day in history and a shameful brand for Musharraf's government.⁵⁰

Even the Arab League had expressed opposition, and on 1 September 2005, Counselor Hisham Yusuf, the manager of 'Amr Musa's office, said that Israel had done nothing to be rewarded for.⁵¹ This strong opposition, both inside and outside Pakistan, had probably been behind the decision of the Pakistani government to link its recognition of Israel with three stipulations: the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, a Pakistani consensus on such recognition and establishment of relations with Israel, and unanimity within the OIC on recognition of Israel.⁵²

However, connections between Israel and Pakistan did not arise on impulse. The Pakistani Foreign Minister had reportedly said that Pakistan and Israel have made secret diplomatic connections for decades before Turkey's talks, and an Israeli researcher from Tel Aviv University, claimed, in a document issued in 2000, that the two countries started secret talks more than half a century ago, and that this confidentiality had enabled the Pakistani rulers to keep regular

connections with Israel, even though they overtly opposed the Hebrew state.⁵³

Shortly after the meeting of the two Foreign Ministers in Istanbul, this Pakistani-Israeli rapprochement developed. A non-official Pakistani delegation, led by Maulana Ajmal Qadri, visited Israel and met Sharon twice, though the spokesman of the Pakistani government had repeatedly denied that such a visit had ever taken place. But Qadri insisted that the Pakistani government had given him the green light, but they wanted to exploit his visit to test public reaction in Pakistan to closer and public relations with Israel.⁵⁴

On the other side, the Israeli Minister of Trade and Industry, Ehud Olmert, signed, on 12 September 2005 a decree that temporarily allowed importation from Pakistan “in the context of encouraging relations between Israel and Pakistan”, in the words of a statement issued by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁵⁵ According to the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, the Pakistani government, accepted aid offered by Israel in the aftermath of the earthquake that hit Pakistan on 8 October 2005.⁵⁶

Throughout the year 2005, the reaction of the Pakistani people to their government’s inclination towards normalization with Israel was, on the whole, violent. They organized a huge campaign that condemned the meeting of their Foreign Minister with his Israeli counterpart in Istanbul. Thousands rushed out in rampant demonstrations which dismissed this meeting as a “shameful position”, and described its date as “the black day.” Moreover, the demonstrators stuck flags and black emblems on their clothes.⁵⁷ Qazi Husain Ahmad, the *Amir* of the Pakistani *Jama’at Islami* (Association of Islam), described the meeting as “an enormous crime and a mark of disgrace for Pervez Musharraf’s government”, and added that the Pakistani people refuse and renounce Musharraf’s acts. He also said: “I disassociate myself from him before *Allah* and before the Palestinian people” and emphasized that the Pakistani government has lost all its religious, moral, and political principles as a result of Kasuri’s meeting with Shalom.⁵⁸

In response to the calls of Pakistani opposition forces, Islamic parties, students, and trade unions throughout the country, declared 9 September a day of a nation-wide strike in Pakistan to topple Pervez Musharraf’s regime.⁵⁹ In fact, there is practically no evidence that support Musharraf claim that “most Pakistani people support his policy of approaching Israel”, rather, the policy of the Pakistani regime on the issue of normalization with the Hebrew state is obviously confused.

This normalization with Pakistan, the only Muslim country, (out of more than 50 countries), that possesses nuclear weapons, opened the door for Israel to have further diplomatic relations within the Muslim world, which has been persistently and publicly rejected for more than half a century. No wonder that Israel calls Istanbul's meeting historical,⁶⁰ as it was instrumental in drawing a large Muslim country, like Pakistan, to the circle of normalization.

The Quiet Normalization with Muslim Countries:

Some Muslim countries seemingly prefer to establish quiet economic relations with Israel, while maintaining their declared official policies that are in conformity with the general policies of the OIC. Nonetheless, irrespective of the symbolic nature and limited size of this trade, such relations represent an important step to Israel.

Malaysia had admittedly been one of the most critical Muslim countries of the Israeli positions. Its former Premier, Mahathir bin Muhammad, had been, and still is, one of the most critical leaders in the Muslim world of Israeli and American policies, and he is a staunch supporter of the Palestinian issue. Moreover the current Malaysian Prime Minister, 'Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, does not, in this respect, differ from his predecessor. Nonetheless, for the past five years, Malaysia's volume of trade has been the second largest, after Turkey, of all Muslim countries. It exceeds that of Egypt and Jordan, though the Malaysian-Israeli trade indicator goes down annually, unlike that of Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan. In 2005, two international conferences, organized by civil institutions and backed by the Malaysian government, were held in Kuala Lumpur in support of the Palestinian cause. But, at the same time, the two conferences hosted activists from the Israeli "Peace Now Movement" as well as some Israeli academicians.

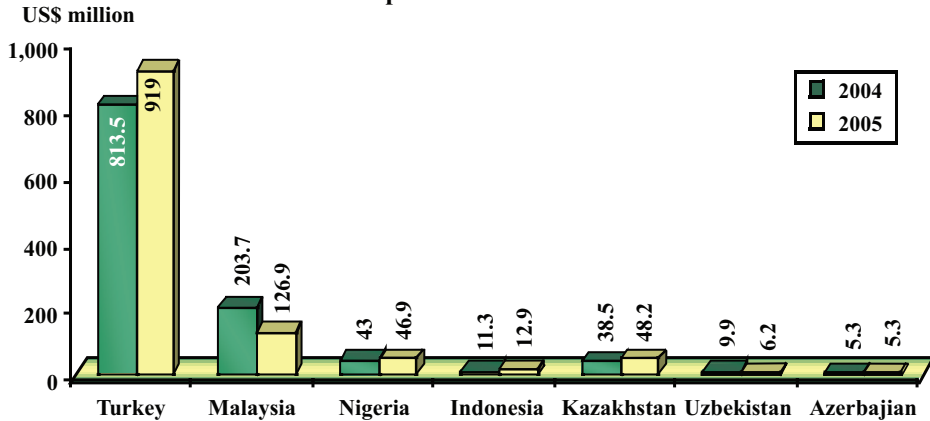
Israeli commercial relations with Nigeria and Kazakhstan have relatively improved during the last years. As for Indonesia, a similar development took place during the reign of the ex-president 'Abd al-Rahman Wahid, who is a member of Peres Peace Institution. Yet this relationship retrogressed after the latter's departure from the presidency, and the huge anti-Israeli campaign in Indonesia during *al-Aqsa Intifadah*. Moreover, the rising role of the Indonesian Islamic movement in the political process weakened Israeli ability to make inroads in Indonesia.

The following table, which is based on Israeli sources, provides a summary of economic relations between Israel and a number of Muslim countries:

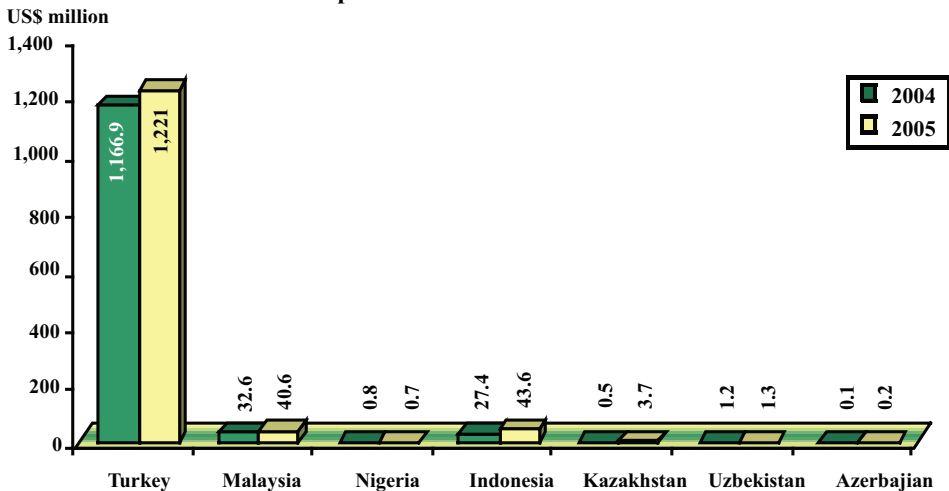
Table 2/4: The Israeli Trade with the Muslim Countries (US\$ million)⁶¹

Year	The Israeli exports				The Israeli imports			
	2005	2004	2003	2002	2005	2004	2003	2002
Turkey	919	813.5	470.3	383.1	1,221	1,166.9	951.5	813.7
Malaysia	126.9	203.7	276.8	289.7	40.6	32.6	26	17.4
Nigeria	46.9	43	28.4	33.3	0.7	0.8	5.1	0.4
Indonesia	12.9	11.3	10	9.9	43.6	27.4	32.6	56.5
Kazakhstan	48.2	38.5	28.5	27.3	3.7	0.5	1.1	1.2
Uzbekistan	6.2	9.9	6.3	38.1	1.3	1.2	1.8	3
Azerbaijan	5.3	5.3	2.9	7	0.2	0.1	0.5	0

The Israeli Exports to Muslim Countries in 2004 & 2005



The Israeli Imports from Muslim Countries in 2004 & 2005



Conclusion:

The year 2005 witnessed escalation of tension between the Muslim world and the western powers, which was motivated by the deteriorating conditions in Afghanistan and Iraq; the attacks launched by al-Qa'eda in Europe; and the oppressive measures adopted by the American administration in its war against "terrorism". However, the underlying factor for this tension has been the long and historical engagement in Palestine, during which the western countries have committed themselves to the existence and security of the Hebrew state, and provided it with multi-faceted aid. Conversely, Muslims view Israel as an "illegal entity", whose existence was forcefully imposed. This Western-Islamic engagement has been reflected on the relations between the two parties for the last half century, sometimes implicitly and at other times explicitly. The year 2005 was a striking example of this engagement. It witnessed, for instance, a drastic change in the official Turkish position towards the Palestinian issue. After a series of statements and activities, that showed an increasing commitment on the part of the Justice and Development government to the Palestinian national rights, leaders of the Turkish government found themselves, for obvious reasons, compelled to travel to the seat of the Israeli government to seek its pleasure. In spite of the worldwide uproar on the escalating "political Islam", the main demands of the United States and the European Block from Muslim rulers are not related to issues like *Hijab* (women's wearing decent clothes and head covers) and gender segregation, but to issues of foreign policy, on top of which is their position toward the Hebrew state. During 2005 it has become obvious that the Turkish relations with both Europe and America are contingent on Ankara's relations with Tel Aviv, which could determine the future of the Turkish Justice and Development government as well.

The Musharraf's government in Islamabad had also come to the same "conclusion." Its exorbitantly priced alliance with the United States against "terrorism" was not enough to persuade Washington to concede to the Pakistani demands in the post cold-war time. Rather, the Pakistani government has to overstep the national taboo of recognition and normalization with Israel, if it were to hope for an American treatment parallel to the one that it gives to India, or even directly next to it.

The Iranian case is no different from that of Turkey and Pakistan. Increasing western opposition to the Iranian nuclear program is essentially goaded by Israel's security interests, not by serious Euro-American fear. It is not difficult

to guarantee the peaceful nature of the Iranian nuclear program as this could be done through an internationally controlled monitoring system, which Iran does not reject. Yet, the focus of the problem is the insistence of the western powers to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear technology and experience that may constitute a threat to the Hebrew state in the long run. As the Iranian negotiation with the European Troika came to a deadlock and the menace to impose international sanctions on Iran increases, the Iranians have realized that their problem is essentially Israel.

The Hebrew state does not only constitute a source of danger to the neighboring Arab states, or the Arab world at large, but also to many Muslim countries. This is the underlying factor for the rapid change in the policy of the Turkish Justice and Development government towards Israel, the Pakistani political transformation on the issue of recognition of Israel, and the Euro-American increasing focus on the Iranian nuclear program. While some had expected that the 1990s Oslo Accords would open the road for consistent normalization and peaceful relations between the Hebrew state and many Muslim countries that do not directly lay within the orbit of the conflict over Palestine, the events of the year 2005 dashed these hopes and aspirations. Muslim peoples, even states, have become increasingly conscious of the tight link between their relations with the Western world and their position on the Palestinian issue.

This awareness has become noticeable in the popular demonstrations of solidarity with Palestine which flared throughout the Muslim world. It is recommended to become glaringly obvious during the coming years, either because of the aggravating crisis in Palestine, the escalating tension between the Muslim world and western forces or for the rising popularity of the current political Islamic trend inside Palestine and in various Muslim countries. But, noticeably, the pro-Palestinian popular Islamic activities have become less organized and politicized than their counterparts in the 1960s and 1970s. This is attributed to the failure of both the PLO and the PA to give due attention, since the Oslo Accords, to the popular Islamic dimension of the Palestinian issue. However, to restore the centrality of this vital factor to the Palestinian scene, assiduous actions should be taken to find new interactive channels between the Palestinian arena and different regions of the Muslim world.

Endnotes:

- 1 Dr. 'Amr Sa'dawi: Researcher of Political Science, Free Lance writer in several journals and magazines and editor of Islamic Book Review (IBR).
- 2 The Islamic Summit Conference is the highest body in the Organization. It undertakes the task of making strategies related to Islamic action and policy. It is held once every three years with the purpose of discussing issues of vital importance for the Muslim world and mapping out the Organization's policy accordingly. So far eight Conferences of Islamic Summits were held. The Conference can also be held whenever the interests of the member states require. At the convention of every session, a chairman would be elected and he holds this position till the convention of the next session.
- 3 See the final statement issued by the extraordinary third session of the Conference of the Islamic Summit at: <http://www.oic-oci.org/ex-summit/arabic/fc-ex-sum-ar.htm>
- 4 About the transgressions and threats that *al-Aqsa* Mosque was exposed to during 2004 and 2005 see: <http://www.mic-pal.info/reportdetails.asp?id=606>
- 5 *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 21 November 2005.
- 6 <http://www.pna.gov.ps/Arabic/details.asp?DocId=1742>
- 7 <http://thawra.alwehda.gov.sy/-archive.asp?FileName>
- 8 <http://news8.thdo.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/middle>
- 9 See the text of the speech of the Turkish Foreign Minister, 'Abdullah Gul, before the members of the Legislative Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Palestinian National Authority, 5 January 2005, see: <http://www.pna.gov.ps/Arabic/details.asp?DocId=1737>
- 10 Muhammad Nur al-Din, "*Al-'Ilaqat al-Turkiyyah al-Isra'iliyyah: Marhalah Jadidah?*," (Turkish – Israeli Relations: A New Stage), *Al-Sharq*, 9 January 2005.
- 11 Muhammad al-Khawli, "*Turkiyyah wa Isra'il: Tahaluf wa Tadarub al-Masalih*," (Turkey and Israel: Alignment and Divergence of interests), *Albayan*, 28 July 2005.
- 12 Soner Cagaptay, "The Turkish Prime Minister Visits Israel: Whither Turkish-Israeli Relations?," The Tharwa Project, 27 April 2005, see: http://arabic.tharwaproject.com/Main-Sec/NetWatch/NW_5_10_05/Cagaptay.ht
- 13 <http://new8.thdo.bbc.co.uk/hi/arabic/middle>
- 14 *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 2 May 2005.
- 15 *Alwafd*, 14 May 2005.
- 16 *Assafir*, 6 May 2005.
- 17 *Albayan*, 13 October 2005.
- 18 'Abd al-Zahra Al-Rikabi, "*Turkiyyah wa Isra'il: Tagdid al-Tahaluf am Taf'iluh?*," (Turkey and Israel: Renewing the Alliance or Activating it?), *al-Khaleej*, 1 January 2006.
- 19 Husni Mahali, "*Madha Ta'ni Ziarat Irdughan ila Isra'il?*," (What Are the Implications of Erdogan Visit to Israel?), *al-Mustaqbal*, 30 April 2005.
- 20 Soner Cagaptay, *op.cit.*, 27 April 2005, see: http://arabic.tharwaproject.com/Main-Sec/NetWatch/NW_5_10_05/Cagaptay.ht
- 21 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il/\fr_trade/tld.htm
- 22 Husni Mahali, "*Anqarah Tazra' Diplumasiyyin Isra'iliyyin bi Safaratiha fi Dual 'Arabiyyah wa Islamiyyah*," (Ankara Plants Israeli Diplomats in its Embassies in Arab and Islamic Countries), *al-Khaleej*, 13 September 2005.
- 23 *Al-Aman*, Beirut, 16 December 2005.
- 24 *Alayam* newspaper, Bahrain, 20 August 2005.
- 25 *Al-Mustaqbal*, 25 October 2005

- 26 *Al-Hayat*, 16 December 2005.
- 27 Ahmad al-Tahir, “*Al-’Ilaqat al-Iraniyyah al-Isra’iliyyah: Jawlah Jadidah min al-’Ida’ wa al-Tawattur*,” (Iranian – Israeli Relations: A new Round of Enmity and Tension), *Alquds*, 7 December 2005.
- 28 *Asharq Alawsat*, 17 August 2005.
- 29 *Al-Khaleej*, 27 October 2005.
- 30 Niqula A. Sayigh, “ ‘*Ala Masharif Nihayat al-’Am 2005!*,” (At the Edge’s End of 2005!), Media and Information Center: <http://www.mic-pal.info/articledetails.asp?id=2086>.
- 31 *Al-Khaleej*, 14 December 2005.
- 32 *Al-Khaleej*, 28 October 2005.
- 33 In the Israeli strategic mind there prevails a vision that Iran constitutes a major threat to Israel’s security. Hence, is Israel’s concern about Iran’s developing its nuclear program. See: Louis Rene Berse, “Israel, Iran, and Prospects for Nuclear War in the Middle East,” *Strategic Review*, Vol.21, No.2, 1993.
- 34 Ahmad al-Tahir, *op. cit.*, p.33.
- 35 *Al-Hayat*, 29 July 2005.
- 36 The isolation of Iran is considered as one of the most important features of the Israeli vision of the Iranian role in the Middle East, see: Ult Aras, “Turkish-Israeli-Iranian Relation in the Nineties: Impact on the Middle East,” *Middle East Policy*, Vol.VII, No.3, June 2000.
- 37 Ahmad al-Tahir, *op. cit.*, p.33.
- 38 <http://www.islamicsummit.org.sa/16.aspx?ID=116>
- 39 *Alghad*, 19 November 2005.
- 40 *Assafir*, 20 May 2005.
- 41 Muhammad Fayiz Farhat, “*Tatbi’ al-’Ilaqat al-Pakistaniyyah al-Isra’iliyyah: Al-Dawafi’ wa al-Ishkaliyyat*,” (Normalizing Pakistani – Israeli Relations: Incentives and Dilemmas), *al-Siyassa al-Dawliya*, Issue No.162, October 2005, p.180. (In this context an agreement was signed between Israel and the Jordan Royal Airlines to transport Israeli merchandises to Muslim countries which do not recognize Israel and have no diplomatic relations with it, including Pakistan).
- 42 As’ad ‘Abd al-Rahman, “*Al-’Ilaqat al-Pakistaniyyah al-Isra’iliyyah: Sharkh Jadid fi al-Jidar al-Diplumacy al-’Arabi*,” (Pakistani – Israeli Relations: A New Fracture in Arab Political Wall), *Alhaqa’eq* newspaper, London, 15 September 2005: <http://www.alhaqaqeq.net/defaultch.asp?action=showarticle&issueid=9secid=5&articleid=34133>
- 43 About the Turkish role, see: Khayri Mansur, “*Yulyus al-’Arabi wa Brutus al-Pakistani*,” (Arab Julius and Pakistani Brutus), *al-Khaleej*, 11 September 2005.
- 44 By the ambiguous term “diplomatic association”, Pakistan establishes diplomatic relations under the umbrella of an unfamiliar description in international relations that has no legal value, particularly if not accompanied by legal and official recognition according to internationally applied principles. Yet its major value lies primarily in its political, moral and propagandistic significance. See: Hasan Abu Talib, “*Al-Zawayat al-Arba’ lil Irtibat al-Diplomacy al-Pakistani al-Jadid ma’ Isra’il*,” (The Four Corners of the New Pakistani Diplomatic Engagement with Israel), *al-Watan* newspaper, Saudi Arabia, 8 September 2005.
- 45 Hasan al-’Attar, “*Al-Mukafa’at al-Islamiyyah wa al-’Arabiyyah lil Kayan al-Suhyuni*,” (Arab and Islamic Rewards for the Zionist Entity), *Akhbar-alkhaleej* newspaper, Bahrain,

- 27 September 2005.
- 46 Pakistan justified its step of normalizing relations with Israel as being a reward for Israel for evacuating Gaza Strip of Jewish settlements considering it a step toward ending the occupation.
- 47 Immediately after the announcement of commencing relations between Pakistan and Israel, the American Congress approved \$3 billion in aid along with the provision of advanced planes of \$1 billion and other F-16 war aircrafts to update the Pakistani air force. Nassuh al-Majali, “*Pakistan: Al-’Awn al-Amriki ‘Abra al-Bawwabah al-Isra’iliyyah*,” (Pakistan: American Aid through the Israeli Gate), *Alrai* newspaper, Amman, 21 February 2006.
- 48 *Al-Quds al-’Arabi*, 27 August 2005.
- 49 *Al-Mustaqbal*, 3 September 2005.
- 50 The Palestinian Information Center, 2 September 2005:
http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/palestoday/dailynews/2005/sep059_1/details4.htm#1
- 51 Site of IslamOnline, 1 September 2005.
- 52 *Al-Khaleej*, 2 June 2005.
- 53 *Al-Watan* newspaper , Doha (Qatar), 7 September 2005
- 54 *Albayan*, 19 November 2005, quoted from the Pakistani newspaper: *Nation*.
- 55 *Alghad*, 13 September 2005.
- 56 *Haaretz*, 15 October 2005: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/634932.html>
- 57 Jamal Mazlum, “*Al-’Ilaqat al-Pakistaniyyah - al-Isra’iliyyah: Al-Ab’ad al-’Askariyyah*,” (The Military Dimensions of the Pakistani Israeli Relations), *al-Siyassa al-Dawliya*, Issue No.162, October 2005, p.182.
- 58 *Amir* of the Pakistani *Jama’at Islami* (Association of Islam) in an interview with The Palestinian Information Center:
<http://www.palestine-info.info/arabic/palestoday/reports/report2005/ameer.htm>
- 59 Fahmi Huwaydi, “*Ayna al-Maslahah fi al-Tatbi’ al-Aan..?*,” (Where is the Benefit of Normalization Now..?), *Asharq Alawsat*, 28 September 2005.
- 60 The Turkish State Minister, Mehmet Aydin, who arranged and sponsored the Pakistani-Israeli meeting, came out to say that his country has a lot of similar ideas that he considered to be within the Turkish obligation to promote dialogue between cultures and religions. See: *al-Hayat*, 10 September 2005.
- 61 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics: http://www.cbs.gov.il/fr_trade/td1.htm

Chapter Five

The Palestinian Issue and the International Setting

The Palestinian Issue and the International Setting¹

Introduction: The international scene in 2005, in relation to the Palestinian issue, was not different from that of the post *Intifadah* years and the events of 11 September 2001. America's hegemony continued under the guise of the so-called "anti-terrorism" campaigns, globalization policies, and the attempts to redraw the map of the region in accordance with the standards and interests of America and Israel. Sharon and the Israeli government have succeeded in dragging the international community to be preoccupied with the unilateral disengagement, and the withdrawal from Gaza Strip (GS). In this way, they can paralyze the Road Map project adopted by the Quartet Committee (USA, European Union, Russia, and the UN). America supported the unilateral disengagement, and assured the Judaic nature of Israel. Moreover, a new dimension has emerged in the American policy, namely the support of Israeli control in the settlements of the West Bank (WB), which contradicts "international legitimacy".

Meanwhile the United States is sinking in the Iraqi quagmire. Its failure to face "terrorism", and the deformation of its international image encouraged several countries to pursue a kind of independent policies, or, at least, to be less submissive to the USA. This is highlighted in the attitude of Russia and some European countries, like Spain. However, the general attitude of the politically and economically effective great powers continued to be pragmatic, and based on the vested interests of each country.

Europeans have tried to play a more effective role in the settlement process, which is evident in their broadminded engagement with Hamas, and their economic support to the Palestinian Authority (PA). The Europeans were chosen as a third party to supervise the boundary paths of GS, but Israel insisted on restricting their role, and succeeded in mitigating and diminishing the impact of the London Conference on the Palestinian issue. Moreover, it seems that the political, economic and security interests, of India and China, particularly the increase in their trade with Israel, has impeded the ability of these two gigantic countries to pursue their traditional support to the Palestinian issue.

The United States of America:

The failure of 15 July 2000 Camp David Summit, that was held during the era of Clinton, led to a series of changes in the American policy towards the Palestinian issue and the end of the conflict, and in the behavior of the American policy-makers towards the whole peace process. The Clinton's administration squarely blamed the Palestinian side for this failure,² which others attributed it to the non-participation of the other international powers, or to the then ambiguity of the American priorities towards the conflict in this region.

The beginning of the *Intifadah* coincided with the election of the new administration of George W. Bush, who, as well as the Americans public at large, considered the *Intifadah* nothing but an expression of a new and violent behavior on the part of the Palestinians that was triggered by the failure of the Camp David Summit.³ The *Intifadah* had, in fact, constituted a turning point in the international conceptions towards the peace process, be it the two main parties concerned, the Palestinians and the Israelis, or those two powers that are interested in the struggle and the negotiations, headed by the USA, the European Union, and the UN. From the beginning, the USA followed the policy of "hands off" towards the *Intifadah*, and gave the Israeli government a carte blanche to adopt a policy of suppression against the Palestinians. Moreover, the accession of Sharon to the premiership led to another drastic change in the course of the *Intifadah*, as he dealt with it in a cruel and suppressive manner. This was clearly seen in his invasion of Palestinian cities and the siege of the Palestinian leadership in its headquarters in Ramallah.

The White House, within its new policies, expected that the Israeli military forces would force the Palestinians to accept what they refused in Camp David. This means that the American silence at the beginning of the *Intifadah* was by no means withdrawal from their hegemony on the region, but rather a deliberate means to push the two parties, the Palestinians and the Israelis, into a deadlock that would convince Israel of its inability to get all that it wanted by force, and the Palestinians that time and force will not serve their cause. This American silence, coupled with the Israeli military supremacy, indicated that the Bush administration was extremely biased towards Israel.

However, the events of 11 September affected American policy towards the Palestinian issue as shown below:

1. The new American strategy aims at forming an international coalition against al-Qa'eda, hence is its strive to persuade Arab and Islamic

countries to join this coalition that would give it more legitimacy.

2. There is an American attempt to exhibit a moderate policy towards the Palestinian issue, which is evident in the declaration of President George W. Bush of the necessity of establishing a viable independent Palestinian state.⁴
3. Attempts are made to give Europeans and the UN a role in the Arab-Israeli dispute. Though admittedly rather ineffective, this role puts an end to the exclusive American control of the peace process in the Middle East.

The US exploited the international sympathy that it had from various governments and peoples across the world after 11 September to call for a concerted international effort, to tighten the grip on the Palestinian resistance groups. In coordination with the Israelis, this campaign was soon extended to include the leader of the PA, Yasir 'Arafat. However, this extremely hostile American policy towards the PA was not unanimously accepted internationally, especially by the European Union, which declined to boycott the President of the PA. However, European policies remained largely ineffective, and were restricted to the diplomatic field.

The USA and the Road Map: The Road Map is different from what had been suggested previously to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It concentrated on parallelism, not succession, and sets a certain time frame for its implementation. Finally, the plan stipulated that it should end in establishing an independent and viable Palestinian state. These visions came as a result of many factors amongst which are:

First: The war against Iraq in which the USA reverted to the same mentality and mechanism that it used in its war against Afghanistan. However, the USA had then to appear to be more objective, particularly, as it has been popularly viewed as the representative of Israel who cares for nothing except its narrow interests. To give its war in Iraq an international legitimacy, America reverted to the policy of wide collation in order to secure international support, including that of Arab and Islamic countries, especially after facing difficulties in obtaining legitimacy from the UN.

Second: The practical developments in Palestine came after a series of American attempts, called Mini Plans, like Mitchell's report, Tenet's negotiations, and Anthony Zinni's visits. These attempts were patterned after America's classic handling of the Palestinian issue, i.e., stopping violence on both sides,

and return to the negotiation table. But this was not a sufficient response to the new realities that had taken place after the outbreak of the *Intifadah*. Thus, the Road Map came as a comprehensive solution that had a clear time limit and an ultimate aim, i.e., the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.

Third: The participation of the UN, Russia, and the EU in the peace process, with, of course, the USA. This is now known as the Quartet Committee.

However, a thorough analysis of the Road Map reveals that it did not come with anything new. On the contrary, it aborted all the previous achievements. This plan was a compliment to Russia, Europe and the UN, who were considered as sponsors of the peace process.⁵ By this approach, America had nominally given up its previous monopoly of the issue which prevented the participation of other powers. However though this plan represents, on the whole, the new American attitude in the region, it is important to mention that, the American and Israeli interests in Iraq were much interrelated.⁶ The Road Map is not an independent measure that may achieve peace; but is essentially an outcome of regional developments.

The Road Map opened the issue of reform of the PA. However, the aim is not reform per se, but to force the PA to carry out the part related to security. The USA tried to do so through applying pressure on Palestinian leaders, especially the Palestinian President, Yasir ‘Arafat. The real aim of the Road Map was lost, and it trod on the steps of previous plans by calling the Palestinians to fulfill their obligations, while ignoring the brutal policy of Israel that makes it impossible to achieve peace in the region. This was evident when Mahmud ‘Abbas (Abu Mazin), assumed the premiership in response to the calls for reform of the PA, and the fulfillment of its security obligations. However, the Israeli reaction to a Palestinian offer of an armistice was the continuation of its assaults, and demands that the Palestinians should uproot the so-called “terrorism” and “terrorist movements”.

The USA and the Concept of Security: On this premises, that had crystallized in less than a decade, the international scene for the year 2005 had been formulated, which has its effect on the Palestinian issue. What distinguishes the recent period is the involvement of multi-international powers, though the USA remain to have the lion’s share in the international arena,⁷ particularly with regard to the international political dynamics and their impact on the Palestinian issue.

The new concepts of security, that the world is experiencing today, are a logical outcome of the recent changes and effects of globalization, since no country can be isolated from this universal milieu. Influencing the international status quo has no longer been confined to the national resources of a given state. So, there appeared some new concepts concerning security such as Human Security, World Security,⁸ Comprehensive Security,⁹ Mutual Security,¹⁰ and Security Partnership.¹¹ These changes, which are largely imposed by the USA, made the concept of security transcend the national borders of a state. They are also considered to be among the most important international factors which affected the Arab-Israeli conflict since the beginning of 2005. The developments in Arab-Israeli relations, represented in the Israeli withdrawal from GS, the new suggestions to withdraw from the WB, and the new program of the Kadima Party, cannot therefore be understood without reflecting on the changes in the American concept of security.

This factor plays an important role in determining the future of the Palestinian-Israeli relations. As for Israel, it superseded what may be called “*First Israel*” (Israel Phase One), which was based on establishing its existence. Then it turned to “*Second Israel*” (Israel Phase Two), which is based on the important role that Israel should play in the region. This cannot be achieved unless other countries acknowledge the distinguished role of Israel in the region. Thus, Israel must convince the neighboring countries that it had occupied what it wanted in the WB. If this is realized, then Israel will overcome the great internal demographic problem. As for Palestine, this factor plays an important role, particularly when we consider the geographic, or economic, potentialities that the WB and GS need to have in order to build an independent state. Having looked at the regional milieu of this state, it seems that Israel is the only state capable of making the project of the Palestinian state successful. This will lead to a new kind of occupation that has been unimaginable until now. Thus, the outcomes of Israeli relations with Muslim countries after its withdrawal from GS can now be grasped.

One of the most important changes in the past year is the failure of the American policy in the war against “terrorism”. The inability of America to fulfill its promise of achieving democracy, which was the *raison d’etre* for waging its war against Iraq and toppling Saddam Husayn, led to drastic changes not only in the Middle East but throughout the world. This was evident when many countries around the world expressed their dissatisfaction with the American occupation

of Iraq. Later, those countries called for amending the international system, in a manner that gives the UN a more effective role in international affairs. Thus, the American theory has failed to make any real change. Moreover, the extension of the scope of war against “terrorism” to comprise European countries urged some European governments to oppose American policy, especially after the shameful scandals of Abu Ghreib and Guantanamo prisons. All of this helped to undermine the American position, and curtail its central role in leading the world.

The USA and the Palestinian Political Status:

The dynamics of 2005 began with the departure of the historical President of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO); Yasir ‘Arafat, which embarrassed the American administration, who kept maintaining that his absolute monopoly of power was the stumbling block to the peace process. This required Washington to work on two fronts, first, to pursue the peace process, and, second, to deal with the bi-products of the events in Palestine (the elections and the participation of Hamas in the legislative elections) after the death of Yasir ‘Arafat.

America was bound to move to establish its claim that ‘Arafat was the problem, and that his absence was the key to the solution. This is actually what it did. Immediately after ‘Arafat’s demise, the Bush administration declared that the time was opportune for radical reform in the institutions and policies of the PA, which is a pre-requisite to achieve progress in the peace process. America increased its effort in the region in a salient way, particularly after the victory of Abu Mazin, who is known for his opposition to the *Intifadah*, or, to be precise, to its militarism. During a session of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Senate, on 18 January 2005, the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, expressed her satisfaction with the “fair” presidential elections.¹² As a practical demonstration of this satisfaction, she announced during her visit to Ramallah, on 7 February 2005, the appointment of an American general to keep an eye on the situation in the WB, GS and Israel. She also declared that \$40 million will be extended to support the efforts of reforms and security.¹³ On the other hand, Bush stated that his country was absolutely committed to the Road Map, and that the independent Palestinian state must be set up during his reign.¹⁴

Mahmud ‘Abbas was received by President Bush in the White House twice in

2005, in May and October. But these visits failed to persuade Israel to implement its obligations in the Road Map. On the contrary, they were determined to apply pressure on the Palestinians to stop what the Israelis called “terrorism”. Consequently, American financial support and praise for Abu Mazin was not for free; it was a prelude to ask for “security reforms”. This, in essence, means to quell the Palestinian resistance movements, and to undertake political reform that guarantees the realization of the American vision through some misleading slogans, like fight against corruption, reform of the educational curricula, and the spread of democracy. The real objective behind these slogans is to impose American values and standards on the Palestinian people.

The application of these administrative, political, and judicial reforms dragged on, whereas security reform took a different track. Abu Mazin hoped to persuade the Palestinian resistance movements to declare a truce, and his efforts in this respect culminated in a meeting attended by all Palestinian groups in Cairo. But this way of handling the security issue was unacceptable to America and Israel because it indirectly acknowledged the Palestinian right of resistance, a development that was completely incompatible with the American position towards these so-called “terrorist” organizations, which should not be negotiated with, but had to be suppressed and their infrastructure crushed. However, America was encountered with two other developments:

1. The unilateral disengagement plan.
2. Hamas’ declaration of participation in the legislative elections.

The unilateral disengagement plan was out of the context of the peace process, and clashed in one way or another with the American plan on the issue of Palestine. While the US has been trying to give the new Palestinian leadership a chance to prove its worth, the disengagement plan frustrated this accomplishment. Moreover, the disagreement of Israel to associate this disengagement with the Road Map embarrassed the USA. But, as usual, America adjusted itself to the Israeli agenda; rather than exerting real pressure on it to abide by the decisions of the UN, and the “international legitimacy”. So, the USA concentrated on relating the two positions, and considered the disengagement a step in the peace process.¹⁵

In a joint press conference with Sharon in Washington on 14 April 2004, Bush announced America’s formal support of the disengagement plan. Contrary to America’s formal attitude towards the Israeli settlements in the WB and

GS and to international law, Bush declared America's prior commitment to maintain the security of Israel and its Jewish characteristic. He also confirmed that Israel could retain its hegemony over the settlements in the WB. He added that "the new developments on the ground, including the existence of the main settlements, made it unlikely that Palestinian-Israeli negotiations would end in a complete return to the 1949 Truce Line." Having encouraged Israel to continue implementing the disengagement plan, America had, in fact, abandoned its traditional policies concerning the settlements. During her tour in the Middle East in June 2005, Condoleezza Rice said that there were many realities on the ground that must be taken into account when dealing with the peace process, in reference to the settlements in the WB.¹⁶ Thus, America concentrated on criticizing Israeli setting up of "illegal settlements",¹⁷ which implicitly meant that it could keep what may be called "legal settlements" in Palestine in future.

The USA played an important role in facilitating the implementation of the disengagement plan, and was also instrumental in the conclusion of the Agreement of the Passages of GS in November 2005. The latter was under the auspices of Rice herself.

The other development, which is no less important than the disengagement plan, was the relationship with Hamas. Though classified as a "terrorist" organization by America, Hamas was bound to play a major role in political decision-making in Palestine, either through its ability to form a Palestinian government, or as a strong opposition. Hence is the American controversy on how to deal with Hamas, for the central question here is: When will Hamas be a full-fledged political organization? Irrespective of the confused American position towards Hamas, the Palestinian reality shows that Hamas has become a major player in the issues of peace and war on the Palestinian land. No democratic process that excludes Hamas from being a main political party can materialize. America has thus been once more engaged with the crucial question, what are the best ways and means to undermine the role of Hamas?¹⁸

Meanwhile, 339 American Senators signed a petition that asked President George Bush to prevent Hamas from participating in the legislative elections, if it refused to disarm. 71 Senators and 268 members of Parliament signed a message, that called Bush to force the PA to implement the disarmament of the Palestinian groups concurrently with the withdrawal from GS, and before the elections.¹⁹

On 18 February 2005, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy published the Presidential Study Group Report, entitled: “*Security, Reform, and Peace: The Three Pillars of US Strategy in the Middle East.*” The fifty three members of this Group, who belonged to both the Republican and the Democratic Parties, ratified this Report. The Presidential Committee for this Group included many famous figures; Madeleine Albright, Samuel Burger, Alexander Haig, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Robert McFarlane, and James Woolsey. This Report sought to formulate a plan for the second presidential term of George Bush. It also called for adding Hamas and Hizbullah to the list of “terrorist organizations”, and to target their financial sources and military infrastructure. The Report advised that the aim of the USA should be to achieve progress in the direction of a solution based on two states. This could be carried out successfully by concentrating on three basic issues: to support Israel in carrying out the disengagement plan, to support Palestinian attempts to fill the political vacuum created by the death of ‘Arafat. This should be done through the setting up of representative, legal, and supervisory institutions, and by guiding the efforts of the major regional and international sponsors of the PA to constitute an accountable and transparent administration to replace the Israeli military occupation, and be responsible for achieving peace. The Report also called for rejecting any new peace strategies.

All the attempts to isolate Hamas failed. Its acceptance of a truce, and strong performance in the municipal elections as well as Abu Mazin insistence on Hamas’ participation in the political process persuaded the American administration to allow the Organization to participate in the legislative elections in an attempt to absorb it, or restrict it, politically. On 21 October 2005, America declared that it would not compel the PA to prevent Hamas from participating in the next legislative elections.²⁰

The EU and the European Countries:

The year 2005 did not witness any major changes in European policy on the Palestinian issue. Though more flexible and courteous to Palestinians and Arabs concerns, compared to the USA, the Europeans did not apply any pressure on Israel to stop its suppressive practices, annexation of Palestinian lands and building of the Separation Wall. They continued to include Hamas in the list of “terrorist organizations”, even though it represents a wide sector of the Palestinians. However, Israel has faced increasing criticism from the European public and academicians, who viewed it a threat to world peace.

The European political map experienced important developments during the year 2005. The success of the Labor Socialist Party in the Spanish elections on 14 March 2005 weakened the political relations between America and Spain, as seen in the withdrawal of Spanish forces from Iraq, and the call of the new Spanish government for the participation of Hamas in the legislative elections.²¹ On the other hand, the success of the Christian Democratic Party, led by Angela Merkel, in the German elections on 18 September 2005, and her attempts to cultivate closer relations with America strengthen the latter's hand in the European Union. Meanwhile, the British Premier Tony Blair faced decline in his popularity and that of the Labor Party in the parliamentary elections held on 5 May 2005. In spite of its overall victory, the Party's majority shrank by more than 100 seats, presumably because of Blair's foreign policy, especially in Iraq and Palestine, and his strong relations with the American administration.

Although the history of Europe is full with positions that affected the Palestinian issue, these positions and the degree of their impact had changed over time. The stance of Europe was highlighted in the Florence statement of June 1996, where the European group called for enhancing the peace process and setting up a viable Palestinian state side by side with the Israeli state.²² This European attitude on the Palestinian issue was triggered by some internal and external limitations of which the most important are:

- One can not claim that the European Union has thus far reached a unified foreign policy, which could express a distinguish attitude.²³ It faced the problem of standardizing the constitution as well as foreign and defense policies. It is still divided into two fronts, one under the leadership of Britain, and the other under the leadership of France.
- The admission of ten new countries into the EU increased the degree of this division. Having strong relations with the USA, the affiliation of these countries to the EU strengthened Britain's position in the Union, and largely harmonized the foreign policy of the EU with that of the US. A discussing of the role of the EU as a whole, or each of its countries separately, may lead to the following observations:
 1. European policy on the Palestinian issue was characterized, especially since the beginning of 2005, with a kind of objectivity and neutrality. European countries refused to adopt the Israeli point of view in some issues, like the Separation Wall, Israeli settlements, and several other

issues. Cecile Pozzo di Borgo, the spokeswoman of the French Foreign Ministry, declared that the building of settlements and the Separation Wall will affect the outcome of the final negotiations, which are supposed to discuss the issue of settlements.²⁴

The French and British are in agreement on refusing the building of the Wall.²⁵ The British position can be summed up in an article that Blair gave to the ABC, and was published in the Emirate newspaper, *Albayan*, on 18 March 2005. Tony Blair detailed his position towards the Palestinian issue in the following points:

First, abiding by the idea of setting up two states, as spelled out in the Road Map, and the importance of the existence of an American administration which is ready to implement this condition.

Second, calling for international support that guarantees the Palestinians a political, economic, and security infrastructure to establish their viable and independent state.

Third, supporting Israeli withdrawals, that takes into account the security of Israel, and to open the door for GS trade through an airport and a harbor.

Fourth, continuing the peace process on the basis of the Road Map.²⁶

Thus, all in all, the British position remains to be very close to that of America, though it is distinguished by Britain's clear ability to perceive the Palestinian and Arab concerns, which it acquired from its wide political and colonial experience in the region.

2. Though there is not much difference between the American and the European attitudes towards the Palestinian issue, the latter have independent views on certain crucial issues such the Wall, settlements, and Hamas. The Europeans expressed their desire to allow the participation of Hamas in the political life as a first step to implement its disarmament and recognition of the Israeli state.²⁷ This is not in line with the American position that insists on Hamas' disarmament prior to participation. Europe went a step further by initiating direct communication with Hamas, and informed America about the developments which resulted from these communications.²⁸ In addition, the European position of the Separation Wall was described by the British Minister, Kim Howells, as odious and shameful.²⁹
3. The EU, along with European governments, tried to play a more effective role, especially after the disengagement plan. It depended on the Arabs,

and specifically the Palestinians, to give it the chance to do so.

The European attitude towards the Palestinian resistance was also less tense than its American counterpart. The chair of the Development Committee of the EU, Luisa Morgantini, confirmed the right of the Palestinians to resist the occupation, but without killing civilians.³⁰ Although the EU classified Hamas as a “terrorist” group, some European countries saw no fault in contacting it, especially after the municipal elections. They organized the Beirut meeting, which was held on 21 and 22 March 2005, between Hamas and some American and European dignitaries. Alistair Krock, a retired British security official, was the mastermind of this gathering.³¹

As argued above, the European handling of the Palestinian issue was affected by some recent changes that helped in reshaping the European role in the region, such as its membership in the Quartet Committee and its supervision over the Road Map plan. The new role of Europe gave it a more effective role in the region. Thus, since the implementation of the disengagement plan, the EU has begun to play an effective role in the Palestinian issue. It adopted some positions that are considered by Israel to be biased towards the Palestinians of which:

1. The EU emphasized that the disengagement should be connected to the Road Map.³² The EU asked, through a declaration by its special envoy, for a further extension of GS withdrawal to include settlements in the WB on condition that this be through Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, and not by a unilateral act.³³
2. The EU considered that economic developments in GS will not be possible within the existing Israel policies that aim at turning GS into a huge prison.³⁴
3. The necessity of setting up a viable and independent Palestinian state that can be achieved through offering economic support to implement projects in GS and the WB. The European Commission had actually suggested a strategic plan to set up such an economically and politically independent state. In 2005, the EU offered \$295 million, most of which was used to implement developmental projects, while some European countries (an individual basis) offered \$300 million. Germany offered the largest of this sum, \$56 million, followed by Britain, \$50 million. The EU promised to double the aid from 250 million to 500 million euros, if real development becomes apparent.³⁵

4. The EU viewed the Israeli policy of expansion of settlements as a violation of the Road Map, and a predicament to the peace process. European experts, in charge of this mission on behalf of the European Parliament, confirmed this position in their reports. The spokesman for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Herve Ladsu, declared that the continuation of the Israeli settlements clashed with the provisions of the Road Map, that ordered their freeze. He added that the building of new settlements tantamounted to a prior determination of the outcome of the final negotiations.³⁶

Britain tried to play a more effective role in the peace process by an invitation to hold a Conference in London to discuss the Palestinian issue. But Israel did not hesitate to boycott this step, lest it faces any kind of pressure. It even tried to undermine the European role in the settlement process. However, the Conference was held on 1 March 2005. The UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, and other foreign ministers from more than twenty countries attended.³⁷ The final communique stressed upon the necessity of the reform of the PA, ending Palestinian attacks and implementing the disarmament of the Palestinian groups, and it offered more economic support to the PA.³⁸

The EU proved its effectiveness on the Palestinian issue, when both the Israeli and Palestinian sides agreed to have European supervisors on the passages between GS and Egypt.

It is expected that the European role in the Arab-Israeli conflict may increase in the future. This is because of the failure of American policy in the region, and the increasing Russian role there. But what may weaken this EU role is the strong relationship between the new German government and America, along with the German's cool relationship with its traditional European ally, France.

Russia: During the year 2005, Russia exhibited a desire to restore its previous effective role on the Palestinian issue, Middle Eastern issues and international affairs. Its tangible success in the areas of economic and internal security was most useful in this direction. In a reception held in honor of the Palestinian Ambassador to Moscow, Khayri al-'Urudi, Russia emphasized its strong relationship with Palestine.³⁹ The Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Alexander Sultanov, commended the developing Russian-Palestinian relations, and the constructive dialogue between the two countries. He also referred to his talks with President 'Abbas on 16 April 2005 in which the two leaders discussed

strengthening the Palestinian-Russian economic relations.⁴⁰

To activate the role of his country in the peace process, the Russian President, Vladimir Putin, proposed during his visit to Egypt on 27 April 2005, to hold an international conference in Moscow to discuss the peace process in the Middle East. But the Israeli government rejected this or any other international interference in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, except, of course, that of America.⁴¹ The US responded to this suggestion with great indifference as could be seen in the remark of Secretary Rice, who mentioned that they should concentrate on what they have, that is to make sure that the withdrawal from GS will be successful, and then they may think of the next necessary steps.⁴² This strong position forced Russia to temporarily retreat from the idea of the conference.⁴³ However, Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, reiterated the idea on 13 October 2005,⁴⁴ but once more Israel gave a deaf ear.

Russia continued to support the Quartet Committee, and President Putin promised its special envoy, James Wolfensohn, that Russia would offer its complete, direct, and clear support to the Committee.⁴⁵ Russian also continued its support to the Road Map plan which had already been adopted by the Committee. Although it welcomed the Israeli withdrawal from GS, Russia opposed unilateral solutions as well as the Israeli settlements in the WB and the erection of the Separation Wall. This was emphasized by the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, and the spokesman of the Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mikhail Kamynin.⁴⁶

In a comment on the Israeli withdrawal from GS, Sergey Lavrov emphasized the importance of including all aspects in this process in order to ensure a secured and continuous life in GS. He also maintained that the Palestinians and the Russians positions were consistent with each other in their demand not to prolong the implementation of the decisions of the UN which are related to the Road Map, including the negotiations of the final settlement, which should be inclusive for all the avenues of a peaceful settlement in the region.⁴⁷

On the other hand, the Russians were keen to maintain good and balanced relations with Israel. Putin, during his visit to Israel on 28 April 2005, informed Sharon that he could rely on Russia to be Israel's strategic ally on all matters related to security and "terrorism". He assured the Israeli leaders that the international conference that he suggested is on the level of experts not presidents. Putin indicated that his country was keen to maintain the security of

Israel, and as long as he is in power, no step that threatens the Jewish state will be taken.⁴⁸

In 2005, the Russian government dismissed the Rabbi of Moscow because of doubts that he was a spy of the Mossad (Israel's Secret Security Agency). But this did not affect Russian-Israeli relations.⁴⁹ The year 2005 also witnessed an increase in trade between Israel and Russia, which was a step towards the strengthening of the relations between the two countries.⁵⁰ According to official Israeli statistics for the year 2005, the Israeli exports to Russia were estimated at \$415 million & 800,000, while its imports from Russia totaled \$1,055 million & 700,000 (see table 5/2).⁵¹

China: China was one of the first countries to open a consulate for the PLO in Beijing, and subsequently it appointed an Ambassador in Palestine. However, it gradually moderated its strict anti-Israel attitude during the last twenty years, and adopted a policy that was largely based on maintaining its interests, especially in the economic field. China continued its "calculated" support of the Palestinian cause, but in a much more sympathetic manner than the other major powers.

The Chinese Prime Minister, Wen Jiabao, emphasized after his meeting with the Palestinian President, Mahmud 'Abbas, who visited China on 17 May 2005, the importance of strengthening the political and economic relations with the PA. During this visit, China and the PA signed five agreements, of which one was for technical and economic cooperation.⁵²

Moreover, the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs visited President 'Abbas in his headquarters in Ramallah on 20 June 2005, where he maintained that the main objectives of his visit were to promote the peace process and the Chinese cooperation with the countries in the region. The Chinese Minister signed with his Palestinian counterpart an agreement in which the Chinese government undertook to construct a new building for the Palestinian Foreign Ministry in Ramallah. China also offered \$7 million to train Palestinian diplomats in Beijing, and another \$5 million to establish a large and fully equipped hospital, and to train 80 Palestinian cadres in various fields. In addition, it decided to study a new project to set up a Palestinian-Chinese industrial zone in Northern GS.⁵³ It offered an urgent aid of \$300,000 to the victims of the Israeli invasion of Rafah and another \$1 million & 500,000 to support the Palestinian legislative

elections.⁵⁴ China also continued its support to the Palestinians, in the fields of security and communication.⁵⁵

On the other hand, Amos Yudan, the manager of one of the most important companies in Israel, was the first Israeli to initiate trade exchange with China in 1981, though this was through the backdoors due to the then sensitive political conditions. He presented a feasibility study on the prospects of trade with the huge Chinese market, which was endorsed and adopted by the Israeli government in 1987.⁵⁶

The Israeli-Chinese military cooperation forms the main, but obscure, part of the trade exchanged between the two sides. This importance is derived from the fact that Israel is the back gate for transferring into China the Western and American weapon technology and military industry. Moreover, this kind of trade is important for the Israeli economy, though it annoys America.

According to two reports, published at the end of the year 2004, by the Pentagon and the American Congress, Israel was the second source of weapons to China after Russia, and the military trade between the two countries was estimated at more than a billion dollars per year. Moreover, European press reported that Israel sells weapons to China by an estimated amount of \$1,250 million every year. But Israel denied these reports and figures, and claimed that it had sold China defensive weapons only, and for not more than \$35 million.⁵⁷

One of the deals concluded between Israel and China at the beginning of 2005 included a contract by which Israel developed pilotless planes, called “Harpy Killer”, that had already been sold to China.⁵⁸ The two countries also agreed to cooperate to develop a sea missile similar to the Israeli Gabriel sea-to-sea missile, and to produce the air-fighter F-10. Israel also offered China the technology to produce an air-to-air missile, which, in effect, is an imitation of the American rocket named “Sidewinder.”⁵⁹

In an attempt to absorb the American anger, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Silvan Shalom, apologized, in an interview with the Israeli press on 19 June 2005, to the US about any Israeli weapon deals that might have effected American national security. Moreover, Minister Mofaz asked 50 Israeli companies to undertake to submit official requests to the Ministry before traveling to China.⁶⁰

As for non-military commercial activities, it is important to note an Israeli trade delegation, under the leadership of Ehud Olmert, the Israeli Deputy Premier and Minister of Industry, that visited China in 2003 to increase Israeli exports to this country; from \$600 million in 2003 to about \$2 billion at the

beginning of 2005. Trade between the two countries increased about thirty times more than what it has been two decades ago when commercial transactions were initiated between the two countries. The main sectors of trade between China and Israel, in addition to the military sector, are: advanced technology, security, cars, agricultural products, plastic industries, and air conditioning. Israel also strives to promote its advanced technological products (wireless communication, medical apparatus, computers, information programs, and agricultural techniques of production) that are being met with interest in the Chinese market.⁶¹

On 25 November 2004, China and Israel signed a protocol of financial and economic cooperation, which allowed long-term financial credit to Chinese companies when they import Israeli products. These facilities were guaranteed by the government owned Israeli Insurance Company for Foreign Trade.⁶²

According to the official Israeli statistics for the year 2005, Israeli exports to China were estimated at \$743 million & 200,000, while imports were about \$1,888 million & 200,000 (see table 5/2). This reflects a noticeable increase in the commercial relations and mutual interests shared by the two countries.⁶³

All this indicate that the trade exchanged between Israel and China would substantially develop as a result of this industrial cooperation, especially in the military field. In addition, is the huge potential of Chinese investment in the field of agriculture, which is looking for Israeli agricultural techniques.

India: India was a traditional supporter of the Palestinian cause. This had been seen in the strong support offered to this cause by the Congress Party, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and others, and in India's refusal to recognize Israel. However, the subsequent departure of many Arab countries from their previous ideological commitment to the Palestinian, and the acceptance of the PLO to the principle of negotiations and peaceful settlement triggered a pragmatic change in the Indian policy towards the Palestinian conflict that served its interest with both parties, the Arabs and Israel.

Indian interests in the region were threefold: Security concerns, economic interests and the Indian immigrants and employees, especially in the Gulf region, which is related to the economic aspect. The security interests dictated India's drive to benefit from the military expertise of Israel in order to find a strong balance, or, precisely, "a balance of terror", with its neighboring arch

rival, Pakistan. The desire of India to strengthen its relations with America was another factor for its new strive to befriend Israel, as it is very well known that Israel is an important factor in the formulation of American foreign policy. However, on the other hand, India wanted to have strong relationship with the Arab countries, as their region, especially the Suez Canal, constitutes an important commercial route for India. Besides, there are 3 million & 500,000 Indian workers⁶⁴ in the Arab region who represents a very important source of revenue to the Indian economy, while 60% of India's oil is imported from Arab countries.⁶⁵ Consequently, India is careful to be balanced in its dealings with the Palestinian issue in order not to harm any of its own interest with either side.

Within this context, India supported in September 2005 the Israeli withdrawal from GS and expressed its hope that it, coupled with that from the WB, would lead to the establishment of a real independent Palestinian state. The Indian Foreign Ministry declared in a formal statement, on 12 September in New Delhi, that India welcomed the Israeli step as a positive and good beginning to find a compromised solution. The statement added that this step should be exploited by the parties concerned to achieve progress in the peace talks, which would lead, in a suitable time, to the establishment of a recognized, independent and secured Palestinian state living side by side with Israel.⁶⁶

Like China, India tried to develop its economic and military relations with Israel. According to official Israeli statistics for the year 2005, India's imports from Israel were estimated at \$1,224 million & 200,000, while its exports to Israel amounted to \$1,276 million & 300,000.⁶⁷ Other sources claim that the diamond trade formed half of the trade exchanged between the two countries, which multiplied by ten times since formal diplomatic relations were established between the two countries in 1992.⁶⁸

In the year 2005, the Israeli Military Industries (IMI) won a contract, estimated at \$140 million, to set up 5 factories in Bihar (India) to produce chemical explosives. Other reports spoke of two deals; a \$12 million one to supply India with advanced tank missiles, and a second \$40 million deal to help the Indian army develop its rocket industry.⁶⁹

In November 2005, the Indian News Agency reported (according to Israeli sources) that Israel will launch, after a year, a spy satellite from the space center "Station Down" in India in order to strengthen the relations between the two countries.⁷⁰ While Pakistan anxiously followed this Indian-Israeli military co-operation, the Pakistani newspaper *Daily Times* maintained that India was

preparing to buy fifty pilotless spy planes from Israel for \$220 million.⁷¹

No doubt Israel tries to invest its military influence in the US to build strong relations with India, taking into account that this country is expected to be one of the greatest world powers in the next 20 years. In this drive, Israel benefits from Arab weakness and disunity, and plays on their support and sympathy with Pakistan, the traditional “enemy” of India.

Japan: It is difficult to isolate the policies and positions of Japan in the region from those of the European countries and the USA. Meanwhile Japan concentrates on its commercial and economic interests, and does not thus far aspire to play an active political role. Its economy is the second largest economy in the world, and it is one of the donor countries that support the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, both politically and financially. Its aid to the Palestinians is estimated at \$760 million since the Oslo Accord,⁷² and the relations between the two countries were strengthened through mutual visits. During the visit of the Palestinian President to the Japanese capital, Tokyo, in May 2005, the two sides signed various agreements, besides an offer of urgent Japanese financial support to the Palestinians. Japanese financial support to the Palestinian people during the course of the year 2005 can be divided into many parts:

First, aid through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). In February 2005 the Japanese government decided to offer the Palestinian people, through the UNDP, an urgent aid of \$30 million. The Japanese Embassy in Amman said, in a statement, that this sum is just part of an allocated aid of \$60 million to encourage the peace process in the Middle East.⁷³ During the year 2005, Japan decided to offer \$9 million & 586,000 to the UNRWA to support its activities in Palestine, and to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian refugees.⁷⁴

Second, direct support to the PA. During the visit of the Palestinian President to Tokyo in May 2005, the Japanese government offered several projects to the Palestinian people, of which one was designed to help in the completion of the sewage project and develop the coastal roads in GS, in addition to other projects of about \$400 million during the next three years.⁷⁵ Japan also undertook to extend an additional \$100 million to the PA in order to achieve peace in the Middle East.⁷⁶

Third, support within different developmental projects, or through bilateral agreements between the two sides. One of these agreements, concluded during President 'Abbas' visit to Tokyo in May 2005, allocated funds to finance the project of Gaza coast road, which extends for 40 km from the north to the south of GS, and cost about \$60 – 65 million.⁷⁷ Subsequently, it was agreed to implement other projects through the Japanese Agency for International Co-operation (JICA), which aims at improving local administration and reproduction health,⁷⁸ and to support developmental study of the regions of Jericho and the Jordanian Valley.⁷⁹ In July 2005, the Palestinian signed financial agreement with Japan by which the latter offered to set up a Joint services council to exploit the solid wastes in the provinces of Jericho and the Jordanian Valley.⁸⁰ In November 2005, the Japanese government decided to increase its support to the Palestinians in 2006 from \$100 million to \$200 million.⁸¹

Thus, the Japanese policy towards the Palestinian issue is not isolated from that of the powers concerned with peace in the region, especially the US on one hand and Israel on the other. So the financial support that Japan offers to the Palestinians is subjected to political maneuvers and international pressure on the Palestinian people.

On the Israeli side, the country and Japan are economically strongly connected with each other. In 2005, Israeli exports to Japan were estimated at \$792 million & 400,000, while its imports totaled \$1,278 million & 100,000.⁸²

Israel tried to persuade Japan to purchase defensive systems against rockets that Tokyo needs to protect itself against the arsenal of its neighbor, Northern Korea, and its weapons of mass destruction. But America interfered and the Israeli efforts were frustrated.⁸³

Brazil: The success of socialist or anti-American hegemony trends in Latin America and the world at large, is generally in favor of the Palestinian issue, especially so in 2005. This applies to Brazil, Venezuela, and Bolivia, but we will choose for our purpose here the case of Brazil, the biggest and the most important country in South America.

Non-alignment has usually characterized the Brazilian foreign policy, but, the year 2005 witnessed great tension in Brazilian-Israeli relations. Some diplomatic Israeli sources considered the Brazilian President as being more receptive to the Palestinians positions than those of the Israelis. The Israeli Vice Premier, Ehud Olmert, had maintained, during a visit to Brazil in March 2005, that this country

could not participate in the Middle Eastern peace process, unless it conducts a serious dialogue with Israel.

Brazil severely criticized the Israeli military operations in the WB and GS, and in January 2005, the Brazilian Minister of Human Rights, Nilmario Miranda, complained of the Israeli predicaments to the mission of the monitors of the Palestinian presidential elections. Miranda added that Israel depends on weapons and American support, and noted that the delegation of supervisors sent to the WB and GS reflected the support of the Brazilian government to the Palestinians.⁸⁴

But Brazilian diplomats denied any change in their country's traditional principle of non-alignment, and maintained that the Israeli protests are just simple misunderstandings between friends. A Brazilian diplomat explained to Agence France-Presse (AFP): "Our relationship with Israel is excellent, and it is natural that we disagree about some points, exactly like two friends when facing each other frankly." Gunter Rodzit, a professor of international relations in Armando Alvares Penteado Institution in Sao Paulo, argued that the drive of the Brazilian President Lula in the Middle East is triggered by commercial motivations in particular. He added that the Brazilians have understood how to deal with the Palestinian question, which is of extreme importance to the Arabs, but their primary concern is money and business in the region.⁸⁵

As for the Brazilian-Palestinian relationship the Brazilian President, praised, during his meeting in Brazilia with the Palestinian President, Mahmud 'Abbas, in May 2005, the "patience" of the Palestinian people, and emphasized the readiness of Brazil to support the peace process.⁸⁶ Moreover, the Palestinian Commercial and the Industrial Chamber in Nablus was invited to participate in an economic conference, held under the auspices of the Arab Brazilian Chamber and on the occasion of the Arab-Latin American Summit, during the period 12 and 13 May.⁸⁷ In July 2005, The First National Conference on Equality and Apartheid was convened in Brazil. However, it did not clearly and outrightly denounced the Israeli racist practices against the Palestinians, but only agreed that the Brazilian government send a delegation to the WB and GS just to monitor the racist Israeli practices and military operations against the Palestinians.⁸⁸

The United Nations:

The UN suffers from a structural defect that makes it incapable to have an effective role without the consent of the major powers and members of the Security Council.

In spite of the hundreds of resolutions passed by the UN, in support of the Palestinian rights, these resolutions have no real effect on the ground, because they were not obligatory. The only ones that could be binding were vetoed by USA, because they were against Israel. This happened 39 times during the previous years.

The UN resolutions of the year 2005 on the Palestinian issue remained consistently monotonous. The General Assembly adopted 5 resolutions on 3 December 2005, that dismissed Israel as an occupying country that should withdraw from the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, and reaffirmed both the Palestinian right to set up an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital, and, the refugees right to return. The discussions were concluded with a demand for quick resumption of negotiations that would hopefully lead to a permanent settlement of the Arab Israeli conflict, and a criticism of the illegal Israeli settlements. Both Israel and America, along with Micronesia, voted against all these resolutions. USA and Israel waged a campaign to abolish the Department of the Palestinian Rights in the General Secretariat, the Special Media Program on Palestine, and the Committee concerned with the pursuit of the unconditional Palestinians rights.⁸⁹

Kofi Annan did nothing concrete, as he limited himself to only appeals for calm and official statements, which reflect the paralysis of the UN to take any effective decision on the ground. Annan condemned Israeli annexation of Palestinian lands and the building of the Separation Wall, but, at the same time, he asked the Palestinians not to face this with violence. He also asked the Israelis to stop atrocities, which would endanger the forthcoming negotiations for a final settlement. On the other hand, he recognized the Israeli Security requirements, but he hoped that the Israelis will achieve this by alternative means other than the Separation Wall, which caused serious harm to the Palestinians.⁹⁰ The UN Human Rights Commission condemned the Israeli use of force against the Palestinian civilians, and called upon Tel Aviv to stop building settlements in the occupied land.⁹¹

In 2005, Israel achieved a moral victory, namely the unanimous endorsement by the General Assembly of the UN, in its 60th session, of an unprecedented resolution that considered 27 January as an International Day for the commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust.⁹² It is, however, unexpected that the UN and the Security Council, will change in the near future their current

positions and attitudes and effectively support the Palestinian cause, as long as they are suffering from the existing structural defect, in decision making and the domination of the narrow interests of the great powers, especially USA.

Conclusion: The American hegemony is still heavily reflected on the situation in Palestine. America has for many years lost the credibility of being an “honest broker”, and it is unlikely that American policy will seriously change in the foreseeable future to deal in a fair manner with the Palestinians case, particularly as the right wing groups, the new conservatives, and the Zionist lobby continue to have an effective role in shaping American foreign policy. The increasing American support to Israel in 2005, especially on the settlements in the WB and the unilateral disengagement from GS is a regressive step, particularly when we compare this position with the terms of the Road Map, that had been patronized by the USA and the rest members of the Quartet Committee.

The distorted image of America, which resulted from its foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, encouraged some countries to adopt more independent policies, as appears in the case of Russia which strives to restore its role in the region. Moreover, the outcome of recent parliamentary elections have caused some political shifts in many countries, e.g. in Spain, which have relatively distanced itself from American policy, in Germany, which had closer relations with the USA, and in Britain, where the alliance of Labor government with America had negatively affected the performance of the Party in the last general elections. Moreover, an increasing number of South American countries had either distanced themselves from the USA, or adopted anti-American policies.

Thus, the general tendency in international politics is still associated with the pragmatic considerations of each country. But effective breakthroughs in international positions are difficult to achieve in the short run. There is a need for a unified and effective Palestinian position, and a radical change in the way in which the Arab and the Muslim world deals with Palestinian issue. On the other hand, the top down policies and narrow calculations of Israel and America may generate more dissatisfaction and hatred to these countries, which could be translated in future in increased sympathy with the Palestinian and Arab rights.

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Chapter Six

The Palestinian Demographic Indicators

The Palestinian Demographic Indicators¹

Introduction:

The year 2005 concluded while, more than half of the Palestinians are still experiencing the bitterness of asylum and enforced life in the Diaspora, and 1 million & 600,000 of them are homeless, though they live within the historical borders of Palestine. So, the case of the Palestinian refugees is the oldest in the world.

Tens of international resolutions were passed in support of their right to return to their land. But Israel does not only deny this right and the legitimacy of the international resolutions themselves, but also actively strives to implant its own Judaic character on Palestine, and to impose a new scenario on the ground that will lead to the immigration of more Palestinians from their land.

However, the high birthrate among Palestinians, compared to the low Israeli one, is still a glimmer of hope for the Palestinians and, at the same, time, a great source of concern for the Israelis. It is expected that the Palestinians will outnumber the Jews in historical Palestine during the next few years. But, the mere increase in the number of Palestinians can not be relied upon to determine the end of the conflict and to restore the legitimate rights of the Palestinians.

General Demographic Indicators:

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) estimates the number of Palestinians worldwide to be 10 million & 100,000 by the end of 2005. Only 4 million & 900,000 live in historical Palestine, of whom 2 million & 400,000 are in the West Bank (WB), 1 million & 400,000 in Gaza Strip (GS), and around 1 million & 100,000 inside Israel. However, around 3 million live in Jordan, who constitute the largest number of Palestinians in the Diaspora.²

The Palestinian people have a high fertility rate, 4.6 births per woman according to the census of 2003. Statistics showed that the general birthrate reached 37.3 births per 1,000 Palestinians. Life expectancy for the year 2005 is 71.7 for males, and 73.4 for females.³ According to some sources, the fertility rate per woman for 2005 was 4.4 births in the WB and 5.91 births in GS.⁴

Table 1/6: General Demographic Indicators for the Year 2005

Total number of Palestinians (in million)	Birthrate (for each 1,000)	Life expectancy (males)	Life expectancy (females)
10.1	37.3	71.7	73.4



The Palestinian society is distinguished by its youthfulness, with 52.8% under the age of 18, that is, 2 million out of the total number of the population in both the WB and GS. In the WB there are 605,360 males and 582,780 females under 18, while those in the same category in GS are 390,083 males and 384,500 females. There are 114,800 senior citizens (age 65 and above) who represent 3% of the total population; 49,300 males and 65,500 females.⁵

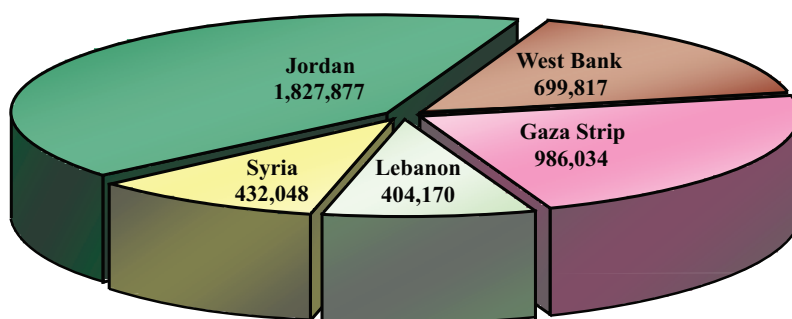
Palestinian Refugees : Some writers use the term: *Laji'un*, i.e., “refugees” to describe the Palestinians living in the Diaspora on the grounds that they left their homeland after the 1948 war. But this is incorrect as many of the 1948 refugees still live in the WB and GS. Some other writers include in the 1948 refugees those who were compelled to leave from the WB and GS; after the 1967 war, whom they call: *Nazihun*, i.e., immigrants. This is also in-accurate, since large numbers of Palestinians left the WB and GS during the period 1948 – 1967 for different reasons, especially those who left for the East Bank in Jordan or to the Gulf countries seeking livelihood. There are also young people who left the WB and GS since 1967 to study or work abroad. They are all now denied by the Zionist authorities their right to return to their homeland under various pretexts, such as the expiry of their exist permissions. Moreover, some Palestinians were driven out of their land because they resisted the occupation. Hence, a large number of Palestinians are homeless, though they live within the geographical borders of Palestine. Others live outside Palestine, but they are not necessarily refugees of the 1948 war.

The systematic Zionist invasion managed to establish Israel on 77% of historical Palestine, and to expel the inhabitants of 675 cities and villages. These refugees totaled 5 million & 250,000 in 2000, living in many camps and villages in what remained of Palestine and in some neighboring Arab countries, in addition to other Arab and foreign cities. A report from the PCBS showed that 42.5% of the Palestinians living in the WB and GS, by the end of 2005, were refugees from the land occupied by Israel in 1948.⁶ Those registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), are 700,000 in the WB and 986,000 in GS, totaling about 1 million & 686,000.⁷

**Table 2/6: Number of Refugees in Different Countries until 31/12/2005
Registered by UNRWA⁸**

Area	Number of individuals	Births	Families
West Bank	699,817	7,768	153,485
Gaza Strip	986,034	24,321	212,943
Lebanon	404,170	3,482	102,603
Syria	432,048	8,014	102,508
Jordan	1,827,877	25,863	351,991
Total Number	4,349,946	69,488	923,530

Number of Refugees in Different Countries until 31/12/2005 Registered by UNRWA

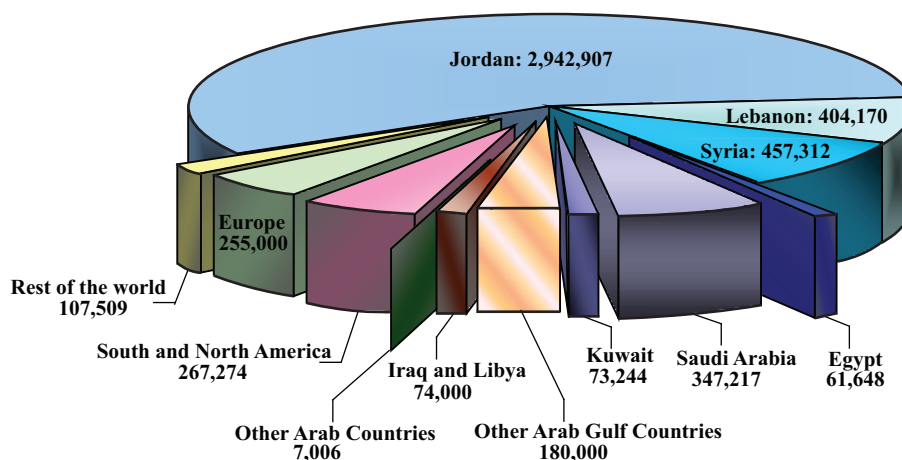


According to the PCBS, Palestinians living abroad at the end of 2005 amounted to 5 million & 200,000;⁹ in which 3 million are in Jordan, 432,000 in Syria, and 404,000 in Lebanon. However, the number of the Palestinian refugees living in Jordan in the records of UNRWA, 1 million & 827,877, is not correct because some are not registered with this Organization, because they did not need its services (see table 2/6).

It is difficult to estimate the number of Palestinians living abroad. Some may have got the nationalities of the countries of their residence, like Jordan. Other countries do not have a separate census for them, while thousands of Palestinians are being traveling to the Gulf countries, Europe, Canada, Australia and other countries. Having considered different tables and estimates, the annual 3.4 Palestinian population growth rate, in addition to Palestinian immigration from Lebanon and to the Gulf countries, Europe, Canada, and Australia, the following table 3/6 may give a reasonably accurate estimate of the Palestinians living in the Diaspora, though, admittedly, its figures require some revision. However, this table is almost in conformity with the estimates of the PCBS.

Table 3/6: Estimates of Palestinians Living in the Diaspora

Area	1998	2005
Jordan	2,328,803	2,942,907
Lebanon	357,559	404,170
Syria	361,884	457,312
Egypt	48,784	61,648
Saudi Arabia	274,762	347,217
Kuwait	57,960	73,244
Other Arab Gulf countries	105,578	180,000
Iraq and Libya	74,284	74,000
Other Arab Countries	5,544	7,006
South and North America	203,588	267,274
Europe	190,000	255,000
Rest of the world	69,248	107,509
Number of Palestinians abroad	4,077,994	5,177,287

Estimates of Palestinians Living in the Diaspora in 2005


There are some problems related to the estimates concerning the Palestinian refugees in Europe; who are estimated at 200,000, by the European Council, of whom 80,000 in Germany, 20,000 in Denmark, 15,000 in Britain, 9,000 in Sweden, and 3,000 in France. But other reports assert that the number of Palestinians in Germany exceeds 200,000 and 50,000 are in Britain, in addition to countries in which a good number of Palestinians live, but are not included in the estimates of the European Council, such as Holland, Italy, Austria, Spain and others.¹⁰ Dr. ‘Abbas Sheblaq, a researcher in the Refugees Studies Center at Oxford University in Britain, estimated the numbers of Palestinians living in the European Union at 250,000; around 25,000 of them live in Britain, which is the third largest European host country of the Palestinians.¹¹

The Israeli–Palestinian Demographic Conflict:

The deeply-rooted Zionist belief is occupying lands, crushing and expelling its people. This is known in international law as “ethnic cleansing”. It is a war crime that should not be ignored and neglected with the passing of time, but there must be some kind of retribution or compensation to the victims. However, this Zionist principle has remained unchanged, irrespective of the change in circumstances over the past decades.

During the British Mandate, which implemented the notorious Balfour Declaration, the mandatory government enacted laws that facilitated Zionist Jewish immigration to the land of Palestine, and the expulsion of its own people. These plans increased the rate of the land owned by the Zionists in the entire area of Palestine by 3%; that is, from 2% in the Ottoman period to 5% by the end of the Mandate. However, the real threat lay in the increasing number of immigrant Jews, who reached 30% by the end of the British Mandate. Most of those immigrants were in the military profession, of whom many had served in the Second World War. Actually, those immigrants did not come to Palestine as mere quiet refugees as they claim, but as invaders to expel its people.

This reminds us of the catastrophe of 1948 where the organized Zionist invasion managed to drive out the inhabitants of 675 cities and villages, who later became refugees, totaling in 2000, about 5 million & 250,000. This was the greatest organized crime of ethnic cleansing in modern history. Unlike other war crimes that occur only during the hostilities, and sometimes accidentally by the mob, the 1948 one is, indeed, unprecedented because it had been well planned, and is continuing on daily basis since 1948 and until the present day, though its means and ways may have changed under the guise of “open war”, “heated peace” or occupation.

The western powers, who provide the Zionists with arms, money, moral and political support, continue their support to this orchestrated Zionist crime to this very day. The ongoing and shameless crimes committed by the Zionists are very well known through the television and newspapers, of the countries that has no double standards and enjoy freedom of expression. The history of Zionism is indeed scandalized, since the last century, by their predetermined and ongoing atrocities against the Palestinians.

In 1967, the Zionists occupied all Palestine, and some territories in Egypt and Syria, to which they added Southern Lebanon in 1982. But the Lebanese

resistance forced the Zionists to evacuate Lebanon, and they also withdrew from Sinai in return for Egypt's agreement to end belligerency with Israel and to allow the United Nations troops to take up its positions there. Today, they are gradually appropriating the WB, and squeezing the Palestinians there behind the Separation Wall and in the enclaves. The Zionists' crime is not only confined to occupying land, but also involves well-organized plans of racial cleansing to get rid of the original inhabitants. In 1948, the Zionists murdered Palestinians in 70 massacres, and expelled a large number of those who remained alive under the false pretension that they left their land voluntarily, out of fear of the war or on the instruction of Arab countries.

Now, they want to expel the rest of the Palestinians under the pretext of the "demographic bomb"; an aggressive nomenclature which reveals the racist policies of the Zionists. How can the existence of a people on their own land be a bomb? In fact, this claim aims to uproot the Palestinian people, but the failure of this policy may well be a devastating bomb to the Zionist project itself.

Despite all the Zionist efforts, the Palestinian people refuse to succumb and be destroyed. They will overtime ultimately constitute the majority, whether in 1948 Palestine (Israel) or in historical Palestine. This is confirmed by many studies, which differ only on the time during which this will be achieved. Thus, Israel tries its best to get a written Palestinian commitment that gives Israel the right to expel the Palestinians if they exceed a certain number. This is indeed the upshot of racial fascism that does not care for its democratic principles. What will happen if the Palestinians in Israel reach 10%. Will they be treated as an oppressed minority? What if they became 20% or 30% of the total population? Will they experience an improvement and suffer less oppression? Does it all depend on Israel's wishes? These racist principles are against international law and human rights. They must be revealed to the whole world, and eradicated through serious boycotts and embargos as happened in South Africa during the Apartheid era.

Let us reflect on table 4/6 below which shows the increase in the population of Palestine, or parts of it, from 2000 to 2020. The estimates of 2000 in this table are actual, whereas the numbers of 2020 are quoted from the Israeli scheme for the year 2020¹² and from other sources.

**Table 4/6: The Expected Population Increase
(Jews and Palestinians) in Palestine (in thousand)**

2000			Expectations for 2020		
Place		Actual figure	Israeli scheme for 2020	Minimum ⁽⁴⁾	Maximum ⁽⁴⁾
Israel	Jews	5,180 ⁽¹⁾	5,832 ⁽³⁾	6,058 ⁽⁵⁾	7,431 ⁽⁵⁾
	Palestinian	1,188 ⁽²⁾	2,268	2,233	2,233
Total		6,368	8,100	8,291	9,664
Percentage of the Palestinians to the Jews%		23	39	37	30
West Bank & Gaza / Palestinians		3,115	6,000	6,500 ⁽⁷⁾	6,500 ⁽⁷⁾
Whole Palestine / Palestinians		4,303	8,268	8,733	8,733
Percentage of the Palestinians to the Jews%		83	142	144	118
The year when they become equal in number ⁽⁸⁾		2000	2012	2013	2014
The total number of population (Palestinians and Jews)		9,483	14,100	14,791	16,164
Total of Palestinians in the world		8,333 ⁽⁶⁾		16,748 ⁽⁶⁾	16,748 ⁽⁶⁾
<p>(1) Includes Jews in settlements, non-Jewish Russian immigrants (about half a million), and non-Jewish foreigners (about 250,000).</p> <p>(2) Includes Palestinians in Jerusalem.</p> <p>(3) Includes an expected annual increase of 1.3%.</p> <p>(4) The writer's estimations.</p> <p>(5) Includes the minimum and maximum of migration.</p> <p>(6) The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics estimations.</p> <p>(7) Numbers calculated based on natural annual growth of 3.75%. The recent researches run by Courbage (2005) indicate the decrease of this percentage to 3.26%, which decreases the expected number of population in 2020 to 5 million & 920,000.</p> <p>(8) This is the year when the Jews and non-Arabs become equal in number to the Arabs in historical Palestine. The recent researches run by Courbage (2005) state that they will be equal in number in 2018.</p>					

The above table shows that the ratio of Palestinians to Jews and non-Arabs in Israel will increase from 23% in 2000 to around 39% in 2020, if no mass Jewish emigration takes place. However, if such a migration occurs, this ratio will decrease to 30%.

During this period, the number of Palestinians will multiply by 100%, whereas the number of Jews and non-Arabs will increase by 12% if no migration takes place, or by 27% in case of minimum migration, and 42% in case of maximum migration. If we subtract the non-Jewish Russians, who constitute between 40 – 60% of the Russian immigrants, and the foreign workers, about a third of

a million (the total is 750,000 persons), then the ratio of the Palestinians to recognized Jews in 2020 will range between 45% in case of minimum migration, to 33% in case of maximum migration. This means that the worst scenario from a Palestinian point of view is that the ratio of Palestinians will not be less than 1:3 (one Palestinian to three Jews) in 2020, whereas it was 1:4 in 2000.

A report released by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) stated that the ratio of the Jewish population growth was about 1.1% a year, compared to 2.7% for the Arabs. On the other hand, it is expected that the rate of the elderly (age 65 and above) among Jews will increase during the next 25 years. In 2000, it was estimated at 10% of the total Israeli population, and is expected to rise during the next 25 years, to about 13%. According to the report, the number of the elderly in the Zionist state will increase from 623,000 by the end of 2000 to 1 million & 200,000 in 2025.

The same report predicts that life expectancy among the Israelis will increase by 2.6 years; with an average of 79.8 years for males and 83.8 years for females. It also maintains that in return for this rise in life span, there will be a decrease in the birthrate, from 2.9 to 2.7 on average for each woman. As a result, the percentage of children in Israel will decrease from 28% to only 26%.¹³

The prominent demographic analyst, Youssef Courbage, expects that after a century from the foundation of Israel (in 2048), Palestinians living in Israel will constitute half of the population. Moreover, in 2025, the number of Palestinian members in the Knesset may be 23 out of 120 members, if they unite and vote collectively.¹⁴ This is, of course, apart from the Palestinians living in other parts of Palestine and in the Diaspora.

The Ongoing Ethnic Cleansing:

Zionist racism neither accepts the existence of the original inhabitants of the land occupied by Israel nor a democracy which entails equality between the Arabs and the Jews. Instead, it adopts the theory of “Judaization” of Israel, which has no legal or moral basis. The practical Israeli solution is the completion of ethnic cleansing by getting rid of the rest of the original inhabitants of Palestine.

During the abortive negotiations at Taba, the Israeli suggested that they should be given some areas in the WB that have plenty of water resources, and on which Israeli settlements were constructed, in exchange for an arid desert on the borders of Egypt, which had originally been occupied by Israel over and

above the lands given to them by the partition scheme. According to Israel, the Truce Line (1949), ironically named the Green Line, which separates the WB from GS on one side and Palestine (1948) on the other, is the new dividing line for Palestine, thus all territories beyond this Line “legally” belong to Israel. Hence, it is a bargain of an occupied Palestinian land for another appropriated one.

For propaganda purposes, the Israelis called their expulsion of the Palestinians from their land the “transfer”. They falsely justified this process by citing examples of the “inhabitants’ exchange” between India and Pakistan as well as between Turkey and Greece. But this “transfer”¹⁵ has been a consistent and fundamental principle of Zionism since 1937, that was applied broadly in Palestine in 1948, and is still active until now.

During the last decade of the 20th century, the issue of the “transfer” ceased to be restricted to private and closed circles, and became a hotly debated public concern that was openly discussed by several parties.¹⁶ The idea was a top agenda during the annual Conference held in Herzliya in January 2006, attended by a group of notable politicians, generals, businessmen, and academicians. This group is practically more important than the Knesset itself in terms of ideas that formulates the cabinet’s agenda. They came up with the following recommendations:¹⁷ to bring more Jewish immigrants, to cancel, or at least restrict, the Palestinians right of citizenship in Israel, and to encourage the Palestinian Authority (PA) to accept land exchange, including the transfer of the Arab areas in Israel to the WB, and the most important settlements there to Israel.

Along the same pattern, the participants endorsed Sharon’s plan of unilateral withdrawal from GS and to get rid of 1 million & 400,000 Palestinians, whereas the whole GS should remain under tight Israeli occupation by air, sea and around the borders. Israeli troops should, moreover, have a free hand to assassinate and demolish without any loss on their part.

On the other hand, an Israeli analyst concerned with the Arab and Jewish demography, Sergio Della Pergola, told the attendants that the number of Palestinians will be equal to that of the Jews in all Palestine by 2020, if not by 2010.

Arnon Sofer, the extremist racist demographer and the private counselor of Sharon who initiated the idea of the notorious Separation Wall, stated: “The destruction of the Jewish state is inevitable unless we take serious measures against the [threat] of the Palestinian population growth.”

The participants decided that the salvation of the Jewish state lies in capturing the main areas in the WB, the water resources, the Jordan Valley, as well as Jerusalem and the surrounding areas, hence railing off the Palestinians into a few cantons that have neither connection to GS nor supremacy on anything below or above the ground or within the cantons. Through the current ongoing air attacks, assassinations, and destruction in GS, Israel hopes to guarantee that this entity, even if it is called a state, would be in the middle of nowhere. The miserable Palestinian inhabitants will then leave their land voluntarily. And that is exactly what Israel hopes that they will do.

The Israelis concentrate particularly on expelling the Palestinians by force from Jerusalem. A study published by the PCBS stated that the Israeli policies on the rights of the Palestinian citizens in Jerusalem, that were actively pursued since 1948, led to a dramatic decrease in their numbers. 100,000 inhabitants of Jerusalem, including a great number of Christians, were expelled in 1948. Another procedure of the same kind happened again in 1967, resulting in the expulsion of 15,000 inhabitants of Jerusalem, including thousands of Christians.¹⁸ In addition, thousands of Jerusalem inhabitants lost their identity cards, which allow them to live in Jerusalem as a result of the racist Israeli policies that allow the Israelis to build houses in Jerusalem, while putting extreme restrictions on building houses for the Palestinians in East Jerusalem. So the Palestinians get annually less than one hundred permits for building such houses. Thus, most new Palestinian houses were unlicensed, and hence considered illegal by the Israeli authorities (although the occupying authorities have no right to impose their laws in the occupied lands, according to the Fourth Geneva Convention). These restrictions and the demolition of houses made these unexploited lands, which were, in fact, owned by the Palestinians, an easy target for the new settlers, or an extension to the previously built ones.¹⁹

This plan does not only include Jerusalem, as Zionist parties try to accomplish what they call “voluntary expulsion” that targets other Palestinian cities and villages. In al-Lud (Lydda) town, for example, the Rightist Israeli Party, Moledet, works hard to encourage Palestinians to migrate. It extends grants to the Arabs in the shape of guaranteed jobs and a better educational and financially stable life in Canada, Europe, South Africa, and Australia. Some Arab citizens admit that some Jewish agents offered them facilities to go to Iraq, claiming that the country has a pressing need for businessmen and educated people. In an address to the Jewish Agency, the director of Moledet Party in

Jerusalem, Arie King, called not to depend only on migration to maintaining the Jewish majority in Israel, but also to adopt his plan of “voluntary expulsion” for the 1948 Palestinians, otherwise they will constitute the majority in fifty years. He, moreover, expected the agreement of many Arabs to migrate because of the deteriorating political and social status that they experience inside Israel, and added that his Party has already begun, since the turn of 2005, implementing this plan in Acre and the cities of the WB as well.²⁰

The Apartheid Wall divides Palestine into enclaves, depriving many Palestinians from their livelihood by confiscating their land or separating them from their places of work. Two questionnaires, published by the Jerusalem Institution for Israeli Researches, stated that this Wall primarily affects work and employment. 52% of the people questioned confirmed either losing their jobs or facing difficulties in reaching their work, 39% referred to the Wall’s negative effect on their health, whereas 37% complained of its negative social impact.²¹

On the other hand, Israel controls the Palestinian economy in order to weaken and destroy it, thus increasing poverty and unemployment rates among Palestinians. The embargo on Palestinian employment in the 1948 occupied land, the extensive closures and the many checkpoints had all combined to lead to a terrible deterioration in living standards, paralyzed the movement of the Palestinians and forced them to migrate.²²

Authentic data on the Palestinian migration after *al-Aqsa Intifadah* is meager. However, according to some unconfirmed Israeli statistics and estimates, Palestinian migration from the WB and GS reached 34,700 during the period 2000 – 2003, (see table 5/6).²³ The Norwegian Demographic Research Institution estimated this wave of migration from the WB and GS during the period September 2000 to December 2002 to be 100,000, mostly from the middle class. Other estimated the migration of about 80,000 Palestinians from GS and the WB in 2002.²⁴

There is an undisclosed, but still underway, part of the Israeli immigration plan that has not been publicly debated, though it may be recorded in confidential files. Observers have noticed a sudden decrease in the fertility rate of Palestinian women living in Israel. The birthrate was estimated at six children per woman in the 1960s, but it decreased to less than four children per woman in 2001. As usual, this can be explained by the high standards of living and high levels of

education, which lead to family planning in an attempt to raise few children in a better way. But these very circumstances also reduce the mortality rate of children, which was one half of the birthrate during the Ottoman period.

Table 5/6: Israeli Estimates of the Palestinian Migration from the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Year	Total
1967 – 1969	74,900
1970 – 1974	27,100
1975 – 1979	81,800
1980 – 1984	68,700
1985 – 1989	45,300
1990 – 1994	29,400
1995 – 1999	52,900
2000 – 2003	34,700
Grand Total	414,800

Since the Palestinians always prefer large families, and health care lessens the mortality rate of children, the net natural growth rate should increase accordingly, or, at least, remains static. Here a question poses itself, namely, what then is the cause of this decrease?

Youssef Courbage analyzes in detail a similar phenomenon in the WB and GS as follows:

The Palestinian fertility in the WB and GS increased during the first *Intifadah* (1987 – 1993) as a result of early marriage and the restriction of movement. But this cannot account for everything since elementary educated Palestinian women (less than six years) have more children than their illiterate counterpart, an estimate of 7.18 children per woman compared to 6.66 children. The fertility of Palestinian women who receive intermediate and secondary education is admittedly less than that of the previous category, but it is still high (6.03 – 6.42), while university female graduates keep their fertility at a high level (4.09). This affirms the direct relationship between the political awareness of the Palestinian women and their instinctive desire to have more children. Indeed, this is contrary to the general trend in the world, even in similar Arab societies, where the number of children in a family decreases with the increase of the educational level of their parents.²⁵

However an acute decrease in fertility in Palestine has occurred since 1999. In 2000 the fertility rate decreased rapidly from 6.25 children per woman to 4.18. According to Youssef Courbage, “this is a very rare, striking and unprecedented phenomenon in Palestine.”

Neither the decrease of the marriage rate, especially in GS where it actually increased by 31%, nor the frequent use of contraceptives account for this sudden decrease. It should not also be wholly attributed to the difficult circumstances surrounding the *Intifadah*, assassinations, lack of security, and decrease of the individual's income as a result of the deterioration of the economic standards. Instead, Courbage affirms that this ambivalent decrease was noted before the *Intifadah* in 2000, but it could not be explained scientifically.

What then is the reason? It is obvious that Israel has a great vested interest in this decrease. So did it somehow plot to do it? Some press reports reported collective fainting and hysteric cases among female students. Many others were victims of some medically unknown poisonous gases released by the Israeli forces against demonstrators.²⁶ Reports released by the Palestinian Ministry of Public Health provided evidence of a disturbing and unprecedented prevalence of abortion and cancer cases in the Palestinian population.²⁷

Israeli use of biological weapons is very well known and documented.²⁸ It now possesses the greatest arsenal of biological weapons between Paris and Tokyo. Thus Israel has the motive as well as the means to commit such crimes. So did Israel dare to kill Palestinian babies before their birth, as it did after their birth?

The Israeli Demography:

Paradoxically, Zionism tries through various means to increase the fertility of Jewish women, including the provision, by private associations, of food, clothes, and delivery expenses to every Jewish woman who gives birth.²⁹ A Jewish-American millionaire encourages young Jewish men and women to pay a free of charge visit to Israel through a program named "Birth Right", which aims to acquaint them with Israel and encourage them to migrate to it.

The assumption that the fertility of the Jewish woman is much less than that of their Palestinian counterpart is ambiguous. According to Courbage,³⁰ the fertility rate among Jewish women differs greatly, as they are not a homogenous people, but they have the characteristics of the countries from which they migrated, specially two categories: Those of Afro-Asian origin and those of Euro-American origin. Besides, extremist religious Jews are more fertile than any other group in the world, except for the women of the Niger in Africa. Their fertility rate was registered at 7.6 children per woman in the late of 1990s; a

ratio which is four and a half times bigger than that of the Russian secularist Jews (1.7 children per woman). Strategic, not only religious, reasons are behind this phenomenon, particularly so, for religious groups live in great numbers inside the settlements. If the Jewish migration to the settlements is considered, then the Jewish demographic growth in the settlements clearly precedes that of the Palestinians. As Courbage says, this reminds us of the rapid increase of Jewish immigrants in Palestine during the Mandate period, which eventually led to occupying 77% of its land by force in 1948.

In spite of this demographic competition, the ratio of Palestinians will eventually be higher, both in Israel and in historical Palestine. All studies affirm this prediction, though they differ on the time span for its realization.

As previously mentioned, if genocide does not work, the Israeli solution for this eventuality is demographic elimination through evacuation by force, or due to the difficult living conditions resulting from Israeli policies, diplomatically called “voluntary expulsion”. Other means will be by re-dividing Palestine in way that gives Israel the most fertile lands as well as the water resources, and by getting rid of the remaining inhabitants via withdrawal from GS and the annexation of the Palestinian territories in Israel to the cantons in Palestine.

To justify this racist elimination, Israel propagated by the slogan of “the Jewish characteristic of Israel”, and described Israel as a democratic Jewish state. But this is a contradiction in terms, though this false humanistic claim had appealed to some uninformed writers and politicians in the pro-Israeli-West. It is a great deception for many obvious reasons. For, there is no legal, or even moral, rationale for establishing a Jewish state in Palestine. No text or definition in international law supports this.

The legality of declaring the establishment of Israel is based on the Partition Resolution 181 of the year 1947. But the United Nations could not establish a racist state, be it religious or ethnic. It is clear in this Resolution that the Palestinians represent half of the inhabitants of the suggested state for housing the Jews; and that they should be treated on equal terms, having all civil and political rights. Hence, according to international law, Israel should not be called “the Jewish state”.

Moreover, the so-called “Jewish characteristic of Israel” could not possibly be based on their presumed homogeneity and unique cultural traits, as they have come from 110 countries and speak 82 languages.

The real purpose behind the attempt to give some legitimacy to the Jewish

nature of Israel is to persuade the entire world (specially the Arabs and Muslims) to accept its racial laws that covers all aspects of life, and is applied by Israeli institutions “legally”, and is not a mere racial discrimination. But these laws are obviously a blatant practice of racism against all non-Jews (taking into consideration the dispute on “who is the Jew”) in citizenship, nationality, entry and exit from the state, possession and use of land, education, public services, and so on.

After the collapse of the racist regime in South Africa, Israel remains the only place in the world which practices the worst type of racism by the force of its own laws. There is no doubt that this terrible crime against humanity will come to an end, whether in the medium or long term.

The Palestinian Solution: Notwithstanding the different political opinions on the Palestinian solution, and the political status of Palestine after its implementation, there is a consensus among Muslims, Arabs, Palestinians and many other groups all over the world on the necessity of restoring the fixed legitimate and historic rights in Palestine

There is no space here to discuss this issue in details, but it should be mentioned here that the demographic and geographic facts supports the legitimacy of the right of return upon which all shades of political opinions agree. This right of return, which can be implemented on the ground, will reconnect the history of Palestine with its geography.

Besides achieving the right of return, this review proves the falsity of Zionist propaganda in the West that the aim behind the Palestinians’ return is to eradicate the Jewish immigrants in Palestine, and to force them to go back from where they came. But this is nothing except a “call of war” that they propagate in the West to justify Israeli crimes against the Palestinians.

Previous studies shows³¹ that about 80% of Jews in Israel still live in the same Jewish areas in which they lived during the Mandate, though they expanded to include nearly 15% of the entire area of Israel. The rest of the Jews, who represent 20%, live in Palestinian towns, and they include only 1.5% of the inhabitants of the Kibbutz and Mushav, who appropriated the land of the refugees in 85% of the area of Israel.

Practically, nothing prevents the refugees from returning except for the vast area of Tel-Aviv and Western Jerusalem. Neither the return of the inhabitants

of Galilee, who took refuge in Syria and Lebanon, nor that of the Southern Palestine inhabitants, who sought asylum in GS, represents any obstacle, since the total number of all these refugees is equal to that of the Russian immigrants who were accommodated by Israel in the 1990s without causing any undue overcrowdedness.

We conducted a detailed demographic study on the original homes of the Palestinians in Palestine, their numbers in each village, and their present positions in the five areas covered by the UNRWA. This study was followed by a similar one on present day Israeli villages and cities. We divided the original inhabitants of each village into categories: the remaining Palestinians, Russian Jews, the ancient Ashkenazi Jews, Arab Jews, inhabitants of the Kibbutz and Mushav, new Jews, and, finally, the non-Jewish newcomers, including workers, evangelists, and Christian Russians.

The logical conclusion is that it is possible for the Palestinian refugees to return to their home without undue difficulty, though the number of the Jews had multiplied ten times (from 600,000 in 1948) and that of the refugees six times (from 900,000 in 1948). Naturally there will be a problem of over crowdedness in the mixed cities or those which were purely Arab. But this problem and dispute over land ownership can be largely resolved, particularly after the experiment of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the United Nations' accreditation of the Pinheiro Principles, which regulate the re-ownership of the lands and properties that were taken by force, or through the oppressive policies of the military occupation, and by confiscation.

Conclusion:

In conclusion we note the following facts:

First: Zionism could not eliminate the Palestinian people in spite of its recurrent trials to achieve this, in different ways throughout a period of fifty years, though it succeeded to appropriate their lands and properties.

Second: The bet that the Palestinian people would be forgotten proved to be wrong. In spite of the expulsion of about half the Palestinians from their homes, they still possess a portion of their land, and will eventually constitute the majority, whether in historical Palestine or in Israel itself. Therefore, the bet is only on the duration of time needed for the realization of this in the future. However, the assumption that the simple majority of 50% is all that is needed

for the effective restoration of these rights is misleading, because an active and forceful minority can attain its rights, even if it represents less than 50%.

Third: The Zionist phobia concerning the Palestinian growth rate is racist and immoral, and is not dissimilar to many examples in history in which a group tried to eliminate another. The Zionist assassinations, terrorism, starvations, building the racial Separation Wall, and separation of many families may force a few thousands, or even tens of thousands, to leave. But the supremacy will be for the Palestinians, even though this takes a long time to be realized.

Fourth: In spite of the obvious prejudice of the West to Israel and the continuous crimes committed by Westerners, such as Saykes, Picot, Balfour, Ben-Gurion, and Sharon, the world will not continue to accept Israeli crimes and its racist regime, that has no equal in today's world.

The increasing pressure on Israel, through public awareness, resistance, boycott and the elevated influence of worldwide civil associations that call for human rights and rejection of racism, will undoubtedly lead to the collapse of this last place of blatant racism in the world. This battle will take a long time, and success requires the Palestinians to continue defending their legitimate rights steadily, efficiently, earnestly and persistently, while being prepared to sacrifice whatever it takes to achieve this success.

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Chapter Seven

The Economic Situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

The Economic Situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip¹

Introduction:

Before we discuss the Palestinian economy in the West Bank (WB) and Gaza Strip (GS) during 2005, we should bear in mind that this economy is under occupation. The situation is analogous to a group of prisoners who are managing their business while inside a huge prison called the WB and GS. The jailer or the head of the prison, Israel, controls the borders, checkpoints and access to goods and people. It is capable of killing people, demolishing and confiscating properties, establishing checkpoints, banning imports and exports, destroying lands, and dominating water supplies, electricity, transportation, and energy.

Therefore, no wonder that the year 2005 did not reflect the real potentialities and capabilities of the Palestinian people. Rather, it showed the abnormal conditions of the people, who are still suffering under Israeli injustice and suppression.

Although the Palestinian economy is weak, it has abundant human resources. Palestinian could depend upon these resources to achieve continuous economic development. Unfortunately, these qualified human resources experience explicit, or disguised, unemployment and are, therefore, not well utilized. Moreover, most of them have inappropriate jobs.

Israeli policies and procedures, meanwhile, played a major role in destroying the Palestinian economy through a well-planned and programmed methodology that makes it dependent on theirs. In this way, they control the economy and suspend any potentialities that might lead to its prosperity. Thus, it is evident that more than two-thirds of Palestinian imports come from Israeli sources and nine-tenths of their exports go to the Israeli market and institutions.

Although the Palestinian Authority (PA) has been established, unfair economic protocols (including the Paris Protocol of 1994) have enabled Israel to control the most important sources of Palestinian income: customs and taxes. This condition provided a mechanism of political pressure that Israel can employ whenever it wishes to withhold or surrender these revenues.

The Palestinian economy in the WB and GS is being managed in an atmosphere of a coercive, authoritarian, and hostile occupation, which aims at humiliating the Palestinians, expelling them from their lands, and replacing them with Jewish settlers. So, any radical remedies aimed at improving the

Palestinian economy would require the highlighting of eradication of the occupation, rather than minimizing its repercussions.

In this context, the PA and the World Bank have put forward many plans for construction and development, but most of them were introduced in response to instructions and conditions given by the sponsors, and they relied on unrealistic suppositions that ignored the current political and economic position. The situation was further complicated by massive financial and administrative corruption within the institutions of the PA, which led to inappropriate spending of large amounts of funds (out of the meager available).

Main Indicators: The figures released by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) pointed out that the value of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at constant prices for the WB and GS (except Jerusalem) for the year 2005 could have reached \$4,456 million & 400,000.² The general readings of the economy pointed out that although the Palestinian GDP increased by 9%, it was still 29% less than the year 1999. The GDP for the year 2003 reached \$3,881 million, which indicated a recession of 14% less than the year 1999. In 2004, it reached \$3,928 million with a recession of 12.9% less than 1999.³

According to World Bank estimates, the Palestinian economy needs to achieve a 10% growth in the GDP annually during the four years 2005 – 2008 in order to match the records of the year 1999.⁴ This reflects the cruel destruction, siege, starvation, and confiscation of property that Israel used to suppress The Palestinian *Intifadah*, and force the people to surrender. The World Bank admitted that the main reason behind the inability of the Palestinian economy to employ its potentialities is basically the occupation, which blocks the movement of people and goods.

Often, researchers refer to the year 1999 as an economic standard because it preceded the *Intifadah*. The year 1999 witnessed the best performance of the Palestinian economy, and some sources pointed out that the GDP reached \$4,750 million, while the Gross National Product (GNP) reached \$5,850 million. Moreover, the per capita income from the GDP for the year 1999 reached \$1,575, and the per capita income from the GNP reached \$1,940.⁵ According to the CIA annual World Fact Book, the Palestinian per capita income in the WB declined from \$2,000 in the year 1999 to \$800 in 2003, while in GS it declined from \$1,800 in the year 1999 to \$600 in 2003. In the meantime, the Israeli per capita income reached \$19,000.⁶ This clearly reflects the unbalanced economic

position between the Zionist settlers and the autochthon people of Palestine.

Generally speaking, the Palestinian per capita income decreased by 36% from October 2000 (beginning of *Intifadah*) to the end of the year 2002, while the period between the year 2003 – 2005 witnessed a gradual annual economic growth of 7%, that was, however, far from the level of growth of the year 1999.⁷

In the year 2005, the GDP per capita reached \$1,268, compared to \$1,218 in 2004, but that of the year 2005 was still less by 30%, compared to the year 1999. Thus, if we take into consideration the percentage of income progress since the year 2003, a period of 5 to 7 years (2010 – 2012) will be needed to reach the *pre-Intifadah* level of the year 1999.⁸

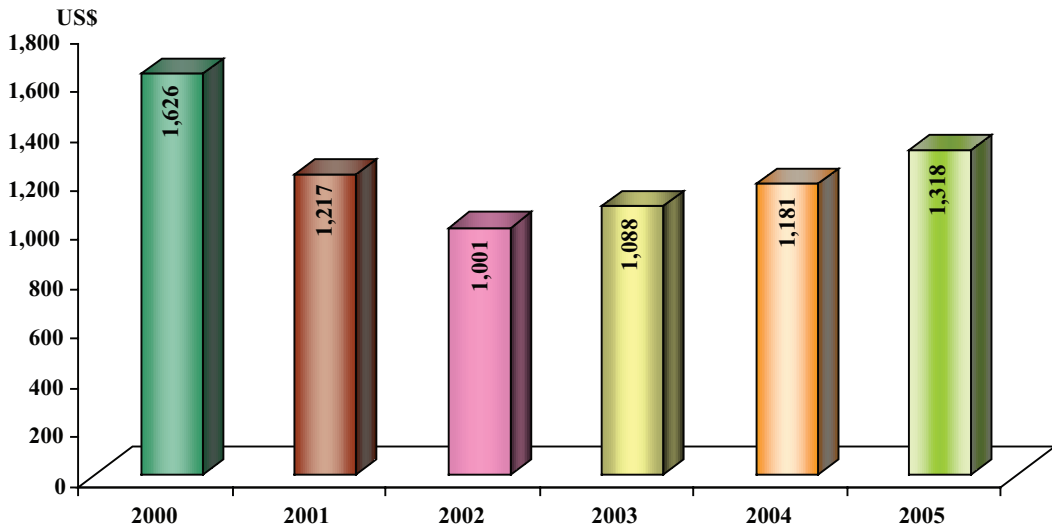
In the year 2005, the financial policy of the PA was characterized by a great deal of expansion resulting in a 25% rise in local consumption. The year 2005 also witnessed a 30% rise in the private sector deposits, which had a great positive impact on the construction and transportation sectors, as the first scored a 25% growth rate while the second achieved 18%. These two sectors attained the highest growth rate and provided one-third of all new jobs. On the other hand, foreign aid increased by 20%, and the better performance of the Israeli economy was instrumental in providing new jobs for Palestinian workers. The Palestinians also benefited from the Israeli relative relaxation in the closure of borders and the restriction on the movements of goods and persons.⁹

Table 1/7: Economic Main Indicators of the West Bank and Gaza Strip¹⁰

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005(p)
Real GDP growth	-5.6%	-14.8%	-10.1%	6.1%	6.2%	8.7%
Cumulated growth since 1999	- 5.6%	-19.6%	-27.7%	-23.3%	-18.5%	-11.4%
Cumulated growth since 1999, per capita	-9.5%	-25.9%	-35.7%	-34.1%	-32.4%	-29%
Population (million)	2.93	3.05	3.16	3.27	3.39	3.51
Exchange rate (Israeli shekel: US\$)	4.08	4.21	4.74	4.55	4.48	4.35
GNI per capita, US\$	1,626	1,217	1,001	1,088	1,181	1,318
Consumer price inflation	2.7%	1.2%	5.7%	4.4%	3%	3%
Unemployment rate	14%	26%	31%	25.6%	26.6%	22.4%
Poverty rate	31%	46%	59%	61%	46%	43%

Source: World Bank Staff calculations and PCBS. Notes: Figures exclude East Jerusalem. (p): projection.

**GNI Per Capita in the WB & GS According to World Bank Calculations
and PCBS 2000 - 2005**



The Palestinian people have a very poor infrastructure, which barely meets the demands of the existing population, let alone the expected growth in population during the next few years. This weak infrastructure represents a major challenge to the Palestinians. On the other hand, the separation of the WB from GS, and their inability to communicate geographically with others have contributed to the weakening and blocking of the growth of the Palestinian economy. In this context, the USA Rand Corporation carried out a study, entitled: *“The Arc: A Formal Structure for a Palestinian State”*, which proposed a mechanism to rebuild the Palestinian infrastructure through the construction of a bow-shaped railway that connects all the provinces of the WB with GS, from Jenin to Rafah, and with the whole world, in addition to Gaza airport and harbor.¹¹

When the PA came to office, the economy was privileged by being debt-free, unlike the economies of the region. However, this economy was soon loaded with debts that reached \$1,340 million until 2004. However, the Legislative Council endorsed only 4.6% of the total public debt, as said by Dr. Sa’di al-Karnaz (head of the Legislative Council Budget and Financial Affairs Committee) in the “Third Budget Conference”.¹²

In addition, the potential capabilities of Palestinians have been misused. This is due to improper policies of recruitment that is based on favoritism towards relatives, and members of a given agency, group, or the ruling party.

This policy deprives the society from qualified people who can develop and build up the state economically. This situation results in a great number of unemployed people who detest these public policies, or, at least, are indifferent to public concerns and problems. Another problem emerged; namely regression in the performance of the Palestinians private sector, which coincided with the growing role of the public sector in recruitment, in accordance with the so-called disguised unemployment.

The Palestinian economy functions in a local structure that lacks comprehensive and integrated administrative and legal regulations. This internal factor did not enable the Palestinian economy to by pass some external challenges, or even to make optimal use of its limited human and material resources. The repercussions of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* underlined the active role of Israel in the impoverishment and destabilization of the Palestinian economy.

As mentioned earlier, what distinguishes the Palestinian economy had not been utilized. The Palestinians did not make optimal use of their human capabilities, and were unable to maintain their debt-free record. Moreover, the foreign loans were not invested in the appropriate fields that can generate revenue that contributes in the resolution of the economic problems, and in the service of the loans in the short run and their payment them back in the long run. In addition, the use of aid in relief efforts was far away from the real fields of development.

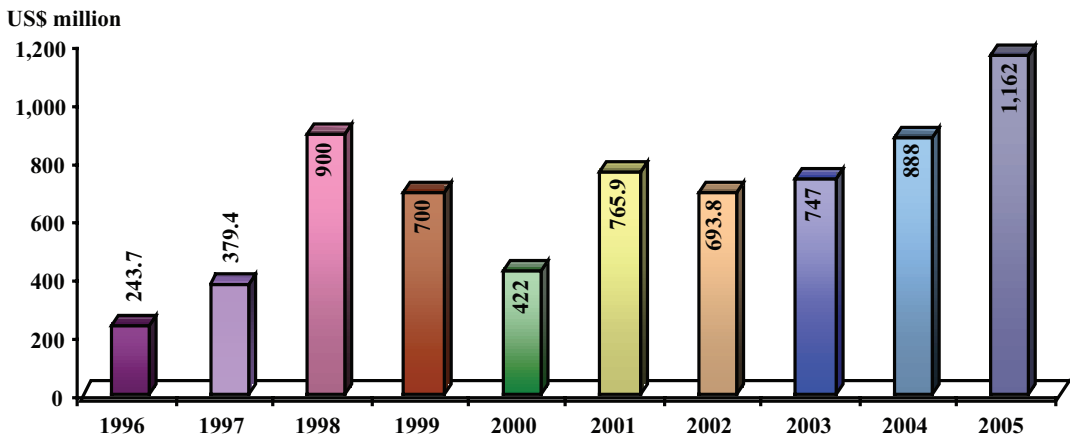
The Authority's Budget:

According to the General Budget Department of the Finance Ministry, the total income in the budget of the PA for the year 2005 was estimated at \$1,058 million, including \$396 million from local taxes and \$662 million as taxes and customs collected for the Palestinians by the Israelis. Total expenditures were estimated at \$2,220 million, with \$936 million allocated for salaries. Thus, the expected deficit before receiving any foreign aid was estimated at \$1,162 million.¹³

**Table 2/7: Summary of the General Budget
from 1996 to 2005 (US\$ million)¹⁴**

Statement	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
General revenues	927.9	1,195.4	1,821.5	1,603.8	1,364	1,125.1	977.4	531	1,705.9	1,058
Domestic revenues	684.2	816	921.5	903.8	964	287.1	283.6	207	805.9	396
Grants, aids, easy loans	243.7	379.4	900	700	422	765.9	693.8	747	888	1,162
General expenditure	927.9	1,211	1,858.4	1,758.1	1,364	1,239.3	1,227.8	1,278	1,694	2,220
Current expenditure	709.6	818.3	894.4	1,008.7	990	1,016.6	1,023	1,040	1,444	1,952
Capital & development expenditure are funded by the treasury & donor states	218.3	392.7	963.9	749.2	436	595.1	563.3	654	250	268
Deficit before grants & aids	-	395	936.9	854.3	422	186.3	250.4	-747	888	1,162
Overall deficit	-	15.6	36.9	154.3	50	265.2	174.7	0	0	0

Grants, Aids, and Easy Loans to the PA 1996 - 2005



Actually, the monthly Palestinian income during the year 2005 reached about \$95 million, yet if Israel does not turn over the revenue from the income tax to the PA, then the whole remaining sum would not suffice to cover the salaries, not to mention other services. That is why the PA depends on foreign donations and aids.

During the first 9 months of the year 2005, the monthly deficit in the PA's budget reached \$57 million & 100,000, with a total of \$514 million by the end of September 2005, which increased to \$800 million by the end of the year. The monthly rise of salaries for the year 2005 reached about \$15 – 20 million that will increase the deficit to \$900 million by 2006. In this case, it would be impossible to provide funds to cover this deficit. The PA has benefited a great deal from foreign donations, aids, and easy loans which reached, according to the 2005 budget, \$1,162 million, with an increase of about 31% over the year 2004. In the meeting held in July 2005, the G8 countries tentatively vowed to collect up to \$3 billion every year, especially during the coming three years, from official and private sources.¹⁵

Salaries in 2005 consumed about 82.5% of the PA's total income (\$78 million & 300,000 out of \$94 million & 900,000 per month). This is only when Israel delivers the collected taxes and customs for the Palestinians (which is about \$60 million per month), but if it does not, the total income of the PA would not cover more than 45.5% of the total salaries. However, Israel never hesitates to keep this money as a tool for political and economic subjugation, just as it did during the first years of the *Intifadah*.

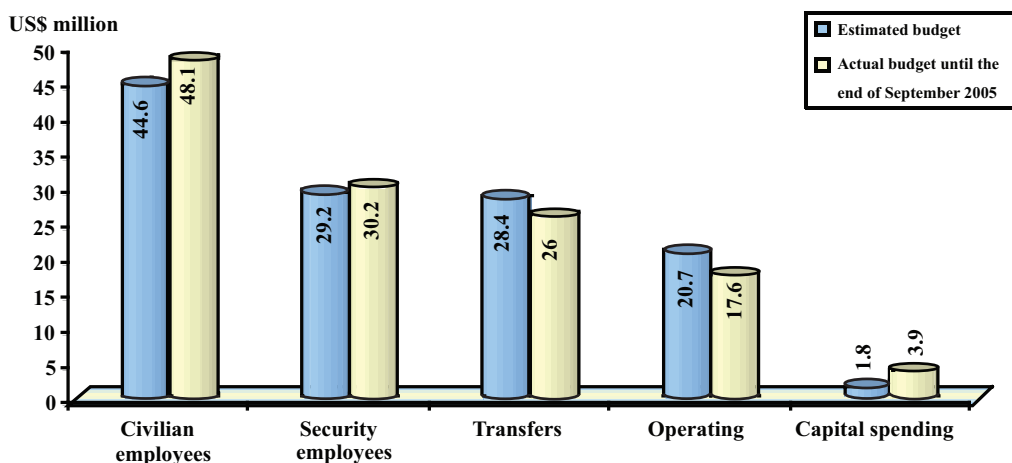
The Palestinian Minister of Economy Mazin Sunnuqrut, noticed a contradiction in the priorities of foreign countries towards the Palestinian people. They insisted to give precedence to the establishment of the security organs, whose budget was increased by 40%. "We had to allocate only 15% for agriculture and 15% for health care. This was done on the request of the donor countries in order to work towards controlling the deteriorating security situation," said the Palestinian Minister. He also confirmed that the government has decided to employ 15,000 from the former members of the security cadre and those who were actively engaged in the resistance. In turn, this led to an increase of about 25 – 30% in salaries. That is to say, \$110 million per month for 150,000 employees in both the security and civil sectors.¹⁶

Table 3/7: Monthly Financial Operations of the Palestinian Authority in 2005¹⁷

Monthly averages (US\$ million)	2005 Budget	Actual budget (until the end of September 2005)
Revenue:	84.9	94.9
Gross domestic	31.2	35.6
Gross monthly clearance (taxes & customs collected by Israel)	53.7	59.3
Expenditure:	124.7	125.8
Gross wages:	73.8	78.3
- Civilian	44.6	48.1
- Security	29.2	30.2
Non-wage expenditure:	49.1	43.6
- Operating	20.7	17.6
- Transfers	28.4	26.0
PA financed capital spending	1.8	3.9
Net lending	10.2	24.3
VAT refunds	1.6	1.9
Balance	-51.5	-57.1

Source: Ministry of Finance.

Monthly Financial Expenditures of the PA in 2005

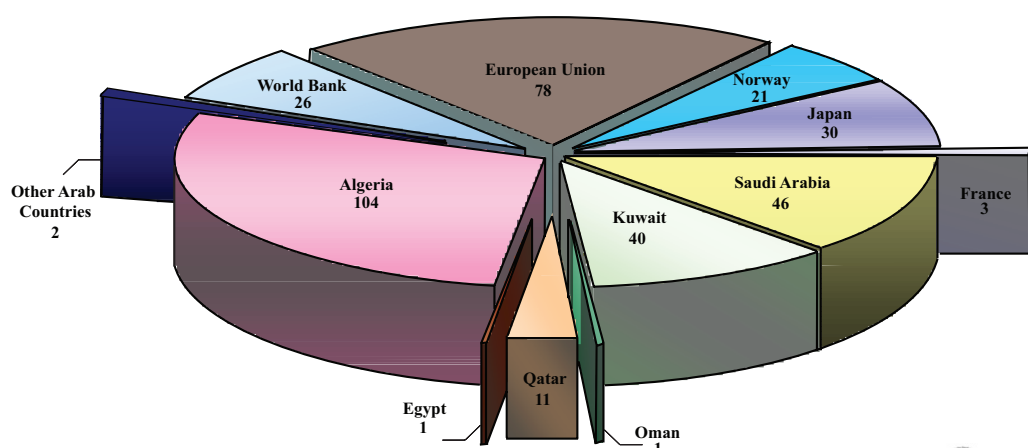


The PA received \$363 million in direct financial support for its budget of 2005, compared to \$353 million in 2004, of which the contribution of Arab countries totaled \$205 million in 2005 (see table 4/7). As for the rest of the aid money (about \$738 million), it was allocated to specific developmental projects.

**Table 4/7: Foreign Support for the Palestinian Authority's Budget
2004 – 2005 (US\$ million)¹⁸**

Year	2004	2005
Total of support's budget	353	363
Arab countries as follows:	98	205
Saudi Arabia	77	46
Kuwait	0	40
Oman	0	1
Qatar	0	11
Libya	14	0
Egypt	3	1
Algeria	0	104
Tunis	2	0
Other Arab Countries	2	2
European Union	50	0
World Bank	67	26
Bank Trust Fund as follows:	118	132
European Union	56	78
World Bank	20	0
Norway	12	21
Canada	7	0
Britain	12	0
Japan	10	30
Australia and Korea	1	0
France	0	3
Other aids	20	0

Foreign Support for the PA's Budget in 2005 (US\$ million)



The most important conclusions of the Third Conference of the General Budget – submitted to Al Mezan Center for Human Rights, which was held on 26 December 2005, are:

1. The late submission of the budget causes chaos that ultimately confuses the action plans of the executive power, mitigates its performance, and undermines its efforts of financial control over the budget, and engages it in finding justification for this delay.
2. The budget depends greatly on the donors, even in covering the salaries of the PA's employees. Thus, if donations are withheld, salaries will stop, which leads to extensive foreign intervention, almost total control, of the Palestinian internal policies.
3. There is a great defect in the performance of the PA's on the use of public funds. The Parliamentary Budget Committee has demanded the suspension of the article on governmental headquarters tenancy because it is an "unjustified" cost. The PA had actually spent more than \$200 million on this unnecessary project, though it can build governmental compounds with an annual cost of about \$15 – 20 million.
4. No corrective measures on the public law of retirement were taken, which contribute in decreasing the gross rate of work opportunities, saving \$125 million for the item of gross loan money, and \$20 million for leases and employment, in addition to the best use of loans and foreign aids.

Repercussions of the Israeli Occupation:

On its occupation of GS, the WB,

Sinai and the Golan Heights, Israel immediately formed an economic committee affiliated to the Central Bank of Israel and the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS). The motive behind all these measures was to link the Israeli economy to its Palestinian counterpart, thus transforming the latter into a private market for Israeli goods, a source for its human resources, and a bridge to the Arab market.

The Palestinian economy continued to be completely subjected to the Israeli economy. For example, the textile industry had a prominent position among Palestinian industries functioned on a subcontracting basis with Israeli factories. This industry stopped immediately after the cessation of relations with Israel.

Israel made every effort to change the nature of the economic relationships of GS and the WB with the world in general and the Arab world in particular. In

this way commercial transactions with Israel reached an average of more than 85% of the total Palestinian foreign trade. That is how Israel managed to secure tight control over the flow of the Palestinian economy.

After the Oslo Agreement, Israel imposed many restrictions on the Palestinian economy under the pretext of security. Thus, all the optimistic expectations of the “economic benefits of peace” for the Palestinian that would lead to prosperity and development had vanished. Moreover, the Paris Protocol did not free the Palestinian economy from Israel’s grip, rather it may have placed more obstacles on its way. Thus, the Palestinian economy became a hostage of Israel and served its ulterior political plans.

According to data provided by the PCBS, Palestinian exports for the year 2002 reached \$401 million: \$370 million to Israel (92.3%), \$29 million to Arab countries (7.2%), and \$2 million to other countries (0.5%). Palestinian imports for the same year reached \$2,356 million, which were distributed as follow:¹⁹

Table 5/7: Palestinian Imports in 2002

Imports from	Total amount (US\$ million)	Percentage %
Israel	1,739	73.8%
European Union	247	10.5%
Arab countries	40	1.7%
USA	67	2.8%
East Asian countries and others	263	11.2%

In his evaluation of the performance of the Palestinian economy for the year 2005, the Palestinian Minister of Economy, Mazin Sunnuqrut, said: “Israel is Palestine’s first commercial partner in both ways, as it exports to us, every year, more than \$3 billion of its products and metals, and imports from us about \$350 million. These findings are the outcome of this imposed bond.”²⁰

The PA is not in control of its financial policies. Israel drained the Palestinian financial resources, and transferred them to Israel through three channels:

- Tariffs and customs duties.
- Income taxes and social insurance.
- Revenues from using the Israeli currency, or the so-called “sovereignty revenues”.

Some researchers estimate Israeli plundering of Palestinian financial resources at an annual rate of 15 – 20% of the GNP.²¹

On the other hand, the occupation causes serious deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian people that forces them to seek jobs in the occupied territory of 1948, where their number reached 150,000 in 1999. This is theoretically a lucrative source of income, but, in line with their usual hard line policy of suppression and submission, the occupation forces frequently closed the borders and crossing points, thus depriving these people, or most of them, of their jobs.

The Israeli policy of internal closures, fixed and interim checkpoints, and curfews, as well as its ethnic Apartheid Wall, had the worst impact on the Palestinian economy. The World Bank estimated that Israeli internal closures were responsible for 50% decline in the GDP during the period between 2000 and 2002. The agony of the Palestinians continued because of barriers during the year 2005. Their number decreased from 680 in November 2004 to 376 in August 2005, but then rose again to reach 396 in November 2005. Such closures are enough to destroy any economy, not to mention closing borders and crossing points with other countries.²²

In the agreement concerning the crossing points in GS, concluded on 15 November 2005, Israel pledged to allow the transfer of goods according to the market forces, and organized, starting from 15 January 2006, the movement of trucks and individuals between GS and the WB. It also acknowledged the Palestinian control over the passage of Rafah along its borders with Egypt (under international supervision). Israel, moreover, agreed not to obstruct the building and operation of Gaza harbor. The World Bank estimated that the current assets of GS economy allow it to export 150 cargo trucks on a daily basis (the agreement allowed the export of 150 cargo trucks per day starting from 31 December 2005, in addition to any extra agricultural products). The Karni border crossing was the only one with a daily passing average of 43 trucks during the six months before the separation. In September and October, the crossing frequency was 18 trucks a day, then increased to 44 after the signature of the agreement.²³

The *Intifadah* Economic Losses:

Dr. Nasr ‘Abd al-Karim estimates the daily losses incurred on the Palestinian economy to be about \$11 – 15 million. This results from the paralysis of the means of production, consumption, and commercial

transactions on one hand, and the loss of more than 120,000 Palestinian their jobs in Israel. It also damaged the infrastructure as well as private and public economic enterprises because of the Israeli bombardment.²⁴ In addition, are the indirect losses represented by the loss of opportunities caused by the economic siege. The following table 6/7 shows the losses incurred by the Palestinian economy in the GDP as a result of the siege, blockage, and Israeli attacks during the period from 29 September 2000 to 28 September 2005.²⁵

**Table 6/7: Losses of the Palestinian Economy in the GDP
(29/9/2002 – 28/9/2005)**

	Economic sectors	Percentage to the GDP	Value to the GDP (US\$ million)	Average of decline in the GDP	Recession through one year (US\$ million)	Total recession (29/9/2000 - 28/9/2005)
1	Agriculture	7	316.19	55	173.8	869
2	Industry	18	813.06	52	422.7	2,113.5
3	Construction	12	542.04	50	271.2	1,356
4	Trade	11	496.8	30	148.04	745.2
5	Transportation, communication	4	180.6	38	68.6	343
6	Financial intermediation	3	135.5	20	27.1	135.5
	Total	55	2,484.3	27.2	1,112.4	5,562
7	General administration and defense	9	406.5	35	142.2	711
8	Social services	26	1,174.4	30	352.3	1,761.5
9	Other sectors	10	541.7	50	225.8	1,129
	Total	45	2,032.6	12.8	720.3	3,601.5
	Overall amount	100	4,517	40	1,832.74	9,163.7

Assessments by the Palestinian National Information Centre indicate that the losses of the Palestinian economy, since the outbreak of the *Intifadah* and until 29 September 2005, totaled about \$15 billion & 600 million.²⁶

Industry: The industrial sector enjoys paramount importance and is given special attention by the PA in order to increase its productivity and capacity to develop the domestic economy. They aim to adopt manufacturing strategies that cope with the current variables, such as encouraging small, medium and traditional industries, as well as mass labor industries,²⁷ and to export High-Tec projects. Yet, the heavy legacy of the occupation, represented in the distortion and backwardness of the industrial sector, and the frequent

obstacles that it imposed on the Palestinian economy, particularly on this sector, make it very difficult for the PA to achieve its industrial goals.

In spite of these obstacles, the industrial sector was able to contribute 17.4% of the GDP for the year 1999, which had, however, declined to 11% for the years 2001 – 2002 and 15.2% (14% in other assessments) for the year 2003. Besides, the contribution of the industrial sector in recruitment decreased from about 16% for the year 1996 to 12% for the years 2002 – 2003. The number of workers in the field of industry, 50,532 in 1994, increased to 72,660 in 1999, but declined to 60,186 in 2003. The following table shows the proportion of the contribution of the industrial sector to GDP:²⁸

**Table 7/7: The Contribution of the Industrial Sector
in Domestic Production**

Year	Percentage of contribution
1994	11.5%
1995	9.9%
1996	11.5%
1997	11.9%
1998	13.2%
1999	17.4%
2000	15.7%
2001	11.2%
2002	10.8%
2003	15.2%
2004	12.3%
2005	11%

It should be noted that the contribution of the manufacturing industry constitutes on average 88% of the total contribution of the industrial sector, followed by the public utilities sector (water and electricity), with 8%, and, finally, the mining sector, with 4%. This shows that the industrial sector in Palestine depends largely on the manufacturing industry sector due to the scarcity of raw materials, like metals and oil.²⁹

Data provided by the PCBS indicates that the contribution of various economic activities in the quarterly GDP has been affected in the short term, compared to the third quarter of the year 2005, and the fourth quarter of the year 2004, as they witnessed a decline in mining, manufacturing industry, and public utilities (water & electricity) from 12.3% through the fourth quarter of the year 2004 to 12% and 11% through the third and fourth quarters of the year 2005.³⁰

Agriculture: The agricultural sector is historically one of the most important sectors in Palestine, and the Palestinian economy used to be classified as agricultural. Besides, agriculture in Palestine is connected to the demand of nutritional security, in addition to its significant contribution to Palestinian gross exports, processing, and the GDP.

This sector has contributed 11.3% to the GDP, to the value of \$405 million & 200,000 for the agricultural years 1994/1995. In the years 1997/1998, it contributed \$445 million & 600,000, with a decline that reached 10% of the GDP, but in the years 1999/2000 it went up to 11% to decline once more to 9% for the year 2003.

Contributions of agricultural activities decreased from 9.5% throughout the fourth quarter of the year 2004 to reach 7% throughout the third quarter of the year 2005, but it went up again to 7.2% throughout the fourth quarter of the year 2005.³¹

The proportion of the contribution of the agricultural sector in the GDP during the period 1995 – 2000 fluctuated. However, on average, its contribution in the GDP during the same period reached 10.6%. This fluctuation resulted, in the first place, from the Israeli policies towards the Palestinian economy, as well as the lack of national agricultural development plans.

The absorption of employment in the Palestinian agricultural sector and its contribution to recruitment has provided 37,400 job opportunities throughout the agricultural season of 1994/1995. In the year 1999/2000 employment increased by 13% to reach 50,500 workers. Assessments indicate that a great deterioration in the Palestinian agricultural sector occurred due to some military actions represented by land sweeping and sabotaging since the beginning of the *Intifadah* in the last quarter of the year 2000. So, the number of workers decreased to 43,500 in the season 2000/2001, with a rate of 13.9%. In the year 2002, the rate reached 15.4%.³²

At the time of writing this report, the available official database on agriculture, for the year 2005, is limited and insufficient, yet the result of the agricultural survey for the agricultural season, 2004/2005, indicates that orchard trees (like olives, almonds, grapes, citrus, etc.) represent 58.7% of the total cultivated land, followed by field crops, with 30.9%, and then vegetables, with 10.8%.³³

We may get a closer picture on the year 2005 by consulting the performance figures of the preceding year (2004). The PCBS indicated that the total cultivated space with field crops, garden trees, vegetables, and flowers, on Palestinian land

reached 1 million & 824,000 donums (1 donum (dunam) = 1,000 square meters); of which 91.1% is in the WB and 8.9% in GS. The PCBS also indicated that gross production value reached about \$940 million, of which 57.6% goes for plant production and 42.4% for animal production. The report also shed light on the aggregation of irrigated plants in GS, that constitutes 69.3% of the total cultivated land. In the WB, the irrigated cultivation ratio is no more than 7.9% of the total cultivated area. Area cultivated with orchard trees was 1 million & 153,000 donums, of which \$1 million & 96,000 donums is in the WB and 57,000 donum in GS. It is noteworthy that 82.4% of the irrigated land in GS is cultivated with orchard trees. While in the WB, unirrigated trees constitute the majority of orchard trees, with 97.6%. Olive trees constitute the largest space of orchard trees, with a ratio of 81.1%, then comes grapes, with 6.6%, almonds, with 4.1%, and, finally, citrus, with 2.3%.

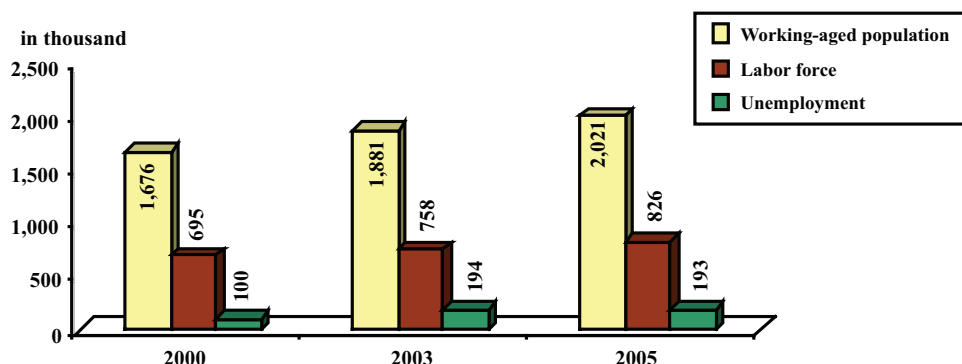
The GDP of the agricultural sector reached about \$555 million.³⁴ However, there is apparently no significant difference in the performance between the years 2004 and 2005. However, initially, but not conclusively, indicators suggest a decline of about 2% in the ratio of the contribution of the agricultural sector in the GDP.

Poverty and Unemployment: According to the PCBS statistics, the unemployment rate increased from 10% before the *al-Aqsa Intifadah* to 27% during the first quarter of 2005, i.e., 208,000 unemployed persons, while the Ministry of Labor estimates unemployment to be about 40%.³⁵ The World Bank statistics indicate that during 2005 the job market received about 44,000 workers, but created 64,000 jobs, thus the number of unemployed persons dropped 20,000. The percentage of dependents on working persons dropped from 6.6 in 2004 to 5.8 in 2005. The World Bank expects a decrease in unemployed people by a rate of about 4.5%, (from 27% to 22.5%), by the end of 2005. Meanwhile, the number of Palestinian workers in Israel dropped from 150,000 before the rise of the Intifadah to 66,000 in September 2005, while this number had been 50,000 in 2004 (see table 8/7).³⁶

Table 8/7: Employment and Unemployment in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (in thousand)

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Working-aged population	1,676	1,744	1,811	1,881	1,955	2,021
Labor force participation rate	41.5%	38.6%	38.1%	40.4%	40.5%	40.9%
Labor force	695	675	690	758	790	826
Employment:	595	505	473	563	577	633
The West Bank	334	310	296	343	370	392
Gaza Strip	145	125	128	166	157	177
Israel and settlements	116	70	49	54	50	64
Unemployment	100	170	216	194	212	193
Unemployment rate	14.3%	25.2%	31.3%	25.6%	26.9%	23.4%

Employment and Unemployment in the WB and GS for 2000, 2003 & 2005



High and uncontrollable unemployment rates pose a considerable concern in Palestine. This problem had even aggravated due to the recurrent closures and foreign policies towards Palestinian employment. The Ministry of Labor's statistics and reports show an increasingly serious problem. Unemployment rates over the first years of the *Intifadah*, according to the estimates of the Ministry of Labor, reached 55% in GS and the WB; 65% in GS alone. These percentages were confirmed by reports released by the State Information Service of the PA. These estimates may have been based on what is known as the unemployment broad estimate.³⁷ During the National Congress for Employment,³⁸ convened on 27 – 28 December 2005, in GS and the WB, participants underlined that the current increase in unemployment rates is over 50%. The Palestinian General Labor Federation considered that the wide scale recruitment policy in the public sector do not tally with the existing needs, and felt that it is the real reason behind the disguised unemployment in the governmental sector.³⁹

The World Bank estimates show that the proportion of poverty during 2005 reached about 43%, of which 15% live in destitution, as compared to 46% in 2004.⁴⁰

The PCBS showed that about 62.6% of Palestinian families lost more than half their income during the *Intifadah*; about 61.3% in the WB and 65.6% in GS, by year 2005. About 48.7% of the families over the past 12 months (September 2004 – September 2005) reduced their expenditure on basic needs, about 51.3% in the WB and 43.7% in GS. Clothing and food are the two most affected items. Data also showed that there is a high proportion of families who changed their food consumption. 97.2% and 95.3% decreased their consumption of meat and fruits respectively while 91.2% had an overall decrease in their food quantities.⁴¹

Palestinian Development Plans and Foreign Aid and Assistance Programs:

The early 1980s witnessed the emergence of the

slogan “development for steadfastness”, on which several conferences, attended by most local institutions, were convened. In 1986, a conference discussed the sources of funding, and the attitude to be adopted towards them and the foreign developmental plans. Other successive conferences and seminars followed in which many ideologies and slogans crystallized, such as “development and resistance”, “public support development”, “development for steadfastness” and “development with disengagement”.

After the signature of the Oslo Accords, the first attempt to formulate an ambitious developmental plan to reconstruct the Palestinian community, called “The Developmental Program for the Palestinian Economy 1994 –2000”, was drafted. The cost of this program was estimated at \$11 billion & 600 million (by 1991 exchange rates). However, the plan was not implemented because of both lack of funds and the plan’s unrealistic assumptions.

The first priority of the PA was to rebuild and reconstruct the Palestinian community. Hence, the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation issued a report on “The Strategy of Development in Palestine 1996 – 1998”, whose gist was presented to the donor states during the Paris Conference in January 1996. It called for the establishment of an economic system based on the free market, and the encouragement of Arab and international investment, while the public sector should be responsible for the provision of the infrastructure

and the proper investment environment through a firm, legal, and organized framework.

In the Paris Conference of November 1996, the PA presented a “General Investment Program”, which included a list of projects whose cost totaled about \$845 million, distributed on the infrastructure, social, private and institution-building sectors. Subsequently, the Palestinian Development Plans for 1998 – 2000 and 1999 – 2001, were presented to develop the national planning process in Palestine.

The Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation also prepared the “Development Plan 1999 – 2003”, which gave the largest proportion of funds; 48% of the whole plan, to the infrastructure sector. The financial ceiling of this plan reached \$4,500 million.⁴² Finally, the Ministry of Planning presented the plan for “Economic and Social Re-stabilization 2004 – 2005,” which cost about \$1,200 million, to the donor states in Rome, which aimed to confront the economic crisis that the Palestinian people has been suffering since September 2000.⁴³

The Palestinian economy is characterized by high economic aspirations, but limited potentialities, and it faces restrictions. Within this reality, the PA geared economic development to achieve sustainable improvement in the living standards of the Palestinian people on the basis of equitable distribution of the funds acquired from the developmental process. Since its inception, the PA has viewed the institutions as one of the priorities of development, and hence it allocated a portion of the available funds for their construction.

The Mechanism and Phases of Donations:

1. International Assistance: The PA received in 2005 foreign aid and assistance, which totaled \$1,123 million, and were as follows:

- The European Union: \$295 million, most of which was designated to developmental projects.
- Aid from individual countries within the European Union. It amounted \$300 million, of which the Germany paid \$56 million, while Britain paid \$50 million.
- The USA: \$234 million, most of which was assigned for developmental projects.

- Arab countries: \$205 million.
- Norway: \$60 million.
- Japan: \$30 million.⁴⁴

The European Union pledged to double its aid to 500 million euros if signs of growth become visible. Aid from Arab countries reached \$205 million in 2005; about 18% of the total aid, though it was \$388 million; 42% of the total aid, in 2001.⁴⁵

The Palestinian Minister of Economy, Mr. Mazin Sunnuqrut, said that the donors conference convened in London in 2005, after the election of President 'Abbas, presented guarantees and endorsed \$2,100 million in assistance for the Palestinian people, but only \$350 million were actually received.⁴⁶

International aid for developing countries is one of the main sources of hard currency, in addition to other sources generated by reserves, exports, and direct foreign investment. This aid is given through bilateral or multilateral mechanisms between states. International aid, in general, has many objectives, of which the most important probably relates to the realization of sound political and economic agenda that are instrumental in eliminating and containing the causes of tension and violence that damage the interests of the strategic allies. This is through presenting economic incentives linked to ending the state of conflict.

Donor states and institutions, which expressed their intention to provide assistance to the PA, reached at least 44. They collectively agreed on the guidelines, objectives, and purposes of presenting such assistance to the Palestinian territories of which the most important were:⁴⁷

- a. Support the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians through the acceleration of economic development in the Palestinian territories, and the implementation of the projects that should improve the Palestinian standard of living, as well as their quality of life.
- b. Establishing a Middle-East system based on collective security, stability, and progress for the people of the region, which should then be merged into the world economy.
- c. Eliminating and containing the causes of conflict, tension, and violence, as well as encouraging market economies and democratic institutions, and safeguarding human rights.

These reasons and objectives for providing assistance to the PA go well beyond the traditional framework of the policies adopted by advanced

countries on the issue of aid to developing countries, namely to find an equilibrium between the industrial North and the backward South. Thus, after Oslo Accords, the donor countries found the Palestinian territories, a new arena to experiment their ideologies and policies.

International assistance is extremely important to the Palestinian people, to set them on the right path to achieve sustainable development and growth. Nevertheless, this aid failed to achieve the aspired development due to many factors, of which the most important is the policies of the occupier, Israel.

After signing the Paris Protocol in 1994, aid and assistance has become an obsession for the Palestinian decision makers, besides having a direct effect on people's lives in general. A number of terms and concepts were introduced into the economic life of the Palestinians, of which three are of concern to us here: pledge, commitment, and disbursement.

When desiring to provide assistance to some countries, including Palestine, donors pledge to pay a sum of money in a conference, a meeting or so, but they usually pay less than promised. They do not actually pay until they conclude an agreement with the payee; the payment usually becomes less than the declared donation.

A pledge is a declaration of the intention of a donor state, party, or association to provide assistance, or financial aid, in cash or kind, e.g. technical assistance. In this declaration, the total sum of money, or the value intended, is to be defined, but with no official commitment on the part of the donor to fulfill his pledge, or to discuss details of delivering the aid or its purpose. A commitment is to be made by providing assistance upon an agreement or memorandum of understanding on the quantity, objectives, and the procedures of delivering the assistance. After concluding the agreement, the provision of the assistance becomes a commitment on the donor state. Then both parties are to cooperate in implementing the agreement that defines the rights and obligations of each party. So, commitment is an advanced step, or stage, of the provision of assistance. The most important element of commitment is to define the projects and programs to be financed by the aid.

Since 1993, the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) discharged the duties of managing international assistance to the PA. Later in 1994, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation joined the PECDAR. After commitment,

there comes the phase of preparation for the implementation of the project within the framework, and according to the conditions, of the agreement.

Disbursement goes through designated funds, many of which are operated under the supervision of the World Bank. Sometimes, some countries resort to open special accounts in their banks and in the banks of the aid receiving countries to withdraw funds for specific projects and programs. The following table indicates the international aid from 1994 to 2003, in terms of commitment and the actual payment:

Table 9/7: Aid from Donor Countries for the Years 1994 to 2003
(US\$ million)

Year	Commitment	Disbursement	Percentage
1994	820.849	515.289	62.8%
1995	620.801	435.926	70.2%
1996	770.295	516.066	67%
1997	646.995	526.128	81.3%
1998	673.742	420.148	62.4%
1999	742.592	486.598	65.5%
2000	852.805	500.467	58.7%
2001	619.881	516.156	83.3%
2002	582.095	463.267	79.6%
2003	378.187	67.594	17.9%
Total	6,708.242	4,447.639	66.3%

Source: Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, international aid, various Papers

2. Foreign Loans:

Countries usually receive foreign loans from many sources, of which the most important are loans based on bilateral contracts with foreign governments, loans from multinational organizations, and loans from foreign private institutions and individuals. Countries usually resort to foreign loans because of their low domestic savings and the consequential need of hard currencies.

The gross foreign loans contracted upon by the PA throughout the period (1994 – 2003) reached \$1,257 million, from which \$914 million, i.e., 72.7%, were withdrawn. Gross loans totaled 62 loans, of which 22 were from the World Bank. Borrowing continued until its total sum reached \$1,340 million at the beginning of 2005.

3. International Assistance Based on Economic Sectors:

The above table 9/7 illustrates the distribution of international assistance given to the WB and GS. In general, the Palestinian development plan deals with four main sectors in order to achieve economic and social development, as well as the development of human capabilities and private investment. These sectors are:⁴⁸

1. Infrastructure sector:

This sector includes 8 sub-sectors for which the gross commitments reached about \$2,500 million, and of which about \$1,300 million, 53% of the total commitments and 25.4% of the total disbursement, were actually paid. The main beneficiary of the infrastructure sub-sectors is that of water supply and irrigation, which received about \$1,300 million.

2. Production sector:

The total disbursement on this sector reached about \$406 million, about 53.1% of the total commitment of the donor states for this sector, and about 9.1% of the gross disbursed assistance. This sector includes 5 sub-sectors, as illustrated in table 10/7 below.

3. The social sector:

The total disbursement on this sector reached about \$1,403 million, about 79.3% of the total committed to this sector; and about 31.6% of the gross disbursed assistance. This sector includes 8 sub-sectors, as illustrated in table 10/7 below.

4. Institution-building sector:

This sector received about 26.3% of the total disbursement, \$1,168 million, that constitutes about 80.9% of the total committed to this sector. The institution-building sector includes five sub-sectors, upon which assistance was distributed, as illustrated in table 10/7 below.

The sectors that benefited most are:

1. Institution-building sector: 19.8% of the total disbursement.
2. Water supply and irrigation: 13.7% of the total disbursement.
3. Education: 10% of the total disbursement.
4. Health: 8.6% of the total disbursement.
5. Human assistance: 7.8% of the total disbursement.
6. Infrastructure: 6.5% of the total disbursement.
7. Other sectors not classified within the main sectors, as they receive contingent assistance. The total disbursement on these sectors reached \$128 million & 600,000; 2.9% of the total disbursement.

Public investment still depends entirely on international assistance and on its availability. The implementation of these projects is still on a selective basis, and is determined by the donor states who provide funds for specific projects. This disturbs the investment plans and restructures their priorities in ways that may not necessarily conform with the national developmental priorities. In

addition, other factors hinder progress in such projects, including:

1. Lack of transparency on the power of the PA over land, water, and borders.
2. The period 1994 – 1997 witnessed great progress in restructuring the infrastructure of micro-projects, but this was not feasible with regard to bigger and more complicated developmental projects, as they need more time, preparation, and huge funds.
3. The difficulty of consensus between donors and the PA on the priorities, procedures, and practices, notwithstanding the existence of several Palestinian developmental plans, which were available during this period.
4. The PA lacks sufficient expertise in management and in the mechanism in land distribution, which delay the actual implementation of the projects.
5. The Israeli obstructive procedures, especially in area “C”, contributed to the suspension of investment projects. Besides, the closures and complicated restrictions handicapped the free flow of persons and goods to the foreign markets, which delayed the implementation of the actual projects, and hindered the progress of potential ones.

Donors’ moneys flowed, but it was not engaged as should have been. For, funding has its own political agenda, which is linked to the prevailing political situation, and the objectives of the donors. Moreover, a great amount of these funds was spent on logistic and technical matters, including expatriates. This renders a great amount of this funding meaningless, and hardly effective in the realization of the aspired economic development. Another factor for this retracted economic development is related to non-transparency and negligence of the priorities by the Palestinian society.

The experiences of developing countries on the role of international assistance and its impact on local economic development are not usually positive. This is shown in the massive protests and demonstrations in developing countries against international loans and assistance that repeated expressive slogans, such as “Trade not Aid”, that reject the unfair provisions of international trade that enable rich countries to control poor developing countries and drain their resources. While the raw materials of the poor countries are being sold with at trivial prices, they pay optionally high prices for the technological products that they get from the industrialized countries in the name of free trade, globalization, and the free market.

Although the Palestinian people have not experienced tangible change from the influx of foreign funds into GS and the WB, it is unfair to maintain that international assistance is unimportant, nor lacks ability to effect development. For a large measure of the responsibility of appropriate investment of these funds lies on the Palestinian side.

Table 10/7: Distributing International Aid on Sectors (1994-2003)
(US\$ million)

	Commitment	Disbursement
Infrastructure sector:	2,524.75	1,341.71
Power	239.95	125.07
Environment	32.38	12.99
Housing	225.37	113.98
Infrastructure	414.50	291.32
Solid waste	49.15	36.48
Communication	4.22	3.58
Transport	223.88	148.86
Water and irrigation	1,335.30	609.43
Production sector:	764.40	405.77
Agriculture	120.45	95.49
Developing industry	134.36	38.60
Private sector	105.92	51.60
Developing the production sector	307.68	152.50
Tourism and culture	95.99	67.58
Social sector:	1,770.31	1,403.16
Childhood and youth	22.32	12.13
Freed and returnees	43.89	39.62
Education	631.85	450.00
Health	485.42	381.58
Social and human development	139.46	116.93
Civil society and human rights	37.32	36.64
Human aid	392.05	348.85
Women	18.00	17.41
Institution-building sector:	1,443.88	1,168.42
Developing democracy	192.26	141.90
Building institutes	1,051.93	881.43
Police	144.53	119.04
Legal affairs	47.40	25.21
High ranking jobs	7.76	0.84
Other sectors	204.92	128.57
Total	6,708.26	4,447.63

Source: Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, international aid, various papers

Israeli Withdrawal and Evacuated Lands:

About 1 million & 400,000 people live in GS, which stretches along 363 km² only, i.e., an exceptionally high demographic density of 4,200 persons per square kilometer, that has no such similar density in the world. Yet GS may be considered as a huge prison and a ghetto, as it lacks full sovereignty over its passages, airport, port, sea, and borders.

GS is almost void of natural resources and raw materials of all types, save a reported natural gas discoveries in Gaza sea, which is still under Israeli siege. The continuity of such a disturbed political reality and instability weakens any attempt to attract foreign investment, not to mention encouraging local investment.

In addition, poverty and unemployment rates in GS are still very high, even when compared with those of the WB. There should be political changes leading to a functional use of the Palestinian lands in GS and the WB, which could only be achieved by maintaining a continuous geographical connection between them that should not be endangered by Israeli policies. Besides full control over the lands, borders, passages, the port of Gaza should be built and the airport should be renovated. Moreover, fair trade agreements with surrounding countries had to be concluded, and the government of the new Palestinian state must be transparent, honest, and faithful to the homeland and its citizens, not to mention the dire need to guarantee the continuity of international aid and fund. This means that the reform of the Palestinian economy heavily relies on independence and the end of occupation.

The Israeli withdrawal from GS enabled the Palestinians to make use of an additional 40% of GS lands, to which they did not previously have access. These lands can be utilized in various ways: fertile lands in agriculture, and others to build the port, schools, universities, and other needed facilities.

As for greenhouses left by the Israeli occupation, Mr. 'Abd al-Karim 'Ashur, the director of the Agricultural Relief Committees in Gaza, said: "If I were to choose between keeping or demolishing the greenhouses, I would choose the latter in the interest of the Palestinian people."⁴⁹

Firstly, the Israelis devastated these greenhouses and their systems, as mentioned by the head of the withdrawal technical teams. Secondly, the underlying motive behind the establishment of these greenhouses was exploitation. For, on one hand, they exploited free Palestinian water and cheap labor, and, on the other, sold their products in European and Israeli markets, which returned with big revenue for the settlers.

As for the Palestinians, we should take into consideration the scarcity of water supply and agricultural technology, that do not match the size of the available water resources. On the other hand, the Palestinians were unable to export their products to European and other world markets, because of the obstacles and restrictions imposed by the Israelis. Therefore, the alleged revenue acquired by the Palestinians from these greenhouses is not true.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, there are also about 10 – 12 thousand greenhouses, which produce about 370,000 tons of vegetables. Only 30% of this amount is available for consumption, while the rest faces the problem of exportation, even to the domestic market in the WB, due to difficulties in transportation.

Though viewed as public property, these greenhouses were not placed under the administration and supervision of the PA. Instead, a monopolizing company was allowed to renovate them, even without subjecting it to the rules of the private sector. Indeed this is a sort of excessive monopoly, and a continuation of financial and administrative corruption.

Financial Corruption:

According to 2005 opinion polls, more than 80% of the Palestinians believe that there is corruption in the PA. In February 2005, the Unlawful Profit Law was passed, and a commissioner was appointed to collect data and carry out investigations. However, investigation with some prominent figures had only recently started. A new Attorney General was appointed in the Autumn of 2005. He pursued some cases, but the issue of corruption came to the forefront after the last parliamentary elections in January 2006. The Palestinian Attorney General, Ahmad al-Mughni, uncovered, in a televised press conference convened on 5 February 2006, a large number of corruption cases, and added that the Office of the Attorney General is investigating 50 financial and administrative cases in which more than \$700 million were embezzled,⁵⁰ \$300 million in one case alone. Al- Mughni claimed that some prominent figures and top officials are involved, of whom a number had reportedly escaped from the country. The Palestinian attaché d'affaires in Amman, 'Ata Khayri, said, in an interview with *Alarab Alyawm* newspaper on 11 February 2006, that some of the suspects are in Jordan, but he did not specify. As an indicator of the widespread corruption, many donor states presented aid to the PA on condition that it carries out reform, or extended it in the form of developmental projects. However, some studies

claim that the magnitude of corruption is much wider than what was declared by the Attorney General.

There have been many reports on widespread corruption in the institutions of the PA, since its assumption of power. Many corruption files were uncovered in 1997, and press reports spoke of the disappearance of \$326 million. Though the case was referred to the Agency of Administrative Inspection, no serious investigation was conducted. In 1999, 20 Palestinian notables signed the so-called “Declaration of the Twenty”, which criticized the prevalence of financial corruption in the PA’s institutions. But several signatories were detained and threatened with death. On 11 December 2004, Faruq Qaddumi accused, in a report published in *al-Khaleej* newspaper, Muhammad Rashid with stealing hundreds of millions of dollars, of which only \$600 million were recovered.⁵¹

Conclusion:

1. Israeli policies played a far-reaching role in the destruction of the Palestinian economy. It affiliated it to the Israeli economy, thus impeding futuristic opportunities for its independence.
2. The Palestinian leadership was unable to terminate this affiliation due to many factors, some of which are objective and beyond its control, but others are internal factors associated with the performance of the PA.
3. The PA receives a fairly large financial aid and assistance, but this did not lead to the development of the economy, nor did it solve its problems. This is attributed to special reasons related to the donor states and their agenda, and to other reasons related to the ways by which these funds were used.
4. Disagreement on a comprehensive Palestinian plan for development, which takes into consideration the Palestinian status quo, circumstances, and available resources, led to distraction and contradiction of efforts to reform the economy. This does not help in the realization of an independent, stable, and viable Palestinian economy.
5. The economic problems from which the Palestinians suffer are widespread in both GS and the WB. However, unemployment, poverty, and demographic density in GS are slightly more than in the WB.
6. The Palestinian industrial sector is very weak. It does not play a significant role in creating job opportunities nor does it support the GDP. It is no more than a number of small-scale factories and home-

based crafts, characterized by mini and micro-scale vocational type, self-finance, individual and family business, and high rates of quitting from the industrial field.

7. The Palestinian economy is historically agricultural, but agriculture is no longer of paramount importance in employment and in the GDP.
8. The Israeli withdrawal from GS and the WB adds areas that Palestinians may utilize. However, the media uproar over the issue of the greenhouses is unfounded. They cannot generate the alleged revenues as long as the Israeli obstacles are in place.
9. Until the occupation and its impacts vanish, it is important to make optimal use of the available resources in order to support the steadfastness of our people. We need to work in a strong, honest and transparent manner, far away from monopoly, corruption, and extravagance.
10. The rise of the Palestinian economy should go through two phases:
First phase: Reforming deficiency, distortion and solving the current economic problems.
Second phase: Paying more attention to development, as an advanced stage to guarantee economic stability and growth.
11. Real development in the Palestinian economy can be achieved through:
 - a. The geographic connection between GS and the WB, with no Israeli obstacles.
 - b. Full control over the borders and passages, the operation of the airport and building the port.
 - c. Concluding fair trade agreements with neighboring countries.
 - d. Having a transparent leadership of the PA, who fights corruption and works for the national interest according to a clear plan and agenda.
 - e. The continuous flow of international assistance over an appropriate period of time.
 - f. To reform deficiency in the national economy on the one hand, and support economic development on the other.
12. International funds and assistance can play an active role in serving the national Palestinian economy on the following provisions:
 - a. Funds are provided according to the Palestinian agenda and priorities, not those of the donor countries, and in a way that serves the infrastructure and the main industrial sectors.
 - b. Attention should be paid to the developmental rather than the relief

- funding. However, if the latter becomes necessary, it should be guided towards an integrated system and plan that would be instrumental in achieving stability for the Palestine economy.
- c. Assigning a good portion of funds to the private sector, which has suffered severe losses.
 - d. Strive to help the Palestinian economy to find new markets through programs of "Trade Not Aid".
 - e. Donors should help in providing job opportunities for the Palestinian labor force based on their skills.
13. Promoting human resources to be a main pillar of development in a way that meets the needs of the Palestinian market. Mobilizing the capabilities of the Palestinians in the Diaspora, and putting the right person in the right place to participate in the developmental process.
 14. Encouraging private investment and developing investments through:
 - a. Creating a conducive, political, economic, and secured environment.
 - b. Organizing the financial policies to achieve the aspired goals.
 - c. Finalizing the institutional and legal framework of the economy, in a way that helps the achievement of the public objectives.
 15. We should differentiate between loans and grants. Loans are more dangerous as they have a direct impact on future generations. Thus, they should only be accepted with the agreement of the Legislative Council, and utilized in productive fields which can pay back these loans and their interests.
 16. PA should take the serious steps to disengage from the Israeli economy, and moves towards the Arab market. Agreements concluded with Israel, especially the economic ones, should be reconsidered in line with the interest of the Palestinian economy and its aspired goals.
 17. It is important to reconsider governmental monopolies and to reform the judiciary, in a way that guarantees an appropriate investment environment.
 18. Encouraging the banking sector to play its proper role in funding the agricultural and industrial private sectors.
 19. Developing an integrated and consistent national economic plan in all fields, and linking it to the budget in a way that serves the economy and the national interest. This budget should be a mean of supervision, touchstone for the assessment and an evaluation of performance.

Endnotes:

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Chapter Eight

Education in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

Education in the West Bank and Gaza Strip¹

Introduction: People all over the world struggle to preserve their identity, co-exist with it, and work towards its development. Culture and education represent essential components in this process. Therefore, the educational and cultural programs imposed by the imperialist states played a key role in subjecting the colonized states, and in changing the mentality of their people in order to comply with the projects of the colonizers.

In the Palestinian case, the Palestinian people have been subjected to colonialism quite early, since 1917. Under the British and Zionist colonization, the adopted policies towards education in Palestine were similar, their most prominent features were:

1. Scarcity of the budgetary allocations assigned for education.
2. Lack of genuine interest to eliminate illiteracy.
3. Insufficient number of teachers.
4. Inadequate budget for building schools.
5. Focusing on the first five years of the primary education only and neglecting secondary education, thus disrupting students' education.
6. Orienting the secondary education towards producing teachers, especially for the primary stage, thus separating it from other walks of life.
7. Devising a new educational system to achieve the goals of the occupation, i.e., imposing political, social and economic realities that facilitate the establishment of the Jewish National Home, and preventing the rise of a complementary or integrative cultural movement with other Arab countries.
8. Weakness of the vocational and industrial education, which led to failure in meeting the necessities of developed life.
9. Ignoring cultural and Arab orientations, and Islamic values.

The British, for example, rejected 50% of students' applications to join the primary stage in government schools. Statistical studies show that 66% remained illiterate, either because they did not join schools altogether, or they left them at an early stage. The great majority of the Arab students in the government schools belonged to the primary stage. The total number of students in the government schools in 1945/1946 was 82,775 of whom 80,915 were in the primary school, i.e., they formed 97.8%.²

Notwithstanding the transplantation of Israel on the ruins of the Palestinian people, with its alien civil, cultural, economic and societal dimensions, the destruction of the Palestinian cities, and the compulsory Diaspora, the

Palestinians exhibited great interest in education, and achieved advanced levels compared to others.

In the wake of the 1948 catastrophe, the Palestinians largely depended on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to provide them with relief and employment. Up to 1950/1951, the budget for education formed 1% of the general budget of UNRWA, but it gradually rose to 23% in 1960, 47% in 1970/1971, and 62% in 1984/1985. However, the enrolment of the Palestinians in the schools of UNRWA recorded a continuous decline. For example, the proportion of applicants in the 1960s was 5.3%, but it fell to 5% in the mid-seventies, 2.1% in the second half of the mid-seventies, and to 1.5% in the mid-eighties.

The Israeli occupation authorities had basically maintained in the West Bank (WB) and Gaza Strip (GS), the Egyptian and Jordanian laws and the educational curricula, with minor modification in the latter. But, it left no stone unturned to Judaize education in Jerusalem. The Military Governor in the WB issued the Military Order 91, which delegated the Military Governor to undertake the duties of the Minister of Education, with the full powers stipulated in the Jordanian law that gave him free hand to make whatever amendments that he saw appropriate. This procedure, i.e., working under the guise of the Jordanian and Egyptian laws, created an educational duality which caused imbalance. It kept the old infrastructure, while the schools, the budgets and the administration were placed under the authority of the occupation. Thus, the teachers, who were appointed prior to the occupation, continued to receive their salaries from the Ministry of Education in Amman; while those appointed afterwards had their salaries from the Israeli Ministry of Defense (the Civil Administration). The Israeli military occupation made basic alterations in to the contents of the textbooks and the educational system. After two months of the occupation, i.e., in July 1967, Israel prevented the circulation of 78, out of 121, books designed along the curricula of the Jordanian Ministry of Education, on the pretext that they incite hatred against Israel. The military authorities adopted oppression and deterrence as means of subjecting the people, especially in universities, apart from closures, curfews, and the occupation of schools, that were often turned into checkpoints, investigation centers and headquarters for the military personnel. All of this has, no doubt, strongly affected educational stability in Palestine. The days of Menachem Milson, the Military Governor in the WB, which coincided with the outbreak of the first *Intifadah* on 8 December 1987, represented the beginning of shameful daily violations by the military institution, that aimed at destroying the education in the WB and GS.

The Israeli occupation was an obstacle in the way of the educational process.

Its destructive policies targeted education to achieve the following:

1. Diverting the Palestinian educational system from its goal of building a developing, struggling and creative Palestinian character.
2. Obstructing the educational progress which was glaringly revealed during the first *Intifadah*. By then schools were closed or turned into barracks, students were assassinated and poverty prevailed. All this was designed to force some desperate Palestinian young men and women into the labor market, and paving the way for moral and social corruption.
3. Control of the government schools, which were under the Jordanian and Egyptian authorities, and subjecting them to the supervision and orders of the Military Governor.

This was accompanied by shortage of teachers and classrooms, which, in turn, negatively affected the quality of education and the process of modernizing its tools.

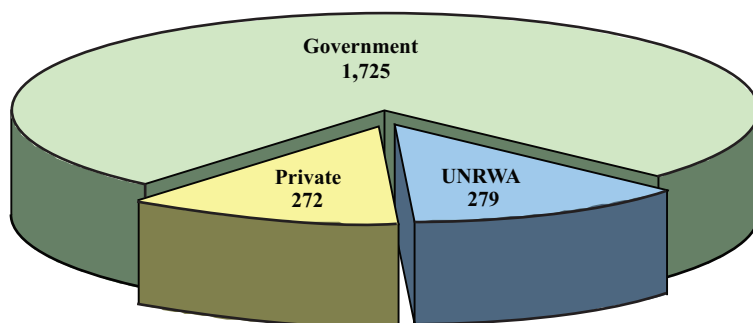
On the formation of the Palestinian National Authority, the education sector was transferred in 1994 from the domain of the military governor and the civil administration to its authority. In 2002, the Ministries of Education and Higher Education were merged in one Ministry under the name of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

The School Sector: At the beginning of the school year 2004/2005, more than a million Palestinian students went to schools, the number of schools in 2004/2005 reached 2,190; and the kindergartens totaled 947 with 75,324 pupils. In the next school year, the number of schools rose to 2,276, according to the following classification (see table 1/8).³

Table 1/8: Schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip

School year	Government	UNRWA	Private	Total
2004/05	1,659	273	258	2,190
2005/06	1,725	279	272	2,276

Schools in the WB and GS 2005/2006



The number of the students increased from 1 million & 50,327 in the academic year 2004/2005 to 1 million & 78,488 in the next academic year. It is noted that male schools converge female schools, as follows in tables 2/8 and 3/8.

Table 2/8: Total Statistics of the Palestinian Education by Gender for 2004/2005 and 2005/2006⁴

Gender	Number of schools		Number of students		Number of teachers		Number of sections	
	2004/05	2005/06	2004/05	2005/06	2004/05	2005/06	2004/05	2005/06
Males	752	802	528,221	536,752	24,383	22,700	12,053	12,610
Females	749	786	522,106	541,736	22,034	25,974	12,171	12,736
Co-ed	689	688	-	-	-	-	5,620	5,655
Total	2,190	2,276	1,050,327	1,078,488	46,417	48,674	29,844	31,001

Table 3/8: Distribution of Students by Grades, Supervising Authority and Gender in 2005/2006⁵

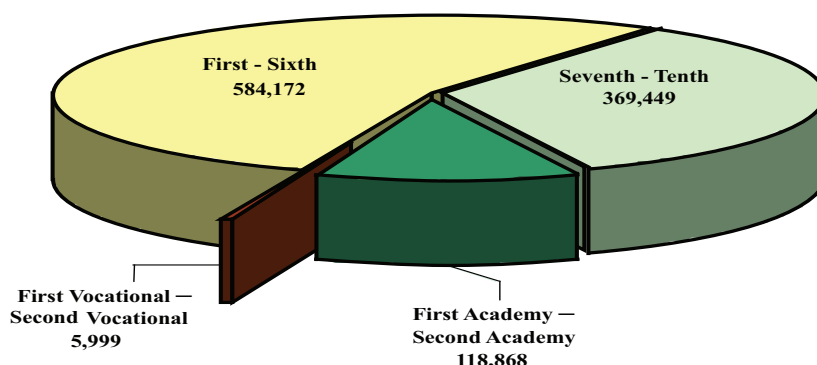
Grade	Government		UNRWA		Private		Total	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
One	29,071	29,093	13,034	13,157	6,840	4,907	48,945	47,157
Two	29,582	29,298	13,071	13,366	5,629	3,901	48,282	46,565
Three	29,207	28,992	13,726	13,753	4,689	3,119	47,622	45,864
Four	32,253	31,004	14,464	14,848	4,052	2,692	50,769	48,544
Five	33,221	32,247	15,787	15,719	3,631	2,403	52,639	50,369
Six	32,845	31,391	13,740	14,078	3,174	2,188	49,759	47,657
Seven	35,638	35,054	16,091	15,939	2,595	1,847	54,324	52,840
Eight	31,500	31,173	13,590	14,257	2,345	1,626	47,435	47,056
Nine	29,828	30,143	12,619	13,162	2,059	1,364	44,506	44,669
Ten	35,858	39,774	50	101	1,676	1,160	37,584	41,035
First Academy	27,681	32,382	0	0	1,208	808	28,889	33,190
Second Academy	25,655	29,072	0	0	1,200	862	26,855	29,934
First Vocational	2,032	991	0	0	152	34	2,184	1,025
Second Vocational	1,809	821	0	0	134	26	1,943	847
Total	376,180	381,435	126,172	128,380	39,384	26,937	541,736	536,752

It is noted that the students of the primary stage in the WB and GS formed more than 54% of the total number of students, and that the numbers of the students decreased to 11% in the secondary stage and to less than 1% in the vocational stage.

Table 4/8: Numbers of the Students in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by Stages

Grades	Numbers	Percentage
First - Sixth	584,172	54.17%
Seventh - Tenth	369,449	34.26%
First Academy – Second Academy	118,868	11.02%
First Vocational – Second Vocational	5,999	0.56%
Total	1,078,488	100.00%

Numbers of the Students in the WB and GS by Stages 2005/2006



It is clear that the greater burden of secondary education falls on government schools, about 96.5% of the total number of the students; while UNRWA schools are not concerned with the secondary education (see table 5/8).

Table 5/8: Total Statistics on the Palestinian Education by Supervising Authority for 2004/2005 and 2005/2006⁶

Supervising authority	Basic				Secondary			
	Students		Sections		Students		Sections	
	2004/05	2005/06	2004/05	2005/06	2004/05	2005/06	2004/05	2005/06
Government	623,688	637,172	17,835	18,348	110,047	120,443	3,547	3,734
UNRWA	254,582	254,552	5,960	6,124	0	0	0	0
Private	57,872	61,897	2,355	2,551	4,138	4,424	237	244
Total	936,142	953,621	26,150	27,023	114,185	124,867	3,784	3,978

On the other hand, by comparing the tables of the years 1998 and 2005, we can note a significant rise in the number of students, from 769,018 to 1 million & 50,327; i.e., an increase of 281,309 students which approximately constitutes a rise of 36.6%. Also, the number of schools rose from 1,621 to 2,190; i.e., by 569 schools, and that the number of students in the private schools significantly rose from about 45,000 to about 62,000, with an increase of 17,000 students over a period of seven years. The same applies to the UNRWA schools whose numbers rose from 200,000 to 254,000, with an increase of about 54,000 students. The number of the students in government schools increased by 210,000.

The above statistics give the following indications:

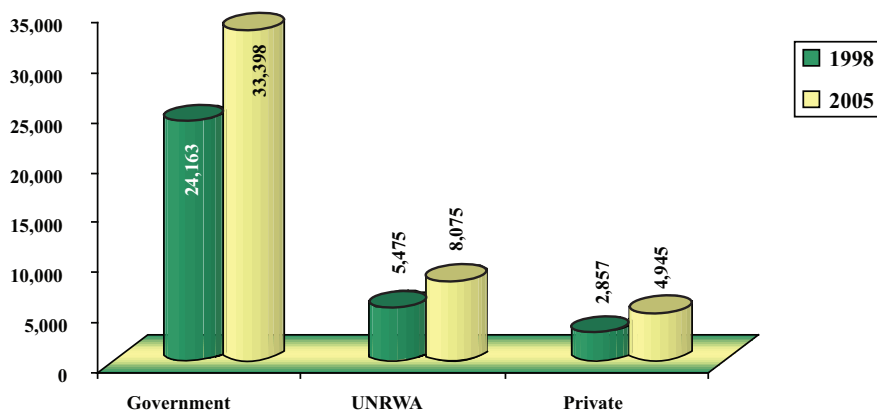
1. The natural increase of population in the areas under the Palestinian National Authority.
2. Most of the Palestinian people are youth; this means that Palestine is a youthful society that needs more effort to meet its needs and stabilize its living and social elements.
3. The parents are significantly aware of the importance of education for their children, which in itself is a strong indication and a basic element to overcome the vicious circle of illiteracy and backwardness.
4. A noticeable decrease in the rate of school drop-out, although the *Intifadah* had negative impact on the stability of education.

By comparing the number of students, schools, teachers and sections between the years 1997/1998 and 2004/2005, we notice that an appreciative educational progresses took place, and that huge efforts was exerted to meet the educational needs in spite of the difficult circumstances (see table 6/8).⁷

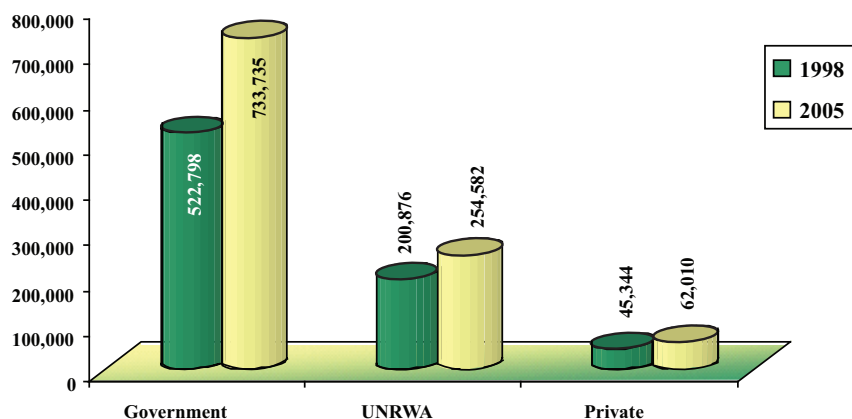
Table 6/8: Comparing the Numbers of Students, Schools, Teachers and Sections between 1997/1998 and 2004/2005

Supervisory authority	Government		UNRWA		Private		Total	
	1998	2005	1998	2005	1998	2005	1998	2005
Students	522,798	733,735	200,876	254,582	45,344	62,010	769,018	1,050,327
Schools	1,176	1,659	268	273	177	258	1,621	2,190
Sections	14,726	21,292	4,353	5,960	1,767	2,592	20,846	29,844
Teachers	24,163	33,398	5,475	8,075	2,857	4,945	32,495	46,417

**Comparison of the Numbers of Teachers in the Schools of the
WB & GS between 1998 & 2005**



**Comparison of the Numbers of Students in the Schools of the
WB & GS between 1998 & 2005**



It is clear that the government bears the major responsibility in educating the Palestinian students (70.25%), followed by UNRWA schools (23.6%), and then the private schools (6.15%). Also, about 71.9% of the teachers belong to the government schools (see table 7/8).

**Table 7/8: Total Statistics of the Palestinian Education by
Supervising Authority in 2005/2006**

Supervising authority	Schools	Students	Teachers	Sections
Government	1,725	757,615	35,013	22,082
UNRWA	279	254,552	8,477	6,124
Private	272	66,321	5,184	2,795
Total	2,276	1,078,488	48,674	31,001

There is an indication that the Palestinian Authority (PA) has been seriously engaged in correcting the disorder of the educational process caused by the Israeli occupation. During the period from 1994 to 2006, the number of government schools in the areas under the PA rose from 1,084 to 1,725 (increasing by 59.1%). The number of students rose from 418,807 to 757,615 (increasing by 80.9%), and the number of their teachers rose from 14,938 to 35,013 (increasing by 134.39%). In addition, the number of sections rose from 11,817 to 22,082 (increasing by 86.87%) (see table 8/8).

Table 8/8: The Development of Number of Schools, Students, Teachers and Sections in the Government Schools

Year	Schools	Students	Teachers	Sections
1994/1995	1,084	418,807	14,938	11,817
1995/1996	1,070	447,822	16,810	12,524
1996/1997	1,113	481,678	18,858	13,623
1997/1998	1,175	516,160	21,186	14,729
1998/1999	1,230	549,404	22,695	15,633
1999/2000	1,289	586,777	24,318	16,541
2000/2001	1,343	621,285	26,173	17,338
2001/2002	1,406	653,650	28,015	18,279
2002/2003	1,490	686,507	29,930	19,381
2003/2004	1,577	711,541	31,858	20,382
2004/2005	1,659	733,735	33,398	21,292
2005/2006	1,725	757,615	35,013	22,082

As regards the geographical distribution of students, the number of students in government schools of the WB rose from 506,921 in 2004/2005 to 522,464 in the following school year, while their counterpart in GS rose from 226,814 in 2004/2005 to 235,151 in the following school year (see tables 9/8 & 10/8).

Table 9/8: Distribution of the Students in the Government Schools by District and Grade in 2004/2005

District	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth	Ninth	Tenth	Academy		Vocational		Total
											First	Second	First	Second	
Jenin	3,274	3,199	3,340	3,397	3,475	3,631	3,288	3,322	3,049	2,819	3,262	1,972	232	153	37,513
Nablus	5,980	5,946	6,370	6,763	6,925	7,555	6,864	6,723	5,982	6,105	4,823	3,969	496	393	74,894
Salfeet	1,499	1,465	1,646	1,648	1,637	1,780	1,605	1,611	1,494	1,315	1,005	835	152	89	17,781
Tulkarm	3,180	3,208	3,362	3,527	3,566	3,870	3,680	3,563	3,312	3,059	2,463	1,933	402	296	39,421
Qalqilya	2,150	2,096	2,158	2,353	2,249	2,482	2,258	2,128	1,947	1,858	1,542	1,182	178	95	24,676
Ramallah	4,535	4,478	4,918	5,069	5,207	5,765	5,273	5,211	4,831	5,084	4,249	3,365	140	100	58,225
Jerusalem Sub.	1,419	1,350	1,630	1,612	1,656	1,761	1,712	1,664	1,560	1,545	1,214	903	29	25	18,080
Jerusalem	1,049	964	1,021	1,127	1,126	1,155	1,140	1,001	914	911	800	618	13	5	11,844
Bethlehem	3,035	2,863	3,059	3,156	3,294	3,565	3,201	3,187	2,789	2,868	2,521	1,948	99	59	35,644
Jericho	401	394	489	466	441	561	477	453	456	599	499	395	0	0	5,631
Hebron	7,132	7,031	7,759	7,912	7,665	8,405	7,577	7,605	6,666	6,608	5,430	4,003	529	496	84,818
South Hebron	5,529	5,376	5,710	5,922	5,396	6,257	5,226	5,005	4,386	4,126	3,513	2,751	156	113	59,466
Qabatyia	3,413	3,293	3,554	3,572	3,615	3,794	3,526	3,452	3,022	2,879	2,390	2,024	218	176	38,928
West Bank	42,596	41,663	45,016	46,524	46,252	50,581	45,827	44,925	40,408	39,776	32,811	25,898	2,644	2,000	506,921
Gaza	6,441	6,675	6,837	7,355	7,471	7,986	7,465	7,281	6,628	10,036	9,040	7,361	65	43	90,684
North Gaza	4,109	4,232	4,503	4,888	4,890	5,359	4,109	3,968	3,298	5,395	4,203	3,508	27	36	52,516
Khan Younis	3,825	4,030	4,107	4,538	4,231	4,809	4,230	4,153	3,832	9,927	8,806	7,522	85	105	64,200
Rafah	938	920	988	1,131	1,066	1,146	1,224	1,273	1,107	3,728	3,243	2,650	0	0	19,414
Gaza Strip	15,313	15,857	16,435	17,912	17,658	19,300	17,028	16,675	14,856	29,086	25,292	21,041	177	184	226,814
Total	57,909	57,520	61,451	64,436	63,910	69,881	62,855	61,600	55,264	68,862	58,103	46,939	2,821	2,184	733,735



Table 10/8: Distribution of Schools, Students, Teachers and Sections in the Government Schools by Region and Gender in 2005/2006

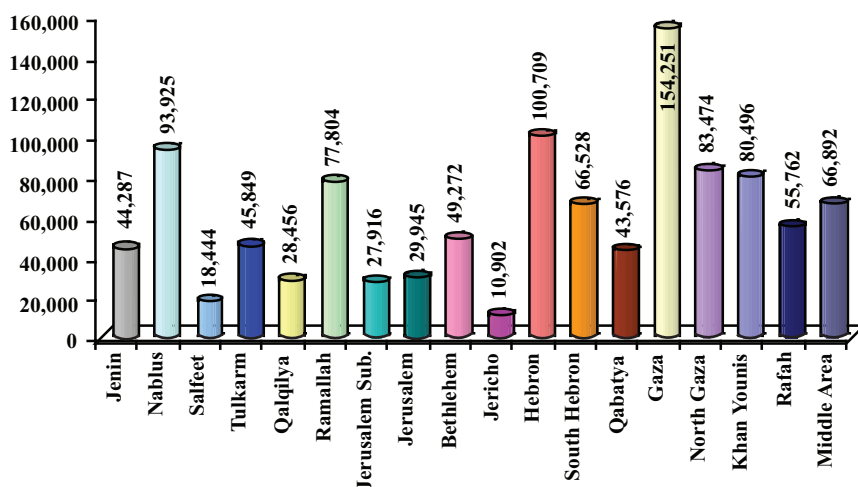
Region	Schools				Students			Teachers			Sections			
	M.	F.	Co-ed	Total	M.	F.	Total	M.	F.	Total	M.	F.	Co-ed	Total
WB	506	524	349	1,379	260,569	261,895	522,464	12,165	13,393	25,558	7,051	7,193	2,126	16,370
GS	155	153	38	346	115,611	119,540	235,151	4,878	4,580	9,458	2,570	2,757	387	5,714
Total	661	677	387	1,725	376,180	381,435	757,615	17,043	17,973	35,016	9,621	9,950	2,513	22,084

The total educational facilities, that include all government, private and UNRWA schools, shows that the areas of Gaza, Hebron and Nablus are more intensive in terms of the number of schools, students and teachers (see table 11/8).

Table 11/8: Total Statistics of the Palestinian Education by District in 2005/2006

District	Schools	Students	Teachers	Sections
Jenin	130	44,287	2,225	1,444
Nablus	234	93,925	4,346	2,776
Salfeet	58	18,444	1,041	659
Tulkarm	123	45,849	2,340	1,419
Qalqilya	76	28,456	1,441	929
Ramallah	206	77,804	4,348	2,644
Jerusalem Sub.	96	27,916	1,603	1,028
Jerusalem	87	29,945	1,853	1,091
Bethlehem	135	49,272	2,624	1,602
Jericho	26	10,902	533	347
Hebron	253	100,709	4,601	2,990
South Hebron	175	66,528	3,080	2,077
Qabatya	116	43,576	2,151	1,384
West Bank	1,715	637,613	32,186	20,390
Gaza	210	154,251	5,877	3,748
North Gaza	100	83,474	3,106	2,010
Khan Younis	102	80,496	2,996	1,906
Rafah	70	55,762	2,034	1,333
Middle Area (Al-Wusta)	79	66,892	2,475	1,614
Gaza Strip	561	440,875	16,488	10,611
Total	2,276	1,078,488	48,674	31,001

Distribution of Students in the Schools of the WB & GS by District in 2005/2006



A quick look at the vocational education reveals that it does not represent more than 0.6%. This is an unsatisfactory situation that requires the immediate attention of the authorities in order to meet the actual needs of the Palestinian society (see table 12/8).

Table 12/8: Total Statistics of the Palestinian Education in the Secondary Vocational Education in 2005/2006

Supervising authority	Students	Sections
Government	5,653	258
UNRWA	0	0
Private schools	346	21
Total	5,999	279

The future expectations of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) show that the number of the Palestinian students may reach about 1 million & 441,000 by 2009/2010; with an increase of 77.75%, compared to the school year 1998/1999. Of course, such an increase will be accompanied by an expected increase of 61.81% in teachers, and an increase in the number of sections to reach 38,682; with an increase of 72.5% (see table 13/8).

Table 13/8: The Expected Number of the Students in the Palestinian Lands by School Year, Stage and Gender⁸

School year	General total			Basic stage			Secondary stage		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2004/05	577,976	562,298	1,140,274	525,572	510,651	1,036,223	52,404	51,647	104,051
2005/06	608,708	591,599	1,200,307	551,924	535,645	1,087,569	56,784	55,954	112,738
2006/07	639,368	620,662	1,260,030	578,054	560,310	1,138,364	61,314	60,352	121,666
2007/08	670,246	649,699	1,319,945	604,273	584,912	1,189,185	65,973	64,787	130,760
2008/09	701,486	678,889	1,380,375	630,700	609,632	1,240,332	70,786	69,257	140,043
2009/10	733,108	708,347	1,441,455	657,371	634,578	1,291,949	75,737	73,769	149,506

The Palestinian Institutions of Higher Education:

There are 11 Palestinian universities in the WB and GS (8 in the WB and 3 in GS). In addition, there are 13 colleges which award bachelor's degree, and 19 colleges which award intermediate diploma.

In the academic year 2004/2005, the number of the registered bachelor students in the Palestinian universities reached 75,486; of whom 35,777 were males and 39,709 females, while those registered for postgraduate studies totaled 3,943. The intake in the traditional universities in 2004/2005 was 17,948 for bachelor degrees, and 1,503 students for postgraduate studies. The undergraduate 2004/2005 intake for Al-Quds Open University was 11,226, while 157 students joined department of educational training. Thus, the total number of the registered students at this university for the bachelor studies reached 46,453; including 22,398 males and 24,055 females.

The number of the new undergraduate students who joined the university colleges was 487, and 1,701 registered for the intermediate diploma courses. Thus, the number of the registered bachelor students at the university colleges was 2,068 (888 males, and 1,180 females), and 3,966 intermediate diploma students (1,793 males, and 2,173 females). The number of the registered intermediate diploma students in community colleges was 9,002 (5,070 males, and 3,932 females).

The number of the full-time academic staff in the Palestinian institutions of higher education (universities, university colleges, and intermediate colleges) reached 2,082, while that of supportive staff totaled 3,716.

The numbers of those who graduated from the Palestinian institutions of higher education in 2003/2004 were:

- 12,192 students (5,413 males and 6,779 females) obtained their bachelor degrees.
- 3,223 students (1,213 males and 2,010 females) received their intermediate diplomas.
- 3,040 students (1,469 males and 1,571 females) obtained certificates from Al-Quds Open University.
- 790 students (457 males and 333 females) completed their postgraduate studies.
- 1,727 students (781 males and 946 females) graduated from intermediate colleges.

Table 14/8: Classification of the Registered Students in the Traditional Universities in the Academic Year 2004/2005

Serial	University	Registered students		
		Males	Females	Total
1	Al-Azhar/ Gaza	7,362	4,497	11,860
2	The Islamic/ Gaza	6,953	9,725	16,678
3	Al-Aqsa/ Gaza	3,314	5,931	9,245
4	Hebron (Al-Khalil)	1,561	3,167	4,728
5	Palestine Polytechnic	1,418	798	2,216
6	Bethlehem	678	1,532	2,210
7	Al-Quds (Jerusalem)	3,915	3,589	7,504
8	Birzeit	3,507	3,658	7,165
9	Al-Najah	5,447	6,207	11,654
10	Arab-American/ Jenin	2,245	1,145	3,390
Total		36,400	40,249	76,650

Classification of the Registered Students in the Traditional Universities in the Academic Year 2004 / 2005

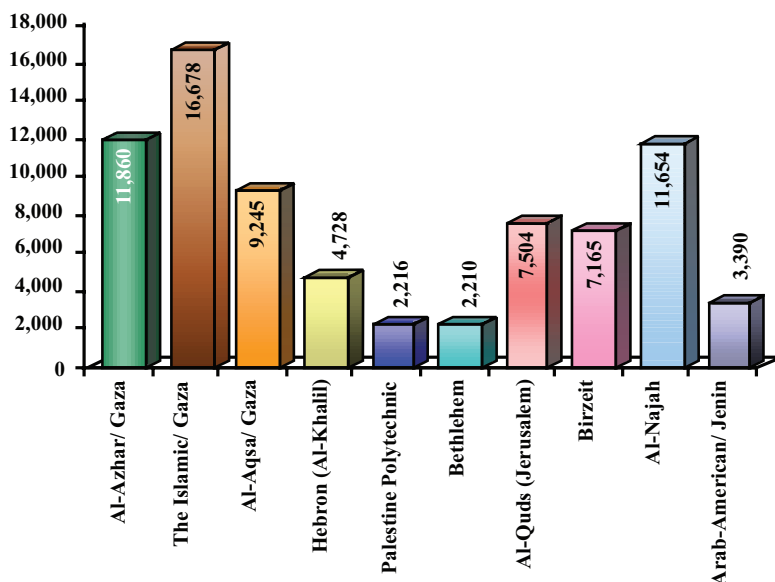


Table 15/8: Classification of the Registered Students in the Open Education in the Academic Year 2004/2005

Serial	University	Registered students		
		Males	Females	Total
1	Al-Quds Open University	22,398	24,055	46,453

Table 16/8: Distribution of the Registered Students in the Colleges in the Academic Year 2004/2005

Colleges	Number of colleges	Registered students		
		Males	Females	Total
University	13	2,681	3,353	6,034
Intermediate	19	5,070	3,932	9,002
Total	32	7,751	7,285	15,036

Students' Drop-out in the Palestinian Authority Schools:

international scientific institutions, revealed that the rate of leaving education fell from 1.8% in 1999/2000 to 0.9% in 2004/2005. This rate of drop-out is

A study prepared by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, in cooperation with many Palestinian and

regarded among the lowest rates in the Second and Third World. It is noted that this rate decreased gradually from 1995 until 2005. This is due to the great effort of the educational authorities, and the increasing awareness of the Palestinian society that education is a national priority and a vehicle to achieve national liberation.⁹

The above study included all government and private schools in all the provinces of the WB and GS. The study attributed the drop-out to the following reasons:

1. Low educational achievement among school leavers.
2. Disinterest in education.
3. Engagement or marriage.
4. Poor capacity of understanding.
5. Joining the labor market; as the study indicated that 64% of the male drop-out and 20% of their female counterpart attributed their decision to quit education to economic reasons.

In addition, there are some other reasons for this tendency that are related to the educational environment in the schools. 40% of the female quitters and 44.7% of the males indicated that they did so because of their estrangement from the school. Another 27% of the female and 49% of the male drop outs blamed corporal punishment practiced by some teachers, lack of a sense of belonging to the school, difficulty of the school curricula, and fear and anxiety of failing examinations.

As for the reasons that pertain to the family, they are as follows:

1. Poor economic conditions of the student's family that forces him or her to the labor market.
2. Inability of the family to pay the educational expenses.
3. Family compulsion of a female or male student to quit education in order to help with the household chores.
4. Family problems that lead to discontinuity of studies.
5. Absence of a helping hand within families to finance, or contribute in financing education.
6. Some families compel their children to quit education.

Besides, there are external factors related to the Israeli occupation.

It is noteworthy that Article (19) of the Higher Education Law stipulates that basic education is compulsory for all children. Also, Article (11) of the same law states that basic education is compulsory until Grade Ten. The rate of drop out during the compulsory stage was 1.88% among male students, and 1.28% among female students in the school year 2002/2003. The rate decreased to reach 1.2% among male students and 0.9% among females in the school year 2004/2005. The number of students who deserted education between 1996/1997 to 2004/2005 reached 88,175. It is noted that the higher the level of education is the higher the rate of quittal will be.

Table 17/8: Leaving Education 1995/1996 – 2004/2005

Year	1995/96	1998/99	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
Percentage of leaving education %	2.15	1.61	1.3	0.9	0.9

The Impact of the Occupation on the Palestinian Education:

Israel strove to destroy the infrastructure of the Palestinian society, including education and health. Hence, we saw the Israeli tanks devoured everything that came on their way during the *Intifadat al-Aqsa*. The number of the killed among students reached 579 in schools and 199 in universities, while those arrested and injured were totaled 720 and 3,491 respectively (see table 18/8).

Table 18/8: The Human Loss from 28/9/2000 to 20/1/2006¹⁰

State		28/9/2000 – 31/8/2001	1/9/2001 – 30/8/2002	31/8/2002 – 31/8/2003	1/9/2003 – 31/8/2004	1/9/2004 – till now	Total
Killed	Teachers	3	12	10	3	4	32
	School students	96	154	145	114	70	595
	Employees	-	4	2	1	-	7
	University students	-	-	-	8	2	199
	University employees	-	-	2	4	-	6
	Eliminating illiteracy students	-	-	-	-	1	7
Arrested	Teachers	21	55	45	46	9	176
	School students	71	101	140	296	61	669
	University students	-	-	-	10	-	720
	Employees	-	13	5	11	-	29
Wounded	Teachers	-	31	18	5	-	54
	School students	2,151	453	387	386	94	3,500
	University students	-	-	-	-	-	1,245
	Employees	-	5	4	1	-	10

The Israeli occupation caused severe damage to the educational infrastructure through various ways and means. 498 schools were closed, from the beginning of the academic year 2002/2003 until 2005, because of curfews, blockades and closure of towns and villages. In addition, 1,289 schools were temporarily closed during the *Intifadat al-Aqsa*; amongst which three were closed from the beginning of the *Intifadah* until 23 January 2005, and converted into Israeli military barracks. 297 schools were shelled with missiles or tanks since the outbreak of the *Intifadah*. Also, 9 schools were closed by Israeli military orders until 23 December 2005; including 3 converted into military barracks: Usama bin Munqidh School, Banat Jawhar School and Al-Ma'arif School in Hebron. The students lost 7,825 study days because of disruption of study during the above mentioned period.¹¹

At the time of writing this report, we do not have complete and accurate statistics for the year 2005. Thus, we will mention some statistics for previous years to give a general picture of the subject. The number of schools in which education was disrupted during the academic year 2002/2003 was 514 schools, i.e., 34.5% of the schools were closed down by the occupation (see table 19/8).

Table 19/8: The Closure of Schools during the Academic Year 2002/2003

Governorate	Closed schools	Affected students	Affected teachers & employees	Number of days	Number of the curfew days
Ramallah	37	19,001	844	257	26
Qalqilya	35	17,485	711	329	42
Jenin	47	23,785	947	816	62
Jericho	3	915	52	3	3
Qabatya	28	13,588	589	77	12
Bethlehem	33	15,082	664	685	36
Jerusalem Sub.	13	4,583	255	34	5
South Hebron	55	23,123	9,018	206	16
Salfeet	17	6,334	307	22	11
Nablus	94	38,413	1,761	2,506	71
Tulkarm	51	23,603	1,011	856	47
Hebron	101	52,581	2,137	2,214	63
Total	514	238,493	18,296	8,005	394

The buildings of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education were not immune from this destruction. The Israeli military establishment shelled everything: schools, universities and chambers, forcibly entered into university campuses and ministries and closed down many schools and universities (see tables 20/8 and 21/8).

Table 20/8: The Material Destruction from 28/9/2000 to 21/11/2004

Kind of damage	Total
Shelling and storming into schools	288
Shelling and storming into educational offices	6
Shelling and storming into colleges	5
Shelling and storming into universities	8
Shelling and storming into the Ministry of Education	2
Converting schools into barracks and jails	43
Closure of schools	10
Closure of universities	2
Demolishing schools' walls and classrooms	49
Disrupting schools	1,125
Emptying schools	50
Devastating schools' contents	50

No university or college was immune from this violation and destruction, whose cost totaled more than \$7 million.

Table 21/8: The Damages Inflicted on Colleges, Institutes and Universities, According to an Estimation in 31/3/2003

University/ College	Buildings	Laboratories	Deficit in salaries	Students' allocations	Death of animals	Total
Total (US\$)	3,536,000	201,800	4,104,833	5,000	40,500	7,888,133

The Israeli aggression on the areas of the PA had seriously hindered the educational projects and programs. Consequently, the Ministry of Education had to focus its effort on emergency, not development. The report of the United Nations Children's Funds (UNICEF) revealed the magnitude of the crimes that were committed by the Israeli occupation against the PA and the Palestinian people in general, and the education sector in particular.

UNICEF announced that the Israeli occupation inflicted a severe blow on education in the areas of the PA.¹² *Al-Ayyam* newspaper revealed that the US had offered a subsidy to develop the Palestinian higher education, which

had considerably suffered from the Israeli attacks. Mazin Sunnuqrut stated: “This funding (\$41 million) will benefit the institutions of higher education, students and teachers alike; as it will enable them to get better research tools and technology, and to learn the contemporary trends in the fields of science and technology”¹³ The PCBS indicated that the Israeli actions had severe negative effects on the economic and social wellbeing of the society.¹⁴ This was clearly reflected in the families and their living conditions, where the rates of poverty increased and, in turn, affected education, labor market, economy and health conditions. The Israeli siege deprived 36.1% of the Palestinian families from health services, and forced 4.5% of the school students and 34.6% of the university students to change their residence.

It can be said that Israel, as a colonial state, bears the responsibility of the prevalence of illiteracy among some Palestinians. The deterioration of the economic conditions and the desire of the occupation to retain this status in some families had compelled the parents to send their children to the labor market, which, in turn, made them unable to supervise their children, particularly as they themselves were fully engaged in finding a means of living. For example, during the *Intifadah* of 1987 – 1994, the programs of combating illiteracy, which were adopted by some organizations, stopped. Moreover, during the second *Intifadah* that erupted in 2000, Israel hit the illiteracy programs and the educational process itself, which increased the rate of the drop-out students. Its policies of establishing barriers and imposing closures and the comprehensive war that it pursued increased the proportion of the students who deserted education, while the rate of illiteracy in the WB and GS reached 15%.¹⁵

Meanwhile, Israel refused to give the teachers who held Identity Cards of the WB permits to reach their places of work in East Jerusalem, which illustrates the occupiers’ intention to worsen the life and to spread ignorance among the Palestinian people in order to remain under the clutches of the Israeli occupation.

The Impact of the Separation Wall on Education:

A report issued by the PCBS showed that 7% of the Palestinian families have changed their place of residence or migrated because of the Separation Wall, while another 31% indicated that they will eventually do so. Another report issued by the Ministry of State for Jerusalem Affairs revealed clearly that the Apartheid Wall aims

basically at dismantling the social fabric and to absolutely control the Holy City. This will result in depriving East Jerusalem from being, with its suburbs, one political, social and economic unit. In addition, the report indicated that 2,000 Jerusalemites cross the Wall daily to reach schools in al-Ram and the suburb of al-Barid. Behind the Wall, other 6,500 Jerusalemites come daily from the north of the city to cross the Wall to reach the schools located in the heart of the city. 'Atirut Industrial School is the most vulnerable school affected by the Wall; as the number of its students decreased from 350 in the school year 2002/2003 to 180 in 2005/2006. 77 students out of 230 in al-Jil al-Jadid School in Abu-Dis left education during the academic year 2004/2005 due to the Separation Wall and the consequential restriction of freedom to reach the school.¹⁶ Thus, the Apartheid Wall has a severe devastating effect on the educational structure in some areas and schools. Nazlit Issa School represents the ugly image of the Apartheid Wall, as the school was separated from the village, which it serves. Besides, the Wall threatens to extend a cross Al-Quds University, and disrupt its campus. Table 22/8 shows the damage inflicted upon some students.

Table 22/8: Some Cases of Students Affected by the Separation Wall in Northern West Bank

Governorate	School	Number of the students affected
Jenin	Barta'a Secondary/Boys	362
	Barta'a Secondary/Girls	345
	Um al-Rehan Basic	98
	Al-Farouq Basic	85
	Total	890
Tulkarm	Nazlit Issa Secondary/Boys	329
	Nazlit Issa Secondary/Girls	328
	Baqa Sharqieh Basic/Boys	389
	Baqa Sharqieh Basic/Girls	244
	Baqa Sharqieh Secondary/Boys	208
	Baqa Sharqieh Secondary/Girls	377
	Total	1,875
Qalqilya	Ras Tera/Dhaba'a	133
Total		2,898

To show the hardship experienced by the students of the abovementioned schools, we have to record that 2,765 students are behind the Wall and 101 teachers come to teach them (see table 23/8).

Table 23/8: The Number of School Students and Teachers who Forced to Cross the Wall to and from the Areas of Jenin, Tulkarm and Qalqilya

Jenin					
Area	School	Students	Students out	Teachers in	Teachers out
Barta'a Sharqieh	Barta'a Secondary/Boys	362	15	10	4
	Barta'a Secondary/Girls	345			
Um al-Rehan	Um al-Rehan Basic/Co-ed	98	13	5	2
Khirbet Abdallah Alyounes	-	-	30	-	1
Khirbet Thahr al-Maleh	-	-	17	-	-
Khirbet Barta'a	Al-Farouq Basic	85	-	3	1
Tulkarm					
Area	School	Students	Students out	Teachers in	Teachers out
Nazlit Issa	Nazlit Issa Secondary/Boys	329	-	29	3
	Nazlit Issa Secondary/Girls	328			
Baqā Sharqieh	Baqā Sharqieh Basic/Boys	389	-	54	13
	Baqā Sharqieh Basic/Girls	244			
	Baqā Sharqieh Secondary/Boys	208			
	Baqā Sharqieh Secondary/Girls	377			
Nazlit Abu Nar	-	-	61	-	0
Khirbet Jbara	-	-	61	-	4
Qalqilya					
Area	School	Students	Students out	Teachers in	Teachers out
Ras Tera	Dhaba'a & Ras Tera/Co-ed	60	95	-	2
Khirbet Dhaba'a	Dhaba'a & Ras Tera/Co-ed	73	90	8	3
Arab al-Ramadanien Aljanoubi	-	0	75	-	-



In the province Bethlehem, the Wall will prevent more than 600 students and 140 teachers from reaching 14 schools on regular basis. Consequently, students and teachers will have to resort to different ways, or change their schools to others in accessible areas. Hence, great hardship will be inflicted upon students, teachers and families, besides the long distances and high financial cost.

The Curricula during the era of the Palestinian Authority:

The Ministry of Education stated that: “The general orientation of the Palestinian curricula stems from the comprehensive vision

of the educational process, with all its elements, from unity and integration among the various fields of knowledge and from the premises that the curricula represent the backbone of the education system.”¹⁷ The curricula are built on five bases: the intellectual and national basis, the social basis, the traditional basis, the psychological basis and the educational basis.

In 2004, the Ministry of Education issued its detailed educational plan for the year 2004 (the school year 2004/2005); its budget was about \$318 million & 600,000, of which 80.6%, i.e., \$256 million & 900,000, were considered as running costs.

Table 24/8: The Financial Costs of the Plan of the Ministry of Education for 2004

	Program	Costs (US\$ million)
1	Providing admission opportunities for all students in the different educational years	322.6
2	Improving education	6.6
3	Developing vocational and technical education	5.1
4	Developing the educational system as a whole	1.2
5	Developing the administrative and organizational system in the Ministry	16.4

The structure of the general education in Palestine depends on three bases:

1. The period of general education: Twelve academic years, starting from the first to the twelfth grade.
2. The admission age in grade one is six years.
3. Education is divided into two stages: Basic stage from grade one until

grade ten and the secondary stage.

The following table shows the distribution of classes for lower basic stage (see table 25/8).

Table 25/8: The Classes of Each Grade in the Lower Basic Stage
(grade one to grade four)

Subjects	Grade one	Grade two	Grade three	Grade four	Total	Percentage
Islamic education	3	3	3	3	12	10%
Arabic language	8	8	8	8	32	26.7%
English language	3	3	3	3	12	10%
General sciences	3	3	3	3	12	10%
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	20	16.66%
Social studies & national education	2	2	2	2	8	6.66%
Arts and Crafts	2	2	2	2	8	6.66%
Sports education	2	2	2	2	8	6.66%
Free activity	1	1	1	1	4	3.33%
Civil education	1	1	1	1	4	3.33%
Total	30	30	30	30	120	100%

As for the number of classes for the higher basic education of the first stage, i.e., from the fifth grade to the tenth, they are 35-36 classes; as the Minister added one class according to the following table 26/8:

Table 26/8: The Weekly Classes in the Higher Basic Education
(grade five to grade ten)

Grade	Governorates of the WB	Governorates of Gaza		Plan of the Palestinian curriculum
		Males	Females	
Grade 5	33	34	35	35
Grade 6	34	37	36	35
Grade 7	34	33	34	36
Grade 8	34	33	34	36
Grade 9	35	34	35	36
Grade 10	35	34	36	36

Grade Ten in the Palestinian education system has a special importance; as it is an intermediate stage between the basic education and the secondary education. It is regarded as a preparatory grade before the categorization of the secondary education into academic or technical. It gives students an opportunity to choose what is appropriate according to their inclinations, abilities and aspirations. Therefore, the curriculum focuses on five subjects (Arabic, English, Science, Mathematics and Technical sciences) as a basis for formulating the student's inclination (see table 28/8).

Table 27/8: The Classes of Each Grade in the Higher Basic Stage
(grade five to grade nine)

Subjects	Grade five	Grade six	Grade seven	Grade eight	Grade nine	Total	Percentage
Islamic education	3	3	3	3	3	15	8.43%
Arabic language	7	7	7	7	7	35	19.66%
English language	4	4	4	4	4	20	11.24%
General sciences	5	5	5	5	5	25	14.04%
Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	25	14.04%
Social studies & National education	3	3	3	3	3	15	8.43%
Arts and Crafts	2	2	2	2	2	10	5.62%
Sports education	2	2	1	1	1	7	3.93%
Free activity	1	1	1	1	1	5	2.81%
Civil education	1	1	1	1	1	5	2.81%
Technology and Applied sciences	2	2	2	2	2	10	5.62%
Optional subject	--	--	2	2	2	6	3.37%
Total	35	35	36	36	36	178	100%

These five subjects constitute 66.7% of the Palestinian curriculum for the students of the tenth grade; while the other subjects constitute 33.3%.

While the Palestinian curriculum was under preparation and before its total application at the beginning of 2000, the Egyptian and Jordanian curricula were applied. Thus, the Palestinian curriculum made great use of these two curricula, and added to them (see table 29/8).

**Table 28/8: Classes and their Percentage
for Each of the Subjects of the Tenth Grade**

Subjects	Classes	Percentage	Technical subjects (The student should choose two only)	Classes
Islamic education	3	8.3%	Agricultural sciences	3
Arabic language	5	13.9%	Industrial sciences	3
English language	4	11.1%	Commercial and Administrative sciences	3
Sciences (Physics, Chemistry and Biology)	4	11.1%	Tourist sciences	3
Mathematics	5	13.9%		
Social studies & National education	2	5.6%		
Arts and Crafts	1	2.8%		
Sports education	1	2.8%		
Technology and Applied sciences	2	5.6%		
Optional subject	2	5.6%		
Vocational culture	1	2.8%		
Technical subjects	6	16.7%		
Total	36	100%		

Table 29/8: Number of the Weekly Classes for the Arts, Science and Technical Subjects of the Tenth Grade

Subjects	Governorates of the WB	Governorates of Gaza		The plan of the Palestinian curriculum
		Males	Females	
Literature subjects	22	23	25	19
Mathematics	5	5	5	5
Sciences (Physics, Chemistry and Biology)	6	6	6	4
Technology and Applied sciences	2	0	0	2
Technical subjects (Agricultural, Tourist, Commercial and Industrial)	0	0	0	6
Total Classes	35	34	36	36

As for the curriculum of the secondary stage (11-12), the Palestinian curriculum book of 1998 has this to say:

To develop the secondary education, the First Palestinian Curriculum took into consideration preparing the student academically to study all the following basic subjects: Islamic education, Arabic language, English language, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Social and National sciences, Technology, Applied sciences, and Sports and Arts. These subjects will be a continuation of what was taught in the tenth grade.¹⁸

Table 30/8: The Percentage of the Scientific Subjects in the Former and the Planned Palestinian Curriculum

Grade	Governorates of the WB		Governorates of Gaza		The plan of the Palestinian curriculum
	Science branch	Literature branch	Science branch	Literature branch	
First (Secondary)	45%	15.6%	47%	0%	37.5%
Second (Secondary)	53.9%	14.3%	48%	0%	41.2%

The Palestinian curriculum is distinguished by its due attention to the future subjects such as mathematics and technical subjects from grade 10 to 12.

Table 31/8: Number of the Weekly Classes of the Arts and Science Subjects of the Second Secondary Grade

Subjects	Governorates of the WB				Governorates of Gaza				The plan of the Palestinian curriculum
	Males		Females		Males		Females		
	Science branch	Literature branch	Science branch	Literature branch	Science branch	Literature branch	Science branch	Literature branch	
Literature subjects	14	22	15	23	16	30	18	32	20
Mathematics	6	3	6	3	7	0	7	0	4
Sciences (Physics, Chemistry and Biology)	11	3	11	3	9	0	9	0	8
Classes of all subjects	31	28	32	29	32	30	34	32	32

The school year 2000/2001 witnessed the application of the first Palestinian curriculum. This achievement aroused controversy and criticism; as many stood up for it, while many others opposed it. It is known that the Palestinian curriculum came in stages, starting from grade one to six. During the years that followed 2000, the Israeli occupation sought through the MIP (an Israeli

extremist right institute which conducted several studies and issued reports that aimed at obstructing the progress of the Palestinian education), to stop the extension of funds to the PA to finance printing of books, and to instigate various quarters against the Palestinian curriculum, notwithstanding its flexibility that was criticized by some educationalists. A major point of criticism was directed to the submission of the authors of the curriculum to the pressures exerted by the Israeli occupation through some international networks and the donors states. Dr. 'Izzu 'Afanah, a lecturer at the Islamic University in Gaza, believes that the process of preparing the curriculum was accompanied by many mistakes. It was not based on scientific bases, and it neglected the characteristics of the Palestinian child, training of teachers, providing schools with necessary equipments and defining a specific philosophy of education. Dr. Na'im Abu al-Hummus, the Minister of Education, asserted that the Palestinian curriculum is distinguished by its exposition to the outside world, and by its focus on building the personality of the student through the educational system. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education did not abandon the Palestinian national fixed principles; as it deals with Palestine as one historic unity. Dr. Yusri Zidan, the specialist in curriculum and teaching methods, says:

It is the politician who draws the boundaries, not the educationalist. Therefore, we have dealt with historical Palestine, and what is required of us is required from Israel; as the agreements are binding on the two parties. As long as no agreement has been reached, we will deal with historical Palestine. Israel has not yet determined its political map, and does not allow us to determine ours.¹⁹

Jonathan Brown, an international expert from Georgetown University, stated that the general approach of the Palestinian curricula is sound. The Israeli demand of not mentioning the historical cities is a kind of erasing the Palestinian memory!²⁰

The Congress of the United States commissioned an Israeli/Palestinian Center for Research and Information (IPCRI), (which includes a number of Israeli and Palestinian academics), to examine the Palestinian curricula and the extent of its conformity to the political reality. The institute testified that it is peaceful and scientifically oriented. Wolfum, a German researcher, added that the Palestinian curriculum is much better than others, particularly in its tolerant approach to the issue of religion, which he highly commended.²¹

Conclusion: The Palestinian people showed great steadfastness and wonderful persistence on education, in spite of their exceptionally difficult conditions under the oppressive occupation. However, the future vision of education should observe the following:

1. Provision of an integrated vocational education.
2. Building new schools to solve the problem of over crowdedness and the rented classrooms.
3. Improving the status of endowment/government schools, especially in Jerusalem, to be upgraded in harmony with scientific standards.
4. Addressing the phenomenon of drop out.
5. Supporting the sustainability of the system.
6. Confronting the Separation Wall.
7. Enhancing the role of libraries and the electronic services.
8. Reducing the two-shift system (morning and night classes in the same school).
9. Caring for the teachers by improving their scientific knowledge and living conditions.
10. Establishing a supervisory system to monitor the application of the curriculum.
11. Emphasizing the Arab and Islamic identity through the subjects of Islamic and national education.

Endnotes:

- 1 Dr. Ibrahim Hasan Abu Jabir: PhD holder from University of Goethe – Frankfurt, General Manager of the Centre of Contemporary Studies – Um al-Fahim (Israel).
- 2 Mustafa al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filistin* (Our Homeland Palestine) (Beirut: Dar Attaleaah, 1976), Vols.1-2, p.210; and Ahmad al-Mir'ashli (Editor), *Al-Mawsu'ah al-Filistiniyyah* (The Palestinian Encyclopedia) (Damascus: The Foundation of Palestinian Encyclopedia, 1984), Vol.2, p.11126.
- 3 The Palestinian National Authority, Ministry of Education:
<http://www.mohe.gov.ps/stats/statistic.pdf>
- 4 Ministry of Education: <http://www.mohe.gov.ps/stats/statistic.pdf>; and the Palestinian National Information Centre, 7 December 2005.
- 5 Palestinian National Information Centre:
<http://www.pnic.gov.ps/arabic/edu/indicators/2006.html>
- 6 Palestinian National Information Centre:
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- 11 <http://www.mohe.gov.ps/downloads/textdoc/assa.doc>
- 12 *Alquds*, 20 April 2005.
- 13 *Al-Ayyam*, Palestine, 17 May 2005.
- 14 Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 30 May 2005.
- 15 *Al-Ahram*, 12 September 2005.
- 16 *Al-Hayat al-Jadidah*, 7 October 2005.
- 17 Ministry of Education and Higher Education, The First Palestinian Curriculum Plan 1998, p.5.
- 18 Ministry of Education and Higher Education, The First Palestinian Curriculum Plan 1998, p.37.
- 19 'Abd al-Halim Abu Jamus, *Al-Tariq Raqam 17* (Rout No.17), December 2004.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2005



This

Palestinian Annual
Strategic Report

explains, discusses and analyses the events that took place during 2005, and pursues their developments. The primary objective of this Report is to assess the Palestinian situation on a regular basis through a rigorous study of its various aspects, i.e., internal political affairs, economic development, the educational system, demographic indicators, the Arab-Islamic and international positions and the Israeli attitudes and policies.

The chapters of this academic exercise were commissioned to distinguished meticulous specialists. These chapters were submitted to further scrutiny by another high caliber specialist in the Palestinian issue. Then, the two editors edited the texts and incorporated what may have been overlooked. Hence, it is important to note that this project is essentially a product of team work.



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