

The Palestinian Strategic Report

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Chapter One

The Internal Palestinian Scene

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The Internal Palestinian Scene

Introduction

The Palestinian scene had experienced intensive activity during 2009 that was represented by various developments and actions: the war on Gaza Strip (GS) and its repercussions, the endless Palestinian reconciliation rounds under Egyptian patronage, the drive of Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah) and Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) to put their houses in order and the American strife to achieve a breakthrough in the peace negotiations. But all these events did not have a tangible impact on the totality and reality of the situation, nor did they change the existing and continuing state of stagnation in the Palestinian domestic scene. Palestinian schism and disarray continued and no effective reconciliation was arrived at to shake up the fundamental issues, particularly those related to the desire to put the Palestinian house in order and to fix its priorities, including the restructuring and reform of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the formation of a national consensus government and the reformation of the security forces and the electoral law and procedures, etc. As for 2010, the state of stagnation continued, despite some breakthroughs that have occurred in the negotiations between Fatah and Hamas delegations in Damascus, in October and November of 2010.

The Palestinian internal schism and the “brothers’ misery” continued to have adverse impact on the totality of the national Palestinian plan, locally and on the Arab and international levels. The incomplete legitimacies and contradictory moves had paralysed the Palestinian struggle and rendered it practically ineffective.

First: The Caretaker Government in Ramallah

Salam Fayyad managed to retain throughout 2009 and 2010 his caretaker government and premiership, notwithstanding his insignificant two-member parliamentary group out of the 132 members of parliaments of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), Hamas’ non-recognition of his government, and the



brutal criticism lodged by some senior leaders of Fatah and other factions against his performance and the performance of his government.

Fayyad was lucky to be favored in person by Mahmud ‘Abbas (Abu Mazin) and the international community, and to have benefited from two developments that gave his government the chance to fill the constitutional vacuum in Ramallah; namely, the suspension the PLC, where Hamas is the dominant faction, and its inability to convene, and the failure of the rounds of talks to lead to a government of national consensus. Though he initially submitted his resignation to President ‘Abbas on 7/3/2009, but continued to run the affairs of the government pending the formation of the expected consensus government. On 19/5/2009, Fayyad took the constitutional oath as the prime minister of the new government, which he formed.

Three factors that leveraged the ability of Fayyad’s government to be in control:

1. Relative stable security.
2. Relative economic improvement compared to the misery of GS that has been paralyzed by the siege and destruction.
3. The support of Fatah leadership, the Arabs and the Americans, besides the Israeli “satisfaction.”

However, five other factors had negatively affected the performance of Fayyad’s government:

1. Its poor performance during the Israeli war on GS.
2. The demand to postpone the vote on the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict; the mission that was headed by the Jewish South African Justice Richard Goldstone.
3. The effective security coordination with the Israelis and the Americans, and the chase of resistance activists and their arrest.
4. The stalemate in the negotiations and the peace process, and lack of genuine alternatives to pressure Israel.
5. The continuation of Israeli settlements and Judaization operations, and the Israeli attacks on holy places in the West Bank (WB).

The resumption of the national dialogue and the drive for reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas after the end of the Israeli war on Gaza on 18/1/2009 was expected to corner Fayyad, hence the premier placed his government—during the meeting of the Executive Committee of the PLO of 22/1/2009—at Mahmud ‘Abbas’ disposal.¹ After the beginning of the national dialogue in Cairo, Fayyad

submitted the resignation of his government on 7/3/2009, which, according to a press release issued by his office, would be effective “immediately upon formation of the government of national consensus, probably by the end of the month at the latest.” ‘Abbas accepted Fayyad’s resignation, which, he said, had been undertaken to “usher the Palestinian dialogue and to support it, and to push the Palestinian dialogue forward to form a government [new one].” ‘Abbas asked Fayyad to continue to administer the affairs of the government until the formation of a new government. He, moreover, commended the “achievements” of Fayyad’s government, especially in the areas of “security, finance and reform.”²

Though Fayyad had officially declared that he will not take up an official post, including the premiership of the government of national consensus,³ some informed circles maintained that he, supported by the Americans, had an eye on the job. According to some Fatah sources close to Mahmud ‘Abbas, the latter insisted to nominate Fayyad to the premiership, though a high powered delegation of Fatah’s Executive Committee and the Revolutionary Council asked the President to forgo him in the new government.⁴

However, with the stumbling of the national dialogue and the extension of its sessions, ‘Abbas decided on 8/5/2009 to ask Fayyad to form the new government. The rationale that he gave for this decision was to secure the flow of cash to the Palestinian Authority (PA) from the donor-states, which they were reportedly about to suspend under the pretension that there is no government to deal with.⁵ One really wonders if a mere indirect remark that the financial aid may be stopped or delayed would have hastily lead to confirm Fayyad in the premiership, what would have been the case if Hamas itself was a partner in the government or assuming its leadership?

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) declined to participate in Fayyad’s government because it wanted to have a government of national consensus.⁶ However, Fayyad’s government was finally formed of 24 ministers, most of them technocrats and half the members of the government were of the Fatah movement. Of the other ministers were the Minister of Social Affairs Majida al-Masri of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Minister of Culture Siham al-Barghouthi of the Palestinian Democratic Union (Fida), the Minister of Labor Ahmad Majdalani of the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF), the Minister of Agriculture Isma’il Du‘eiq and the Minister of Economy Bassem



Khoury, Chairman of the Federation of Industries. The formation of this government provoked the protest of Fatah parliamentary bloc, which argued that Fayyad did not consult it. It, furthermore, asked two of its ministerial candidates, 'Issa Qarage' and Rabiha Diab, who were respectively offered the portfolios of the Detainees' Affairs and Women's Affairs, to decline the offers, and they actually absented themselves during the constitutional oath.⁷ But by the end of the day 'Abbas imposed his will on Fatah, sternly telling the Head of its parliamentary bloc 'Azzam al-Ahmad that this government is his government, and that he does not tolerate any obstruction whatsoever to its functions.⁸ Nonetheless, several of Fatah leaders reluctantly dealt with Fayyad, and some weeks later one of Fatah's leaders and Minister of Jerusalem Affairs Hatem 'Abdul Qader, resigned in protest of the government's lack of support to his ministry, though he insisted to continue to be in charge of Jerusalem affairs in Fatah, and Fayyad accepted his resignation on 8/7/2009.⁹

Hamas opposed Fayyad's government because, according to Hamas, it undermines the drive to form a government of national consensus. Ahmad Bahr, a top Hamas leader, and the acting speaker of the PLC, offered the following comment, "Fayyad's government is illegitimate, and which was formed under an illegitimate president." He added that the formation of this government without seeking the approval of the PLC is an "another indication of lack of sincerity towards the Palestinian dialogue in Cairo."¹⁰

Salam Fayyad emphasized that his government is a transitional government that will continue in power until the formation of a government of national consensus, and enumerated its priorities in the following: Internally, reconstructing GS and securing \$240 million* monthly to finance the PA, while politically it will call for halting Israeli settlement construction, stopping the invasions of Palestinian territories and lifting the blockade.¹¹ Fayyad also emphasized that the political program of his government is that of Mahmud 'Abbas and the PLO.¹²

The title of Fayyad's government plan was "Palestine: Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State," It took two months to finalize and was declared on 25/8/2009, and it was expected to be executed within the next two years.¹³ The plan included the construction of major projects like an airport, railways, and basic infrastructure. It aimed to secure the sources of power and water, elevate the standards of housing, education, health and other social and cultural services, improve the agriculture,

* The term \$ used throughout this book is the US\$.

create an enabling investment environment, and promote the professional and effective performance of the security establishment.¹⁴ In response to the criticism that his plan is in line with the repeated call of Benjamin Netanyahu for “Economic Peace” and with the so-called comfort under the occupation, Fayyad maintained that it is a national and integrated developmental plan to end the occupation, and not to consolidate it. Fayyad also dismissed the protest of some Fatah circles that he is assuming a role that is not his as the setting up of the state’s program is an absolute prerogative of President Mahmud ‘Abbas by saying that the plan as well as the government are those of the President, and that he handed the former to Mahmud ‘Abbas two weeks before its announcement.¹⁵

The pragmatic Salam Fayyad wanted to make utmost use of the available resources, and to confront the realities that the Israelis are imposing on the ground. He tried to achieve what he considered to be essential projects that support the establishment of the Palestinian state or, at least, the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in their land. He decided to patronize the peace option, and to strictly implement the provisions of the Road Map. But Fayyad faced a manipulating Israeli side that worked for endless peace negotiations, while it continued to persistently implement large scale projects to Judaize Jerusalem and the rest of the WB, and to settle, on its own terms, the final issues well before the end of the negotiations on them. Fayyad, who has no means whatsoever to exercise pressure on the Israeli side, would, meanwhile, do what the Israelis looked for, namely “to implement the Authority’s obligations to suppress the resistance movements.” Thus, by the end of the day what Fayyad achieves will be trivial compared to what the Israelis do on the ground.

Fayyad actively focused and concentrated on the economy, and on the implementation of the occupation’s security requirements. In an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, Fayyad said that he prefers “to talk about economic issues rather than politics,” and that “his purpose is to prove to the world that the Palestinians can run a state no worse than anyone else.” Fayyad admitted that he was aware that he would be accused of being a subcontractor for the Israeli security forces, Fayyad says he decided that it was imperative to open a new era and persuade his people that building up a security force was first of all for their own safety and their children’s. “I realized that security was the glue between a thriving economy and proper government and achieving liberty for the Palestinian people,” he says.¹⁶



However, the Israeli defiant practices had placed Fayyad's government in an embarrassing situation, particularly the infiltrations and assassinations undertaken by the occupation forces in the territories of the PA, which had sometimes targeted some of Fatah's activists. For example, the assassination of three of them in Nablus on 26/12/2009, which impelled Fayyad's government to say, "We would not be dragged into a circle of violence, chaos and instability," and it also urged to observe absolute restraint and to determinedly and strongly maintain calm.¹⁷

Fayyad's government patronized the coordination and supervision of the issue of reconstruction of GS on the assumption that it is the legitimate government, and refused any direct cooperation or coordination in this respect with the government of Isma'il Haniyyah. Hence, it prepared a plan for the reconstruction to the donors' conference in Sharm el-Sheikh on 2/3/2009, who pledged around \$4.5 billion for reconstruction.¹⁸ But the continuation of the Palestinian schism, lack of coordination between the two governments and the suffocating blockade deprived the people of GS from the fruits of these allocations.

Meanwhile, the government of Fayyad continued financial transfers to cover the salaries of many educational and health sectors in GS, and the cost of some essential services like water and electricity. Fayyad claimed that his government sends \$120 million to GS each month, i.e., half of the PA's budget.¹⁹ A large sector of this fund went to the pro-Authority officials, who did not go to work on the instruction of Ramallah or because they were afraid to go lest their salaries be suspended.²⁰ This is an odd and tragic outcome of the Palestinian schism and the conflict between the governments of Ramallah and GS, which means that a large sum of these funds was politically employed in favor of the PA in Ramallah.

Second: The Caretaker Government in GS

In line with the Basic Law of the PA, the arguably legitimate caretaker government of Isma'il Haniyyah continued to administer GS. But it suffered from isolation and a tight Israeli, Arab and international siege, whereby most countries preferred to conduct official business with President 'Abbas and Fayyad's government in Ramallah.

Haniyyah's government, which is supported by Hamas, worked amidst almost impossible conditions, and it swimed against the tide in an antagonistic, hostile or just indifferent Arab environment. It believed that this siege and aggression does not only aim at ousting it from power, but essentially to uproot it and decisively strike the resistance trend and marginalize it in order to prepare the ground for the imposition of the Israeli-American will on the Palestinian people, and to emphasize the disrespect to their democratic options. Thus, Haniyyah's government felt that its steadfastness deserves all this hardship. If at all forced to choose between "bread and dignity," it would willingly choose the latter.

Haniyyah's government managed to firmly confront the Israeli war on GS (27/12/2008–18/1/2009). With the support of the resistance factions that it spearheaded, this government failed the aggression, and compelled the Israeli forces to completely evacuate the GS. Having quickly absorbed the shock of the war, Haniyyah's government continued its administration and dominance in GS, and the chaos and insecurity that some had betted on did not take place. The steadfastness and bravery of the resistance was a popular, political and media boost to the dismissed government and to Hamas. Conversely, the demoralized enemies and adversaries of Hamas had by now seriously doubted the possibility of overthrowing Haniyyah's government by force. This constituted an impetus to pursue national dialogue to achieve the Palestinian reconciliation.

The destruction inflicted on GS was massive, it included the headquarters of most of the ministries and those of the official and security institutions. But Haniyyah's government continued to offer direct services from substitute headquarters. It distributed €27 million (about \$38 million) to the victims of the war, including 13,847 citizens whose houses were partially or totally destroyed, as well as the wounded and the families of the killed.²¹ Urgent aid was extended to the families of each dead and wounded, respectively one thousand euros (about \$1,400) and €500 (about \$700), and to the owners of each destroyed house four thousand euros (approximately \$5,625).

The dismissed government estimated the cost of reconstruction as \$2.215 billion, insisted that it would be in charge of the operation and refused to allow Fayyad's government to have any direct supervision on it.²² However, the government raised no objection that the donors themselves, or their chosen companies, undertake the reconstruction, took the necessity measures to open the borders to import all that is needed for the operation, and expressed its willingness to give all the required



guarantees on the expenditure of the funds on the specified projects and according to the standards of transparency that the donors may wish. Though Haniyyah's government was completely and on the ground in charge of GS, the donors insisted to deal with President 'Abbas and Fayyad's government on this and other issues. Moreover, they strictly observed the Israeli conditions, which, in effect, meant the continuation of the blockade and destruction, and the inability to deliver the aid and to implement the projects.

Haniyyah's government formed the "Supreme National Relief Committee" to coordinate and supervise the relief efforts. But Fatah, PFLP and DFLP refused to join it because of its official character, while The Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (PIJ) and some minor factions joined.²³

While welcoming Sharm el-Sheikh and other conferences on the reconstruction, the dismissed government maintained that the organizers approached the wrong side, i.e., Fayyad's government. In the view of Haniyyah and his colleagues, it does not represent the Palestinian people; rather, it speaks for America and the international community.²⁴

Nonetheless, notwithstanding the tremendous misery resulting from the siege and destruction, the government of Haniyyah managed to be in charge throughout 2009 and also 2010. It strongly and effectively dealt with its adversaries, and made utmost use of the 500 or so tunnels across the Egyptian borders to bring more than 50% of the basic needs of the Gazans. Some reports had suggested that the resistance forces, specially Hamas, had also succeeded in bringing quantities of weapons and other war needs that made the GS in a better defensive conditions than it were prior to the war. Nonetheless, Israel had, partially at least, succeeded in "burning into the consciousness," so to speak. For both Hamas and the government had linked before the war between the stoppage of the missiles and the truce from one side and the lifting of the siege on GS on the other side. The truce was fixed for a few months after which the resistance would resume launching the missiles. This was what actually happened on 19/12/2008, when, under the slogan of the legitimacy of resistance, tens of missiles were daily fired to press the enemy to lift the siege. But after the war on GS, the truce was open and unconditional, where by the resistance stopped firing the missiles while the siege continued. At the same time, the Israelis became reluctant to attack GS, especially after the fierce resistance of Hamas and other resistance factions.

Third: The Dialogue and the Placement of the Palestinian House in Order

The prospects of dialogue and the efforts to achieve reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas in 2009 were not by any means better than those in 2008. For there had been within Palestine two conflicting visions and paths for dealing with the priorities and fundamentals of the national project, the way to administer the conflict with the occupation, the resistance and the peace options, and the way to adapt with the Arab regimes and the international community. Thus, it is unfair and simplistic too, to view the differences between Hamas and Fatah and between the governments of Ramallah and Gaza as a mere struggle for power. For it is illogical to consider Hamas' steadfastness versus the blockade and the Israeli aggression on the GS, as well as the hardship that it suffered from the closure of its institutions, imprisonment of its members of parliament (MPs) and the sufferings of its supporters in the WB as just a desire by its leaders to enjoy being in power. Similarly, Fatah's insistence that Hamas recognizes the treaties concluded between the PLO and Israel and its insistence to accept forming a government whose program adheres to that of the PLO and to the conditions of the Quartet can only be seen as a drive towards a political program that includes recognition of Israel and the stoppage of resistance.

The Palestinian dialogue experienced three major crises:

1. The first crisis is related to the nature and orientation of the Palestinian national struggle, including its fundamentals, priorities, political program and ways to manage the struggle. For there were profound differences and confrontations between an ideological Islamic resistive path that aspires to achieve change and to impose new equations to administer the conflict, and, on the other hand, a pragmatic one that felt it necessary to acclimatize with Arab realism and the available resources.
2. A crisis of confidence that has aggravated because of the Palestinian schism, lawlessness, the dominance of Hamas over GS, the cooperation of the PA with the occupation to track Hamas and to try to uproot it, and the media and security campaign between the two sides.
3. The crisis of foreign pressure and conditions, where these two elements had always blocked progress in the national dialogue, though different and



milder phraseology was used to present them, such as “adherence to the agreements signed by the PLO,” and the “formation of a government that is capable to lift the blockade.” Moreover, the American warnings of a halt to the peace process, suspension of aid and resumption of the blockade of the WB have never stopped... if Hamas is to be part of a government that does not accept the conditions of the Quartet. The United States (US/ USA) would raise no objections to the reconciliation as long as it leads towards the victory of Fatah in the elections, restoration of its authority in GS and the containment of Hamas or its marginalization and popular delegitimization. Any other courses mean the continuation of the siege and the crisis and even their aggravation.

The Israeli aggression on Gaza (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) represented a gigantic turning point in the sequence of events. For the brave steadfastness of the people and the resistance had dashed the hopes of some quarters to secure the downfall of Hamas by force. On the contrary, the substantial Arab-Islamic, even international sympathy that Hamas in particular and the resistance in general had won restored the glamour of both. This sympathy provided an exit to the predicament Hamas found itself in during autumn 2008, after declining to participate in the national dialogue in Cairo and blaming it for its failure. Meanwhile, the passive and confused performance of the government in Ramallah placed Fatah leadership and Fayyad in a critical situation. Hence forth, there were increasing calls within Fatah and the PA for dialogue to put the Palestinian house in order, and to stop the mutual antagonistic campaigns. Under this pressure, the PA had no option but to freeze the peace negotiations with Israel.

Hence, an outcome of the aggression on GS was the drive towards national dialogue. Besides, Hamas no longer felt that conditions may be imposed on her, or that it will be weakened or marginalized in the political process. Though by virtue of the Palestinian Basic Law the presidential duration of Mahmud ‘Abbas had expired on 9/1/2009, Hamas did not use this card against its adversaries, though it indicated from time to time that it is there and may be raised. Hamas appears to have decided to allow this issue to be an item of the agenda of the negotiations with its adversaries, where it may be used as a bargaining weapon in the presidency’s quest for political and legal exits.

The suspension of mutual media campaigns was instrumental in providing a conducive environment for the dialogue between Fatah and Hamas, which should have begun on 22/2/2009 had it not been for differences on the issue of the prisoners in the WB. While the PA in Ramallah denied the imprisonment of any of Hamas activists, the latter provided lists of about 500 detainees, and demanded that they be released before the launching of the negotiations.²⁵ However, in February 2009 the PA in Ramallah released 21 prisoners and promised to release another 80 on 23/2/2009.²⁶ But a leader of Hamas, Ra'fat Nasif, denied the release of the latter group (80 detainees), and added, "What we see on the ground is a continuation of a campaign and practices that will have negative impact on the dialogue."²⁷

The issue of Hamas' detainees in the WB continued to be one of the main controversial issues in the negotiations throughout the year, and it had been a reason for their stumbling from time to time. However, Fatah leadership refused to budge to all pressure under the guise that there are no political detainees. The real reason behind this adamant stand could be anybody's guess. Is it because of the desire of Fatah leadership to rule the WB uncontested, or to exploit the detainees' card to the maximum; or is it because it wants to demonstrate to the Israelis and Americans that it is abiding by its obligations to fight "terrorism," observe the provisions of the Road Map, and implement the security reforms that are supervised by the American general Keith Dayton? Thus, these procedures will be on a track separate from the track of the Palestinian dialogue.

Egypt, who was unanimously accepted to be the patron of the dialogue, had actively worked for this goal since the second half of 2008, and fixed 10/11/2008 as the starting date of the dialogue. But this did not materialize because Hamas and three other Palestinian factions declined to attend until the attainment of the following: Release of Hamas' detainees in WB, permission for its delegation from the WB to attend, and that President 'Abbas attends all the sessions of the dialogue not just the opening session.²⁸ Though Egypt was furious by these demands, it quickly accepted after the War on Gaza to resume its patronage and efforts to launch the dialogue.

Finally, Fatah and Hamas started the dialogue on 24–25/2/2009, and other factions followed suit on 26/2/2009. Five committees were formed to deliberate on the issues of elections, security, the PLO, the transitional government and the national reconciliation. Both Fatah and Hamas send signals of their keenness to make the dialogue a success story. While Mahmud 'Abbas called Fatah delegation



“to work for the success of the dialogue by all means,”²⁹ Khalid Mish‘al, head of Hamas political bureau, declared that Hamas had “magnanimously superseded” its bleeding wound in GS and the misery of hundreds of its prisoners in the WB in response to the calls of the dialogue, and to pursuit the all important project of national reconciliation.³⁰ Isma‘il Haniyyah had also emphasized that the “issue of national reconciliation and termination of the schism is a Hamas strategic decision that is unanimously endorsed by Hamas, and that the desire to work for the success of the dialogue is enthusiastically supported by both the interior and diaspora leadership and membership.”³¹

The dialogue conducted six sessions of which the last was on 28–30/6/2009, and progress appeared to have been achieved on several fronts. Egypt called for a seventh and final session on 25–27/7/2009 to sign the reconciliation on the next day of the session, but Hamas had once more insisted on the release of its prisoners in the WB prior to the signature of the reconciliation agreement, and accused Fatah of lack of seriousness with regard to the reconciliation and the termination of the schism.³² However, the PA in Ramallah did not release the prisoners and the seventh session was not convened. Meanwhile, Fatah, who had become preoccupied with its sixth congress of 4/8/2009, declined to attend the proposed session on 25/8/2009 and asked for its indefinite postponement under the guise that the Palestinian National Council (PNC) will hold an emergency meeting on 26–27/8/2009.³³

Evidently lack of trust and the historical differences between Fatah and Hamas made an agreement extremely difficult. These factors had led to an engagement in minute details to secure absolute guarantees for a successful agreement.

On the assumption of the American Presidency by Barack Obama and his apparent determination to press Israel to stop the settlement, Mahmud ‘Abbas and the PA in Ramallah were so optimistic of a breakthrough in the peace process that they decided to shelve an agreement with Hamas lest it spoils the presumably positive environment in America, and because it might not offer the necessary concessions for a deal with Israel. What had further encouraged Fatah’s intransigence was the decline in the glamour that Hamas had initially enjoyed as a result of the war on GS and the tightening of the siege on it, coupled with the destruction and prohibition of the reconstruction. By then, Fatah had increasingly talked of a government that accepts the conditions of the Quartet and the conduct of elections without settling the pending issues.

Meanwhile, Hamas had become increasingly suspicious that the entire dialogue process aimed at holding elections with guaranteed results, thus leading to the uproot of its popular legitimacy in GS. Moreover, it may secure the resumption of Fatah's control over the GS, strengthen its claims of leadership of the Palestinian people and of being their spokesperson, and place it in a better bargaining position in the expected peace negotiations.

During the dialogue sessions, Hamas focused on the necessity of a comprehensive agreement that should settle all the five major issues, and guarantees their parallel implementation on the ground. It also rejected outside pressure, particularly the conditions of the Quartet, and demanded the release of its prisoners in the WB prior to the signature of the agreement. Fatah, on the other hand, concentrated on the formation of a government of national consensus that should be qualified to lift the blockade, and conduct presidential and legislative elections.

Hamas assumed that the resignation of Fayyad government would be an indicator of Fatah's seriousness in the quest for the reconciliation. But the delegation given to Fayyad two months later to form a new government, as well as the decision of Fatah's leadership to convene the PNC in August 2009, under the pretext of completing the membership of the Executive Committee of the PLO, were, in the opinion of Hamas and the opposition forces, indicators of Fatah's retrogression from the reconciliation process. This is particularly so as the formation of the government and the election of the leadership of the PLO were integral parts of the dialogue, and that the decisions taken by Fatah on these issues were not only inopportune but harmful to the realization of a true and viable reconciliation agreement.

The formation of a government was, indeed, a very controversial issue. Fatah maintained that this government should be capable to lift the siege, thus had to abide by the political, program of the PLO and the treaties it signed.³⁴ In effect, this meant the acceptance of the Quartet conditions, including stoppage of the resistance and the recognition of Israel, which was categorically unacceptable to Hamas and the resistance factions. However, Hamas had no objection that the formation of this government be based on the National Conciliation Document of the Palestinian Prisoners, which had been almost totally accepted by all the factions. It had no objection also that this government has specific missions: the elections, the reconstruction of GS and the reform of the security forces... and others.³⁵



During the second session of the dialogue, and in response to a proposal by the PFLP and PIJ that the new government be without a political program, Ahmad Qurei', the leader of Fatah's delegation, demanded that it should "embody a crystal clean recognition of Israel."³⁶

Abu Mazin tried to find a political exit on the issue of the new government that guarantees its recognition by the international community. He suggested that Hamas recommends four of its members to be ministers in the government of national consensus. Those will be like "commandos," they'll abide personally by the signed agreements and declare that they are on their own and they do not represent Hamas. However, Secretary of PLC, Mahmud al-Ramahi, had observed that this suggestion was not serious, let alone that Hamas will never accept it.³⁷

The security issue was amongst the most complicated agenda of the dialogue, and it witnessed heated argumentation throughout the dialogue sessions. Initially, Fatah tried to restrict the security reforms to GS only, where it demanded that many of the security officials whose services had been terminated after Hamas' control of the GS should be allowed to return to their posts. But Hamas insisted that the WB be included in the security arrangements. However, the political detention and the security measures undertaken against the institutions in both GS and WB had clouded the prospects of the dialogue. Moreover, the assassination of a number of Hamas members by the officials of the PA in Qalqilya on 31/5/2009 was particularly harmful. In response to this tragic development, and after a meeting that he had with the Egyptian Minister 'Omar Suleiman, director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Services (EGIS), Khalid Mish'al said "The stumbling block of the Palestinian reconciliation are the arrests and abductions in the WB," and added, "There is a persistent campaign undertaken by the PA's security forces in the WB to uproot Hamas."³⁸ However, the Egyptians had exerted great efforts, particularly in the summer of 2009, to resolve the issue of the detainees, including delegations that they sent to occupied Palestine and Damascus.³⁹

All in all, the sixth session of the dialogue had apparently struck agreement on certain sensitive issues, like security and the detainees, which were acceptable to both parties. Fatah and Hamas had also agreed to form a joint committee of all factions, to coordinate and supervise the reconciliation agreement, and whose work will be done as soon as the elections are held.⁴⁰ But this item provoked the opposition of several of the PLO factions. It was rejected by the DFLP on the basis it will grant legitimacy to Hamas' coup in GS, the PFLP on the other hand felt that

this will consecrate the Palestinian schism, as the proposed committee will work towards coordination between the governments of GS and Ramallah.⁴¹

During August and September 2009, several obstacles seem to have been overcome. It was agreed to incorporate in GS's security forces three thousand individuals who had previously worked in them, to reconstruct the security forces in the WB and the GS under the supervision of Egyptian and Arab officers, and to conduct the presidential and legislative elections on 25/6/2010. The latter should, however, be done through mixed system of constituencies (25%) and proportional (75%).⁴²

By early October 2009, both Fatah and Hamas sent signals that the reconciliation agreement will be signed soon. In fact the Palestinian delegations were expected to meet on 19/10/2009, and the signature would take place six days later. But the demand of the PA to postpone the vote on the Goldstone Report by the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) had led to an outcry among the public and in the press, who doubted the honesty and credibility of the PA, and accused it of committing a "crime," and of having no respect for the blood of the dead. Within this tense environment, Hamas asked Egypt to delay the signature ceremony of the reconciliation agreement pending restoration of calm and the bypass of the current bitterness. But the officials in Egypt saw in this postponement a great loss to the Palestinian people, and a sheer waste of the tremendous Egyptian effort.⁴³

However, Egypt presented a final proposal of the Palestinian reconciliation agreement, and demanded that it be signed by both Fatah and Hamas by 15/10/2009 at the latest and by the other Palestinian factions within five days.⁴⁴ Being faced by the scandal of Goldstone Report, Fatah hastily signed the agreement and Abu Mazin sent to Egypt on 15/10/2009, a personal envoy, 'Azzam al-Ahmad, to hand to the authorities in Cairo the text as signed by Fatah leaders.⁴⁵ As for Hamas, it asked for a grace period to read and revise the text, but Cairo firmly declared that the text which it prepared is final, not open to any further discussion, and that it should be signed as it is.⁴⁶

A Résumé of the Egyptian Draft

The Egyptian 22 page, 4,100 words draft of the reconciliation agreement, entitled "The Palestinian National Accord Agreement, Cairo 2009," and handed to all the Palestinians factions, is one of the most detailed documents. Its contents may be summarized in the following:



First: The PLO: The document stipulated that the PLO should be reactivated and developed according to agreed bases, so that it includes all forces and factions. A new PNC, which represents the Palestinians of the interior and the Diaspora, should be formed. The delegated committee to develop the Organization should complete its membership and hold its first meeting immediately after the implementation of this agreement. It should fix the relationship between the institutions and the structures as well as the functions of both the PLO and the PA in a way that maintains the authority of both of them and avoid duplication.

Until the election of the new PNC, this committee will be authorized to establish the bases and working methods of the Council and to address the crucial political and national issues in a consensus manner, and to pursue the implementation of the decisions derived from the dialogue.

Second: The Elections: The PLC and presidential elections, as well as those of the PNC in the WB and GS, including Jerusalem, should be concurrently conducted on Monday 28/6/2010, and all should abide by this provision. The elections of the PNC should be based on complete proportional representation in the homeland and the Diaspora wherever possible. The PLC elections should be done through mixed system of constituencies (25%) and proportional (75%), and the qualifying threshold will be 2%. The Palestinian Territories (WB and GS) should be divided into 16 electoral districts (11 in WB and 5 in GS). The elections should be conducted under Arab and international supervision, and in a transparent, honest and fair way, and accompanied by elections monitoring procedures. The Palestinian president forms the electoral committee on the basis of the deliberations that he undertakes and according to the nominations given by the political forces and national figures.

Third: Security: The security provision calls for the enactment of the laws related to the security forces according to the functions allocated to them. These forces should be professional and non-factional, while the standards and bases for the reconstruction, restructuring and uniting of these forces should be defined. The security forces should be accountable to PLC. The provision stipulates that any intelligence cooperation and supply of information to the enemy that affects the nation, the citizens or the resistance be considered as high treason. It also provides for prohibition of political detention, respect of the security forces for the Palestinian right of resistance, and to detach the security institutions from political differences. It also records the prohibition of using arms for purposes other than the professional ones, and according to the recorded regulations.

The document provides for a supreme security committee that is formed due to a presidential decree, its members are professional officers. It should exercise its duty of implementing The Palestinian National Accord Agreement in WB and GS under Egyptian and Arab supervision. Amongst its functions is to enact and supervise the implementation of security policies, and to rebuild and restructure, with Arab and Egyptian assistance, the security forces in a way that maintains the rights of all their employees.

Fourth: National Reconciliations: The document calls for dissemination of the culture of tolerance, reconciliation, political partnership and co-existence, and to resolve all the violations resulting from the lawlessness and schism in a legal and legitimate manner. Moreover, the document provided for the setting of a program to compensate financially and morally all the victims of schism and violence. It called for putting the necessary bases and mechanism to prevent the repetition of the sad events, for the firm stand against all kinds of mutual incitements, for the punishment of all individuals who commit crimes against the people and their property irrespective of their organizational, tribal or family affiliation, and for the issuance of an honor covenant that stipulates the prohibition of inter-Palestinian fighting.

Fifth: The Joint Committee for the Implementation of the National Accord Agreement: This committee should be composed of 16 members who represent Fatah, Hamas, the factions and the independents. Each of Fatah and Hamas nominates eight members, and, after a consensus on the membership, President Mahmud ‘Abbas will form this committee by a presidential decree. In his capacity as the President of PLO and the PA, President ‘Abbas will be the authority for this committee. However, the committee is a coordinating body without any political obligations or functions. It should start functioning once the agreement is signed, and its work should be terminated after the elections and the formation of a new Palestinian government. The committee is authorized to implement the reconciliation agreement through coordination with the relevant quarters, prepare the environment for the conduct of the presidential and PLC elections as well as those of the PNC, supervise and settle all issues related to the Palestinian internal reconciliation and to pursue the operations of the reconstruction of GS.

The document also provides for the settlement of the civil cases and the administrative problems resulting from the schism, including the appointment and promotion of officials, and to decide on the suspension of salaries and transfer of

officials within the government institutions and divisions, as well as the relevant but controversial presidential and governmental ordinances and decrees through a special legal and administrative committee. The document calls for the return of all civil servants, who had been in service before 14/6/2007 (the military takeover in GS), to their posts in the WB and GS, including the dismissed and the absentees because of the schism. Moreover, the document provides for the formation of advisory units to settle the legal cases in coordination with the relevant parties.

The document considered all individuals who were exposed to all kinds of harm during the time of the internal confrontations as victims of violence. The National Reconciliation Committee should see to it that the PA shoulders the responsibility of settling their cases.

Sixth: The Detainees: Both Fatah and Hamas should provide according to the latest information lists of the detainees in their prisons, of which copies should be handed, after verification and before the signature of the National Accord Agreement, to Egypt and an agreeable legal firm. Each side should release all the detainees from all factions immediately after the signature of the agreement.⁴⁷

The signature by the leadership of Fatah and the PA in Ramallah of this document and the hesitation of Hamas to do so had provided a much needed political exit for the former from their scandalous decision to postpone the discussion of Goldstone Report in the United Nations (UN). It also enabled them to launch an extensive media campaign against Hamas, who was accused of obstructing the efforts towards national unity and reconciliation. Fatah had made utmost use of the genuine Palestinian-Arab-international desire for a reconciliation to push Hamas into a tight corner. Hamas, who refused to sign under pressure and before ascertaining the compatibility of the text with the minutes of the sessions of the dialogue, appeared to be rather confused. This was reflected in the different statements of its leaders on the probability of signature and on the remarks on the document that should be given due consideration. Hamas found it extremely difficult to convince the ordinary observer of the validity of its rationale for declining to sign. Moreover, there were rumors of differences of opinion between Hamas leaderships in GS and Damascus, whereby the latter was said to be more extreme on the issue than the former.

Lack of confidence and bitter historical experiences have been behind Hamas' insistence on closely checking the text, and on insisting to incorporate some

expressions that, in its opinion, were essential to prevent future attempts to retreat from the undertakings by the other side. Hamas insisted on the incorporation of some modifications in the text, or to have them in a legally and politically binding appendix to the text. The most significant of those observations may be summarized in the following:

1. To add a sentence to the paragraph on the PLO, after the part that explains the provisional leadership framework until the conduct of the PLC elections, to the effect, “the above functions are not subject to suspension as they are viewed as a national consensus.”
2. To amend the paragraph on the electoral committee to read, “The formation of an electoral committee through consensus, and the president issues a decree to this effect.” This is different from the text in the document which stipulates that the Palestinian President forms the electoral committee on the basis of the deliberations that he undertakes and according to the nominations given by the political forces and national figures.
3. Addition of a text that clarifies that the formation of the supreme security committee should be consensually agreed upon.
4. To replace the word “rebuild” by the word “build” in the following text: “to rebuild and restructure, with Arab and Egyptian assistance, the security forces...”.⁴⁸

But the Egyptian government and Fatah refused to consider any discussion or amendment to the document. Thus, the project of reconciliation faced some obstacles. The interference of some Palestinian quarters, like the PFLP and independent personalities like Munib al-Masri, failed to provide suitable solutions. Attempts for mediation by Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Sudan and Libya, which continued up to the eve of the Arab summit in Sirte, Libya late March 2010, had also failed.

In October and November 2010, Fatah and Hamas resumed their meetings. It seems that both parties resolved most differences, except for the reform of security forces in WB and the participation of Hamas, along with other national factions, in their administration. This issue remained a difficult obstacle to the final signing of the agreement.



Fourth: The Elections

Hamas bases its position towards the duration of the presidency of Mahmud ‘Abbas on the constitutional provision that fixed it for four years to end on 8/1/2009. But Fatah depends on Election Law No. 9 of 2005 which provides that the presidential and PLC elections should be held concurrently, hence is its argument that the duration of Abbas’ presidency should be extended till the time of the PLC elections. However, the crux of the problem is political, irrespective of this legal debate, i.e., which is binding, the constitutional text or the law that ‘Abbas issued to explain it.

Hamas leaders had issued many statements that emphasized the end of the duration of ‘Abbas’ presidency,⁴⁹ and some of the movement’s literature spoke from time to time of “the president whose term had expired.” Nonetheless, due to the aggression on GS and the subsequent rounds of dialogue to conclude reconciliation, Hamas dealt with ‘Abbas as a de facto president. Hence, throughout the year 2009, it did not take any practical steps or pursued concrete policies to reject dealing with the presidency. Moreover, in several places the Egyptian document referred to ‘Abbas as president, which was not seriously contested by Hamas. Besides, Hamas agreed to the document’s provision to conduct the presidential and legislative elections concurrently.

The elections were a major issue of the Palestinian dialogue. While Fatah and the PLO factions insisted on conducting them solely according to the proportional representation system, Hamas demanded a mixed system of both the constituencies and the proportional system, as was the case in the 2006 elections (50% constituencies and 50% proportional). Hamas felt that candidates who run on its lists or that of the factions may be exposed to arrest by the occupation forces. Besides, the proportional representation system gives to small factions a greater political role than their actual size, particularly so when none of the major parties gets simple majority in the elections (i.e., half of the seats plus one). However, Hamas initially agreed that 40% be for the constituencies and 60% for proportional representation, but after long debate it agreed that the percentage be correspondingly 25% and 75%. Fatah also agreed to this arrangement.

According to the Egyptian document, all Palestinian factions had unanimously accepted that the presidential and PLC elections, as well as those of the PNC,

be concurrently conducted on 28/6/2010, a date that was not contested by any of them. But the crisis that accompanied Goldstone Report, and the insistence of Hamas that its remarks should be addressed before the signature of the Egyptian document, triggered Abu Mazin to issue on 23/10/2009 a presidential decree that fixed 24/1/2010 a date for the presidential and PLC elections.⁵⁰ This was interpreted either as a complete disregard to Hamas and an attempt to impose certain orientation to the Palestinian drive, or simply a vehicle of pressure on Hamas to sign the Egyptian document.

The Palestinian Central Council supported the elections' decree,⁵¹ and Fatah considered it as an absolute constitutional right that provides for the people an exit from the crisis. In the name of the DFLP, Saleh Zeidan, a member of its political bureau, called for the implementation of the decree, which was also supported by the Palestinian People's Party (PPP), Fida Party, the Palestinian Arab Front (PAF) and the PPSF.⁵² But Hamas rejected the decree, and 'Aziz Dweik, the speaker of the PLC, maintained that it needs to be endorsed by the PLC, particularly so as a parliamentary majority (110 members) is available to call for a meeting,⁵³ though the PA in Ramallah may prohibit such a meeting. Ahmad Bahr, the first deputy speaker of the PLC, argued that 'Abbas had "lost his legal and national credentials,"⁵⁴ that "he has no constitutional right to issue any decree as his term had already expired," and that the decree is "valueless from a constitutional point of view."⁵⁵ Hamas issued a statement that argued that by this step 'Abbas had practically and unilaterally "ended the drive for national reconciliation and to end the schism." It also emphasized Hamas' rejection of this "illegitimate" decree because 'Abbas "had lost his legitimacy and the duration of his presidency had already legally expired."⁵⁶

PIJ viewed the decree as "a new blow to the efforts of dialogue and reconciliation," while the PFLP adopted a middle of the road response by claiming that the decree is "a constitutional claim," though it is not "a priority."⁵⁷ The alliance of the national forces in Damascus condemned the decree, and Khalid Mish'al said in the name of this alliance that this move is "an illegal step" that deepens the schism, and added, "There will be no elections under the schism... Reconciliation first, then the resort to elections in natural and fair circumstances."⁵⁸

Hamas refused to allow the Central Election Committee to function in GS, and cautioned that any person who deals with the elections will be subject to



accountability.⁵⁹ On 12/11/2010, the Central Election Committee declared that it is unable to conduct the elections on the date fixed by the presidential decree because of its inability to pursue its duty in GS.⁶⁰ Hence, President ‘Abbas and Fatah decided, on 24/1/2010, to call off the elections.

In another vein, President ‘Abbas declared on 5/11/2009, that he will not seek re-election to the office of the presidency of the PA, adding that this is not “a bargaining or a manipulative move.”⁶¹ The step may reflect ‘Abbas’ frustration caused by the chaotic domestic Palestinian situation and the impasse in the peace process. But it is not farfetched to suggest that the real motive is the President’s desire to assess, through the reactions to his announcement and the attempts that may be launched to persuade him to change his mind, the degree of internal and external support that he actually has. Just before his announcement, ‘Abbas had expressed to several leaders of the security forces and the PA his extreme displeasure with the Israeli-American-Arab positions and policies.⁶²

However, ‘Abbas’ candidacy for a second term was supported by Fatah leadership, the Executive Committee of the PLO, the presidents of Israel, America and Egypt and the King of Jordan, as well as from other quarters that belong to the so-called “moderate” trend,⁶³ who support the peace path. ‘Abbas was persistently requested not to submit his resignation lest a constitutional vacuum occurs and he will officially be succeeded by Hamas leader ‘Aziz Dweik, the speaker of the PLC. But ‘Abbas made it clear that he will not vacate his position until the forthcoming elections.⁶⁴ However, he also continued to emphasize his disinterest to run for a second term.

In an attempt to provide a constitutional cover for the delay of the elections, the Central Council of the PLO decided on 16/12/2009 to extend the term of both the President of the PA and the PLC, pending general presidential and legislative elections in the WB and GS.⁶⁵ The Council’s decision to extend both terms may be because of its desire not to appear to be biased towards the President alone, or because of its keenness to avoid deepening the Palestinian schism. However, as Hamas argued, the Council does not have the constitutional power to extend the duration of the President because it itself is “an illegitimate body” because it is “derived from bodies whose durations had already expired.”⁶⁶

Hence, the fiasco of the 2009 Palestinian elections ended in an indecisive and confused manner. Moreover, their conduct was primarily associated with the

realization of the Palestinian reconciliation and the availability of conducive and objective local, regional and international environment to conduct an election in which all Palestinian factions participate.

Fifth: The Palestinian Liberation Organization

As was the case in the preceding years, the PLO continued to be under the domination of Fatah. Besides, it failed to accommodate Hamas and other resistance factions. It failed, also, to renew its structure and institutions, whose legitimacy had remained at stake because their terms of reference had expired many years ago.

The poor performance of the PLO leadership during the war on GS, and the frustration caused by the total rejection of reforming and rebuilding the Organization had impelled Mish'al to declare in the "Victory Festival," held in Doha on 28/1/2009, that Hamas works with all factions to form a new Palestinian body that "upkeeps the right of return, and adheres to the rights and the fundamentals."⁶⁷

Mish'al declarations led to an outcry in the Palestinian scene, as Fatah and its ilk exploited them to launch a brutal campaign against Hamas, making utmost use of the Palestinians' traditional and emotional desire for unity, and their sentimental feelings of respect and high regard to the PLO. Some had also felt that these declarations provide an opportune platform to undermine Hamas, whose steadfastness during the war on GS had accelerated its popularity to the peak, while the PA and its leadership were widely and bitterly criticized. To confront Hamas and its rising prestige, some of the leaders of the PA and Fatah organized a verbal campaign of abuse that used such strong expressions as "The attempts of Mish'al will utterly fail," "Hamas is trying to kill the Organization"⁶⁸ and that "Fatah will confront the Iranian conspiracy."⁶⁹ Moreover, Hamas was accused of "rejecting right from the beginning to incorporate in the national Palestinian struggle,"⁷⁰ and that Mish'al's declarations were "a conspiracy, and a rejected and denounced coup against the PLO."⁷¹

The controversy has thus become heated, antagonistic and provocative, but it did not frankly and boldly address the miserable conditions of the Organization. Nor did it respond to the urgent and crucial questions: Who is benefiting from the paralysis of the PLO legislative institutions and executive bodies, and from transforming it into a mere puppet in the hands of a specific faction? Moreover, who



had taken it to the intensive care unit to be awoken only when it is needed to rubber stamp some resolutions and decisions? However, Fatah leader Hussam Khader had frankly, even bluntly, called for a serious study of the issue, and he urged the leadership of the PLO, Fatah and the PA to be ready “not only for partnership with Hamas, but also for its leadership of the Organization.”⁷²

However, Muhammad Nazzal, a member of Hamas political bureau, maintained that Mish‘al did not call for the abolition of the PLO per se, or to find an alternative to it, but had simply suggested the founding of a framework for coordination between the Palestinian factions that were excluded from their Organization.⁷³

Nonetheless, the fact remains that the PLO had become a fundamental item in the Palestinian dialogue, where it had been discussed elaborately and extensively. Moreover, as demonstrated in the above-mentioned Egyptian document, an agreement had in principle been reached on the items related to the reform of the PLO and the election of its PNC and a new leadership.

Meanwhile, Fatah had been by the summer of 2009 seriously engaged in having the quorum in the Executive Committee of the PLO by filling the vacant seats of some demised and absent members. But this was a negative signal to Hamas and the factions concerned with the rebuilding and reorganization of the Organization on new basis, particularly so as this step had coincided with the final touches on the reconciliation agreement, in which the reform of the PLO figured quite high. Fatah was, however, blamed for rushing to complete without a consensus the membership of the Executive Committee of the PLO simply because it wanted to consolidate its dominance of the Organization, and thus continue to use it as tool against the opposition.⁷⁴ But Fatah had, on the other hand, argued that there is no excuse for an indefinite waiting for the implementation of the reconciliation agreement, and felt it necessary to take at least temporary arrangements to conduct the minimum functions of the Organization, which is, irrespective of what is being said about it, the acceptable and sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in both the Arab and international arenas.

Meanwhile, Salim Za‘noun, chairman of the PNC, declared that the Council will convene an emergency session on 25/8/2009 in Ramallah to elect six members of the Executive Committee in replacement of the deceased Yasir ‘Arafat, Yasir ‘Amr, Suleiman al-Najab, Faisal Hussein, Emil Jarjoui and Samir Ghosheh.⁷⁵

The meeting of the PNC convened in the presence of 325 members—out of more than 700—whose membership had, however, officially already expired. Four members were unanimously elected, and they are Sa'ib 'Uraiqat (Fatah), Ahmad Majdalani (PPSF), Hanna 'Omeira (PPP) and Saleh Raf'at (Fida). The rest two, Ahmad Qurei' (Fatah) and Hanan 'Ashrawi (independent), were elected by popular vote, the former got 234 votes and the latter 182. Hence the membership of the Executive Committee totaled 18, who were: Mahmud 'Abbas, Sa'ib 'Uraiqat, Faruq Qaddumi, Ahmad Qurei', Tayssir Khaled, 'Abdul Rahim Mallouh, 'Ali Ishaq, Abu Isma'il, Hanna 'Omeira, Saleh Raf'at, Yasser 'Abed Rabbo, As'ad 'Abd al-Rahman, Riad al-Khudari, Ghassan al-Shak'a, Muhammad Zuhdi al-Nashashibi, Zakaria al-Agha, Hanan 'Ashrawi and Ahmad Majdalani.⁷⁶

The holding of the PNC in Ramallah under the Israeli occupation provoked bitter criticism. For, under such circumstances, it would have such an extremely limited freedom that it could not possibly claim to truly represent the Palestinian people. Additionally, criticism was also on the constraints related to the expiry of the legal duration of its members.

Another problem was related to the membership of Yasser 'Abed Rabbo in the Executive Committee, which he joined as representative of Fida Party from which he had resigned many years ago, and the party had, in fact, appointed Saleh Raf'at to represent it in this committee.⁷⁷ Though Fida and two other small parties (DFLP and PPP) had only two seats in the PLC, they were represented in the Executive Committee by four members, including 'Abed Rabbo. Interestingly, the latter was the head of a committee that was appointed by the Executive Committee to draw a plan for the development of the Organization and its departments.⁷⁸

Towards the end of the PNC's meeting, Mahmud 'Abbas said, "Now I can say that the Palestinian legitimacy is viable, the quorum is attained, and the PLO is in good order. Curse upon those who impatiently awaited the destruction of this Organization."⁷⁹ However, at best, this statement is nothing but wishful thinking. What illustrates its absurdity is an observation that Nabil 'Amr voiced in the meeting of the PNC where he said sarcastically "It's about time," to Mahmud 'Abbas who admitted that throughout his leadership of the PLO during the last five years he had done virtually nothing.⁸⁰



Sixth: The Sixth Congress of Fatah

Though the Revolutionary Council of Fatah had recommended in September 2004 to convene the Organization's sixth congress and appointed a preparatory committee for this purpose, progress towards this goal was at a snail pace. In the Strategic Report of 2008, we have explained the efforts exerted during that year to achieve this twenty-year dream.

However, by early 2009 there were reportedly some attempts to convene this conference in March to coincide with the festival of al-Karamah battle, and that the probable venue will be either, Egypt, Jordan or the WB. Moreover, the preparatory committee was said to have almost consensually decided that the membership of the congress be 1,500 members, of whom about 80% were expected to be from inside Palestine.

However, the conference had been repeatedly delayed, and there were conflicts and heated controversies on the venue and the number of the members. Fatah had officially requested Egypt to host the function, but the latter responded in the second week of April 2009 that it prefers it to be inside Palestine.⁸¹ Ten days later the Jordanian government had likewise officially apologized.⁸² Thus the initial inclination to hold the conference abroad had eventually changed in favor of having it in the WB, particularly so as President 'Abbas had forcefully supported the notion vis-à-vis an opposition from several prominent Fatah leaders led by Faruq Qaddumi, who wanted to have the conference in the Diaspora. However, there had been noticeable confusion on the venue of the conference when Muhammad Ghunaym, head of preparatory committee, declared, on 10/5/2009, that his committee decided that the conference will be convened in one of the Arab countries. The Central Committee of Fatah opted for the Diaspora "in the interests of the unity of the Organization and the Palestinian people in the interior and abroad, and far away from the occupation, its practices, pressure and conspiracies."⁸³ This situation prompted 'Abbas to decisively intervene, on 11/5/2009, where he decided to end the work of the preparatory committee and to hold the conference in the WB. Thus, his move was in conformity with the requests of elected Fatah leaders of the interior.⁸⁴ Ahmad Qurei' (Abu 'Ala'), Nasr Yusuf and Abu Mahir Ghunaym had all criticized 'Abbas' stand on the issue. Qurei', chairman of Fatah Department for Recruitment and Organization, had openly told 'Abbas that, by virtue of his

official position, he could not possibly agree to the holding of the conference in the interior. It will lead to a split in the Organization.⁸⁵

In a memorandum, of which excerpts were published in *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 82 Fatah leaders opposed the drive to hold the conference in the interior, accused 'Abbas of taking advantage of his presidency of the PA to wage a coup in the Organization, and warned that Fatah is subject to a well planned conspiracy to destroy it.⁸⁶

Nonetheless, 'Abbas was determined to impose, if necessary, his will to convene the congress in Bethlehem.⁸⁷ On 14/6/2009, he secured a decision from Fatah Central Committee to hold the conference "inside the nation" at a specified date, 4/8/2009,⁸⁸ and, later on, he got the support of the Revolutionary Council, which, 'Abbas cautioned, "should be implemented verbatimly."⁸⁹

The crisis reached to a point of no return when the Secretary of Fatah's Central Committee, Faruq Qaddumi, openly accused in a press conference 'Abbas and Muhammad Dahlan of conspiring to poison the late President 'Arafat, and to assassinate some leaders from Hamas and other Palestinian factions. Qaddumi described 'Abbas as "a dissenter from Fatah" and of being "individualist and a despot...".⁹⁰ Despite the grumbling resulting from these charges, which were voiced by a senior and historical leader of Fatah, no split or a major rebellion took place within the ranks of the Organization, and the threats of Qaddumi to hold a counter conference of the adversaries of 'Abbas did not hold water. Apparently 'Abbas and his ilk were in firm control of Fatah and well prepared to supersede these repercussions, particularly after they persuaded Muhammad Ghunaym, who was in charge of the organizational aspect, to shift to the option of the interior.

Moreover, the prevailing regional Arab environment was in their favor to such an extent that Qaddumi and his comrades would not possibly be able to establish an alternative Fatah organization, or to hold the conference in an Arab country. Besides, the accusations that Qaddumi claimed and the documents presented in their support were not convincing to many within and outside the Organization. For they were launched too late (five years late) to be effective, and appeared to have been said not for the sake of revealing the truth, but were primarily vindictive and motivated by then unprecedented state of political animosity.



‘Abbas secured the firm support of Fatah’s Central Committee, which described the minutes of a meeting that Qaddumi referred to (the document) as fabricated, contradictory and full of lies, and that they provoke sedition.⁹¹ The Executive Committee violently and unprecedentedly attacked Qaddumi, describing his declarations as “hysteric,” and threatened to take measures against him.⁹² ‘Abbas himself had described Qaddumi’s charges as “series of lies that aimed at obstructing Fatah’s sixth congress.”⁹³ All in all, ‘Abbas and his supporters managed within a few days to absorb and contain the negative repercussions provoked by the declarations and objections of al-Qaddumi.

The sensitive issue of membership of the congress was another sensitive issue, which had been a source of contention throughout the years of preparation and until the opening of the conference. There were many suggestions on the optimum size of membership, but the figure 1,500 seemed to have been the most plausible and accepted one, particularly within the circles of the preparatory committee, which had endorsed it several times, the latest of which was on 10/5/2009, when it finally fixed the number as 1,550.⁹⁴ Surprisingly, however, in late July, just a few days before the congress, the number of the members was somehow increased to 2,300. This was unacceptable to some quarters in Fatah in the WB and GS,⁹⁵ who maintained that this increase was effected without the knowledge of the Central and preparatory committees.⁹⁶ However, the official final number was 2,350,⁹⁷ amongst whom 400 were from GS. All in all, the problem of the numbers revealed the organizational and administrative decay in Fatah. The subject of membership, administrative hierarchy and the representation systems of any party or organizational institution constitute the minimum requirement for any cohesive, well-defined performance.

In return for allowing Fatah’s representatives in GS to attend the conference, the dismissed government asked for the release of its detainees in the WB, and to provide it with a quantity of passports to facilitate the movements of its personnel as well as ordinary citizens such as patients, students and merchants. Notwithstanding a flood of mediations and negotiations, no agreement was concluded on the issue. Hamas’ prisoners remained in their detention, and Fatah’s representatives in GS were deprived participation in the congress, which had a negative impact on it. This situation aggravated the internal Palestinian scene, where Hamas accused Fatah of not being serious in its reconciliation, of its agreement on the continuity

of detaining Hamas prisoners, of not being able to do anything incompatible with Dayton's security program, and of prioritizing keeping Hamas prisoners in jail over its member's participation in the congress. On the other hand, Fatah accused Hamas of gravely insulting Fatah, of affecting its conference and all its events negatively, and of deliberately trying to spoil "its democratic wedding," a red line that should not have been passed.⁹⁸

Ahmad Qurei' opened the conference on 4/8/2009, which was also addressed by President 'Abbas. It elected 'Othman Abu Gharbieh as chairman, Sabri Saidam first deputy and Amin Maqbul second deputy. The conference exceeded the originally planned three-day duration to eight days, which reflected the huge size of the issues addressed and the extensive discussions, deliberations and comments by many members of the congress.

The congress increased the membership of the Executive Committee from 21 to 23 members, and re-elected Mahmud 'Abbas as the leader of the movement, and a member of the Central Committee. Hence, 18 other members were to be elected to the Central Committee, who should later appoint four others. The membership of the Revolutionary Council was fixed as 128, of whom 80 will be elected by the congress, 25 to be appointed by the Revolutionary Council in its first meeting, and 20 are to be from Fatah's detainees in Israeli jails.

The most prominent points of the political program of Fatah, as endorsed by the congress, were:⁹⁹

- The right of the Palestinian people to resist the occupation by all means in accordance with the provisions of international law, including military struggle.
- Rejection of the state with temporary borders, and the rejection of Israel as a Jewish state in defense of the rights of the refugees and those of our people across the green line.
- The option of armed resistance is a style and form of the struggle. It is derived from the right of the Palestinian people to resist the occupation, settlement, expulsion, enforced migration and racial discrimination, which has been legitimized by all religions and the international law.
- The liberation of the homeland is the focus of Fatah's struggle. This includes the right of the Palestinian people for self-determination, a fundamental right



that is inalienable and cannot be extinguished with the passage of time, and which is recognized and emphasized by the international community.

- The Palestinian people have the right to establish their sovereign and independent state, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of the refugees for return and compensation.
- The focus of Fatah's struggle in the short run is to confront and end the settlement. Its strategic option is a just and comprehensive peace that can be attained by several means. But the Organization does not accept stagnation as an alternative, and it patronizes the struggle as a means to achieve peace.

As usual in Fatah, despite objections and noisy protests, compromises, settlements and alliances were finally reached, which reflected in one way or another the size of the centers of power within the movement. Moreover, all kinds of tactics—electoral and otherwise—and resources—political, financial, organizational and security—were used.

The election of the Executive Committee of Fatah brought new faces, while some historical symbols were not included, like Faruq Qaddumi, Hani al-Hassan and Muhammad Jihad. Interestingly, some persons with security and military backgrounds found their way to the new committee, notably Jibril al-Rajoub, Tawfiq al-Tirawi, Muhammad Dahlan, Muhammad al-Madani and Sultan Abu al-'Aynayn. Some of the old guard continued their membership, i.e., Mahmud 'Abbas, Muhammad Ghunaym, Salim al-Za'nun, al-Tayyib 'Abd al-Rahim, Nabil Sha'th and 'Abbas Zaki. Though Marwan al-Barguthi was still in detention, his impact on the congress was vividly visible. Though he ranked the third in terms of the votes that he earned, these votes were less than half of the total votes, which reflects the intensity of the competition and the extent of polarization in the congress. Moreover, unlike what had been rumored, al-Barguthi was not a consensus personality.

Both Muhammad Ishtayeh and Nabil Sha'th shared the 18th position. Since it was not possible to conduct a new round of elections, it was agreed that both of them be included in the committee. Hence, three others (not four) were to be appointed. Two leaders from GS, Sakhr Bseiso and Zakaria al-Agha, were added in October 2009.¹⁰¹ Also, in its 11/4/2010 meeting in Ramallah, Fatah Central Committee recommended appointing Nabil Abu Rudaina as the third member, a procedure subject to the approval of the Revolutionary Council.¹⁰²

Table 1/1: Results of Fatah Central Committee Elections 2009¹⁰⁰

Rank	Name	No. of votes	Rank	Name	No. of votes
1	Muhammad Ghunaym	1,368	2	Mahmud al-‘Aloul	1,102
3	Marwan al-Barguthi	1,063	4	Nasir al-Qudwah	964
5	Salim Za‘noun	920	6	Jibril al-Rajoub	908
7	Tawfiq al-Tirawi	903	8	Sa‘ib ‘Uraiqat	863
9	‘Othman Abu Gharbieh	854	10	Muhammad Dahlan	853
11	Muhammad al-Madani	821	12	Jamal Muheisen	733
13	Hussein al-Sheikh	726	14	‘Azzam al-Ahmad	690
15	Sultan Abu al-‘Aynayn	677	16	Al-Tayyib ‘Abd al-Rahim	663
17	‘Abbas Zaki	642	18	Nabil Sha‘th	641
18	Muhammad Ishtayeh	641			

The elections for the Revolutionary Council brought new blood of the age group 30–45 years, who had actively participated in the second and third *Intifadahs*. The congress elected 81 members for this council (two shared the 80th position, and were both incorporated in the council). Among the winners there are 70 male members, 11 women in addition to the Jewish Uriel (Uri) Davis.¹⁰³

A number of Fatah leaders were frustrated because they failed to be elected to the Executive Committee, like Ahmad Qurei‘ and Nabil ‘Amr. The latter had contested the credibility of the totality of the elections, and said that he has big question marks on the elections related to the way they were conducted and the methods used to count the votes. He added that the style decided by the supervisory committee to conduct the elections was not strictly followed, and sarcastically asked, is it by sheer chance that four of the security leaders, who coordinated intelligence with the occupation forces, succeed in these elections?! He also claimed that many of the members of Fatah were extremely furious and angry because of “the rigging operations” in these elections.¹⁰⁴

Whatever the case may be, Fatah had succeeded in convening its congress after a long wait and with minimum losses. Moreover, it rallied the membership behind the organization, and put its house in order in a manner that reflected the influence of



the trends of Mahmud ‘Abbas, Marwan al-Barghuthi and Mahmud Dahlan, as well as that of the security. Moreover, these elections demonstrated the organizational strength of Fatah’s interior leadership versus that in the Diaspora, and had brought in to the membership of the Revolutionary Council and the Executive Committee fresh young elements.

In the second half of 2010, news spread that there were differences between ‘Abbas and Muhammad Dahlan, as ‘Abbas made a number of arrangements to undermine the influence of Dahlan in Fatah and the PA.

Seventh: Internal Security and the Problem of Security

Both the governments of Ramallah and GS had tightened their grips over the internal affairs, thus the security hazards had progressively subsided. But the problem of political arrests continued to have substantial impact on the internal affairs and on the issue of national reconciliation, while security coordination between the PA in Ramallah and the Israeli occupation never stopped.

Meanwhile, the security forces in the WB firmly dealt with the protest rallies and demonstrations that tried to express their frustration and anger against the Israeli aggression on GS. They kept them in a limited scale and prohibited the protesters and the demonstrations from posing pro-Hamas slogans, or clashing with the Israeli occupation forces. Moreover, the security personnel arrested many of the activists who participated in these demonstrations, essentially from Hamas, PFLP, DFLP and other resistance factions.¹⁰⁵

Hamas accused the security forces in Ramallah of organizing a persistent campaign against it that had continued, even accelerated, during the war on GS,¹⁰⁶ and even after the end of the war, many of Hamas activists were put behind bars.¹⁰⁷ Hassan Khreisheh, the second deputy speaker of the PLC, noted that these arrests had particularly increased in the WB just before the beginning of the reconciliation sessions, and that they were masterminded by “the government of Fayyad and other quarters.”¹⁰⁸ However, this issue was a source of extensive controversy during the year 2009. Many argued that Fayyad’s government took these and other security measures under American cover, and that it does not care at all for the views of Fatah members. Fatah leaders who expressed opposition to this security drive were either

marginalized or sent to pension. But others felt that Fatah leadership was actually behind this campaign, otherwise Fayyad government would not have continued in power for one day. They, so they argued, provided the cover for Fayyad and his ilk to undertake this dirty work, which they did not want to do by themselves lest the popular image of Fatah be tarnished and undermined.

According to Hamas, 600 of its activists were detained by the PA. However, under Hamas considerable pressure that their release was an absolute necessity to provide a conducive environment for the dialogue, the security forces released 38 detainees just before the beginning of the dialogue,¹⁰⁹ and another 45 on 12/3/2009.¹¹⁰ However, this issue was not conclusively settled, and it had an extremely negative impact on the reconciliation process. Khalid Mish'al had openly described it as "the stumbling block of the reconciliation," and added that the ugly oppressive measures undertaken by the government of Fayyad, with the tacit blessing of Mahmud 'Abbas and under the supervision of General Dayton, are responsible for obstructing the reconciliation efforts and the Egyptian effort, in particular. Mish'al continued to say that the PA in Ramallah is not targeting the resistance drive of Hamas only, but it is orchestrating a campaign against the movement's social infrastructure, institutions and organizational and political leadership, and that it is after the funds allocated to the orphans and the families of the killed and the detainees. In essence, this is an "attempt to uproot the movement."¹¹¹

In June 2009, the security forces waged an extensive campaign of arrests against Hamas supporters, which included many prominent figures, media and economic experts, academicians, etc. They included Farid Abu Thahir, Hussam al-Safarini, Ahmad al-Shanar and Ghassan Daoud. Women were not spared from this campaign of arrest and detention, which had been viewed by some observers as a political commitment to the peace path and the provisions of the Road Map, while Hamas saw it as nothing but an attempt to uproot it, and to end the reconciliation process once and for all.¹¹² According to Hamas, the various security institutions of the PA arrested in June 474 of its supporters, conducted 555 break-ins and search operations, and called hundreds for investigation.¹¹³ Moreover, in mid December 2009, just before Hamas celebrations of its anniversary, the security arrested 550 of Hamas supporters in the WB. PLC Secretary Mahmud al-Ramahi, bitterly said that this detention drive vividly demonstrates that the claim of the PA in Ramallah that the detainees were security risks not politicians is nothing but fabrication and series of lies.¹¹⁴



Hamas representatives in the PLC protested against harassment, which was clearly seen in the rough handling of ‘Aziz Dweik, the speaker of the PLC, who was not allowed to go to his office and perform his duties under the guise that this could only be done after the successful completion of the reconciliation. On his release, on 23/6/2009, from a three-year detention in an Israeli jail, Dweik, according to some MPs, tried several times to get in touch with Mahmud ‘Abbas to agree on a certain day for the resumption of his duties, but to no avail, though he had been repeatedly promised by the office of the President that ‘Abbas will personally get in touch with him. The MPs added that, according to an agreement with the PA, Qais Abdul Karim (Abu Laila) would declare Sunday 26/7/2009 as the scheduled day for Dweik’s resumption of duties, but, to their amazement, ‘Azzam al-Ahmad refused to allow this under the pretext that the announcement was a violation of the agreement, and insisted that another date should be agreed upon. However, according to another compromise, signed by some intermediaries and ‘Omar Abdul Razzaq, Mahmud al-Ramahi, ‘Abdul Rahman Zaidan and ‘Azzam al-Ahmad, it was agreed that Dweik, accompanied by the leaders of the parliamentary blocs, comes to office the next day, Monday 27/7/2009, at 10:00 am. But once more Fatah did not honor its word and Hamas MPs were surprised, on Thursday 23/7/2009, by the statements of some Fatah’s personalities, whom ‘Azzam al-Ahmad was among, that they withdrew from the agreement and which was confirmed on the next Monday.¹¹⁵ Fatah officially declared that Dweik’s presidency had “legally expired,” thus he will not be allowed to use the office of the presidency of the PLC.¹¹⁶

Meanwhile, a security officer fired at and injured the foot of the MP Hamid al-Bitawi,¹¹⁷ while another MP, Muna Mansour, was harassed and humiliated.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the security agents arrested Dweik’s personal escort and director of office, and denied him entrance to the headquarter of the PLC in Ramallah.¹¹⁹ The director of the office of MP Omar ‘Abdul Raziq was also arrested,¹²⁰ while the office of the MPs in Nablus was exposed to search and inconvenience.¹²¹ Hamas MPs in the WB accused the security forces of failure to implement the decisions of the Supreme Court, issued a month ago, that ordered the release of many detainees, while others were rearrested after their release.¹²²

The security forces admitted that they had confiscated within a few months \$8.5 million from members of Hamas on the grounds that the funds were used

to establish a security apparatus for Hamas in the WB.¹²³ But Hamas dismissed this excuse as sheer fabrication and lies, and accused the PA of embezzling funds allocated to Palestinian orphans and the families of the killed and the wounded. In addition, personal funds and properties of some elements of Hamas were also confiscated, as was the case with the businessman Ahmad al-Shunnar of Nablus, who was forced to relinquish the ownership of his own building, on the basis of the allegations that the real owner is Hamas.¹²⁴

In another vein, Hamas continued to accuse the PA in Ramallah of torturing its members in prisons, which led to the death of some of them, like Muhammad al-Haj in Jenin in February 2009,¹²⁵ Haytham ‘Amr in Hebron (*al-Khalil*) on 15/6/2009,¹²⁶ the clinical death of Kamal al-Sheikh in Fawwar refugee camp in July 2009¹²⁷ and Fadi Hamadneh in August 2009.¹²⁸ But a bloody clash in Qalqilyah between the security forces and three fighters of Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, in which they, as well as three of the security officers, were killed,¹²⁹ had led to an outcry and aggravated the tension in the Palestinian arena. The minister of interior commented that the PA in Ramallah will not “allow groups of outlaws to threaten the security of the nation and the citizens.”¹³⁰ But Hamas accused the security forces of fabricating charges against its fighters, who were killed, “to cover up its awful crime and the culprits behind it, and to distort the credibility of the honored Palestinian national resistance.”¹³¹ Hassan Khreishah warned that a campaign of internal mobilization among the members of the security forces had been actively conducted on the basis that these forces had been established to protect Israel and the Israelis, not to defend the Palestinian people.¹³²

The American funding to develop, train and qualify the Palestinian security forces had substantially increased from \$75 million in 2008 to \$130 million in 2009, an increase of almost 70%. Under the overall supervision of American Lieutenant General Keith Dayton, four battalions, about 1,600 men, were trained in a base in Jordan by American, Jordanian and Palestinian officers, and many of them were stationed in the cities of Jenin, Nablus and Hebron.¹³³ Meanwhile, work had been in progress to train six further battalions that are expected to graduate within two years, thus by then, a company of 10 battalions would be formed. Please note that details and nature of the training were fixed in coordination between the Israeli army and Jordan.¹³⁴



The Palestinian security sources in Ramallah emphasized that Dayton's role is strictly confined to training and qualifying the security forces, but he is not involved in any way in the formulation of the security policies, nor does he issue directives to the security authorities.¹³⁵ Salam Fayyad reiterated that the primary aim of the security forces is to confidently and persistently move forward to guarantee the end of the occupation, and to build a state of the institutions and the rule of law, first and foremost a strong security apparatus. The PA was elated that the last group of trainees, 700 in number, who graduated in June 2009, were trained in Jordan and by Palestinian trainers, not Americans, though Dayton and Jordanian officers were consulted.¹³⁶

Both the American and Palestinian sides admit close cooperation between the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the security forces in Ramallah, specifically the Preventive Security Service (PSS) and the General Intelligence Service, but they deny that the CIA administer or supervise these two institutions. However, a report published in the British newspaper *The Guardian* of 17/12/2009 maintained that the:

Palestinian security agents who have been detaining and allegedly torturing supporters of the Islamist organization Hamas in the West Bank have been working closely with the CIA... The relationship between the CIA and the two Palestinian agencies involved—Preventive Security Organization (PSO) and General Intelligence Service (GI)—is said by some western diplomats and other officials in the region to be so close that the American agency appears to be supervising the Palestinians' work. One senior western official said: 'The [Central Intelligence] Agency consider them as their property, those two Palestinian services.'¹³⁷

The security coordination between the PA in Ramallah and Israel had, in fact, continued in a strong and regular pattern. It took various forms: exchange of information, disclosure of the Palestinian resistance network, prohibition of operations against Israeli target, arrest of fighters involved in such operations, control of protest movements in such a way to avoid clashes with the Israeli forces, disclosure and confiscation of weapons, dismantling of roadside bombs, secure the safe return of Israelis who enter Palestinian territories and to return stolen Israeli cars.¹³⁸

The rise of the extreme right in Israel, the victory of the Likud Party under the leadership of Netanyahu in the general elections, the stagnation of the peace process and the repeated Israeli aggression on the ground had apparently weakened the enthusiasm of the PA in Ramallah on the security coordination with Israel. Though seemingly the Israelis were worried by this development, however, it was not translated on the ground.¹³⁹ For the security coordination had, in fact, continued even after some Israeli practices had placed the dignity and reputation of the Palestinian security itself at stake. On 20/11/2009, “Palestinian sources said Israel arrested five senior officials from the Palestinian General Intelligence Service... The officials include Mohammad Abdel Hamid, commander of intelligence in the West Bank town of Salfit.”¹⁴⁰ The Israelis, also, assassinated three activists of *Al-Aqsa* Martyrs’ Brigades in the Nablus area.¹⁴¹

In another vein, the security forces in GS managed to absorb the great shock of the Israeli attack on GS, whose brutality was experienced right in the first day of the war when the Israelis raided some 18 police stations killing about 240 police officers, besides the destruction of the infrastructure of the government institutions and the security forces.

Meanwhile the security in Gaza arrested during the war several supporters of Fatah in the Strip, who were charged of treason because of their presumed extension of vital security information to the Israeli enemy.¹⁴² Hamas admitted that it executed by firing squad 4% of the captured agents, including seven at one go, and fired at the feet of 10% of them.¹⁴³ Some of Hamas leaders accused the security forces in Ramallah and some members in Fatah of providing the enemy with a list of proposed targets in GS for bombardment. Moreover, they maintained that GS security intercepted messages between some of Fatah security members in GS and their leaders who fled to Ramallah, which revealed that the PA leadership asked for detailed maps of the houses of the leaders of Hamas and Ezzedeen AL-Qassam Brigades as well as weapon stores in GS. The captured Fatah agents had allegedly given detailed information of what they did.¹⁴⁴ But Fatah claimed that Hamas had exploited the war to harass and assassinate its members, including 17 of the Organization’s leadership cadres in GS. In response, Hamas maintained that those who were killed were agents who received capital punishment by the courts of law in GS before “the decisive military action.”¹⁴⁵



Meanwhile the authorities in GS continued to place Fatah and its supporters under surveillance, and, sometimes arrested some of them, who were charged of attempts to provoke chaos and lawlessness, and to assassinate some of Hamas leaders.¹⁴⁶ In reciprocal to Fatah's harassment of Hamas' supporters in the WB, Hamas arrested some of Fatah's supporters, once in a while, and imposed restrictions on the activities of Fatah in GS.¹⁴⁷ It arrested 76 Fatah members in June 2009,¹⁴⁸ while in the midst of December 26 were arrested.¹⁴⁹ However, as a gesture of good will and in an attempt to make the environment more conducive for the Palestinian reconciliation, the government of Haniyyah had occasionally released some of Fatah's detainees. In Ramadan, it freed a hundred detainees of whom 50 were Fatah members who were reportedly arrested for security reasons.¹⁵⁰

On 14/8/2009, from the Ibn Taymiyyah's mosque of Rafah city in Gaza, the spiritual leader of the group Jund Ansar Allah (JAA), 'Abdul-Latif Musa, declared Gaza an Islamic emirate. The government of Gaza opposed this move, and consequently very controversial clashes erupted between this JAA and the security forces, in which 28 were killed and 150 injured from both sides. Among the casualties were 'Abdul-Latif Musa himself and the founder and military commander of the group Abi 'Abdullah al-Suri, nicknamed al-Muhajir, as well as six of the security forces amongst whom was the leader of the eastern battalion of Ezzedein AL-Qassam Brigades in Rafah Muhammad al-Shamali, and six citizens, while about a hundred of JAA were arrested.

Al-Suri was originally related to AL-Qassam Brigades, but his extreme Salafi inclination triggered him to dissent and form his own group, JAA. Hamas tried its utmost best to convince him to give up his new plan, but to no avail. However, some quarters in GS government and Hamas claimed that the JAA had been infiltrated, and that 'Abdul-Latif Musa and some of the group's members were coordinating with the security forces in Ramallah. They, including Musa, were in the pay roll of Ramallah's government, and had participated in the strikes and demonstration against the government of GS.¹⁵¹

The large number of casualties demonstrates the brutality of the confrontation, but the nearly ten-hour duration of the fighting had also indicated the ability of GS security apparatus to effectively and decisively deal with their adversaries. Most of the Palestinian factions expressed sorrow for the big toll of casualties, but Fatah

claimed that Hamas is squarely responsible for the emergence of such extremist groups in GS, and blamed the movement for unnecessarily employing extensive force in dealing with this group. Mahmud 'Abbas described Hamas' handling of the incident as "brutal, ugly and inhuman."¹⁵² In response to these accusations, the government of Haniyyah maintained that it dealt with the incident in a responsible manner, that it gave sufficient room for intermediaries to settle the matter amicably, and that it was JAA that started the shooting and killing. Moreover, the government emphasized that it will "rehabilitate the group's detainees to the Islamic centrist current and the right Islamic path."¹⁵³ Four months later, Isma'il Haniyyah ordered the release of all the detainees of this Rafah incidents.¹⁵⁴

Detailed statistics on the violations of human rights in both GS and Ramallah are not available. However, The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR):

received a total of 3,442 complaints concerning violations of human rights and public freedoms in 2009 including 2,449 in the West Bank and 993 in Gaza Strip... The complaints were distributed as follows: 60% were related to security agencies and 40% to civil agencies. [In WB] ICHR received more than 2,207 complaints about the violation of detainees rights of which 581 complaints regarding detainees arrested on political grounds. About 252 complaints were related to violations of the right to physical safety, which focused on patterns and methods of torture... [In GS] ICHR received 993 complaints... with the highest percentage of complaints aiming the security agencies, amounting to 712 complaints... 236 complaints were linked to detention based on political affiliation. Violations of the right to physical safety totaled 252 and focused on many forms and patterns and method of torture...¹⁵⁵

The above commission had also given statistics of cases of killing or death outside the law orbit in the WB and GS. Amongst those were 36 caused by intra-fighting, 11 in prison and 4 because of cooperation with the enemy. We should, however, caution that the commission included in these statistics 62 casualties in the tunnels between GS and the Egyptian borders, though these were due to different reasons (see table 2/1).¹⁵⁶



Table 2/1: Classifications of Those Killed Outside Legal Channels According to the Region and Killing Background 2009

Basis of killing	WB			GS			Total
	Total	Children	Women	Total	Children	Women	
Family quarrels	26	5	4	15	2	1	41
Misuse of arms by those charged with law enforcement	2	-	1	1	-	-	3
Misuse of arms by citizens	3	-	1	11	7	3	14
Mysterious circumstances	10	1	2	23	2	-	33
Honor killings	4	2	4	5	1	5	9
Collaboration with the enemy	-	-	-	4	-	-	4
Internal fighting	8	-	-	28	4	1	36
Tunnel deaths	-	-	-	62	3	-	62
Negligence and not maintaining public safety	13	11	5	11	1	3	24
Deaths of detainees	3	-	-	8	-	-	11
Total	69	19	17	168	20	13	237

Eighth: Repercussions of the War on GS and Goldstone Report

Like its predecessor of 2008, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10* will address the war on Gaza (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) from different angles. What concern us here are some indicators related to the internal situation, particularly with regard to Goldstone Report.

The immediate impacts of the war on GS on the domestic situation may be summarized in the following points:

1. The increasing popularity of Hamas and the resistance movements, as well as the rising support to the strategy and options of the resistance.
2. The decline in the popularity of Fatah and the PA in Ramallah, and their exposition to severe criticism,

3. The retrogression in the popularity of the peace option and the increasing hostility to Israel.
4. The increasing calls for national dialogue and reconciliation, bypass of internal differences, formation of a government of national unity and the reform of the PLO.
5. Earnest and repeated calls for the mutual stoppage of media campaigns, and the release of political detainees.
6. Increasing calls for solidarity to lift the blockade and to pursue the reconstruction of GS.
7. Aggravation of the people's hardship resulting from the huge casualties—dead and wounded—destruction of thousands of houses and the expulsion of tens of thousands of the population.
8. The increasing economic, political, social and security complexities confronting the government of GS in dealing with the war and its repercussions.

During and after the war there was a barrage of blaming and finger-pointing between Fatah and Hamas. Fatah leadership held Hamas squarely responsible for what happened, and some did not initially conceal their desire in the downfall of Hamas rule in GS. On more than one occasion, Mahmud 'Abbas had bitterly and sarcastically condemned the performance of Hamas leaders during the war. He accused them of hiding themselves and of "escaping in ambulances to Sinai, abandoning our people to be slaughtered."¹⁵⁷ It is really perplexing that such a dignitary like the Palestinian president utters claims that he very well knows that they are false and easy to checkup? 'Abbas had also accused Hamas of offering a price of one thousand euros for families of those killed, 500 euros for each one wounded, and the owners of destroyed homes would receive four thousand euros to help rebuilding work. He also wondered, "Is this what we want to our people? We take them to the massacre, and then say come over you injured father, you bereaved mother, take one thousand euros a price for your son who had been killed for unknown reasons?"¹⁵⁸ No doubt, Hamas did not say to the fathers and mothers of the killed that "The Price" of your son is a thousand euros. Fatah and Hamas extend these amounts out of limited funds, and as a symbol of condolence to the relatives of the victims, which is a very well known and practical social custom. Moreover, there is no Palestinian whatsoever who does not know why the Israelis kill his/ her son or any of his/ her relatives.



Meanwhile, a number of Hamas leaders accused some quarters in Fatah of participating in the war through providing information to the enemy, and by updating the bank of targets in GS to be attacked by the Israeli army. They accused President 'Abbas himself of knowing beforehand of the attack on GS, even he allegedly incited the Israelis to do so. In this respect, they said that 'Abbas "took part in the war through his agents who identified to the Israelis Hamas [members] houses in GS."¹⁵⁹ Hamas had, moreover, adamantly refused to allow 'Abbas and the PA in Ramallah to represent or speak on behalf of GS, emphasizing that 'Abbas has no right to negotiate on what the religious warriors (*mujahidun*) are achieving in the battlefield by their own blood and sacrifices.¹⁶⁰ Hamas also refused the calls of Abu Mazin for individual consent to the Egyptian initiative to stop the war on GS. This initiative, in Hamas' view, did not explicitly condemn the Israeli aggression, distinguish between the killer and the victim, clearly demand the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the Strip, and, above all, did not directly deal with Hamas and its government, i.e., the Palestinian party that administers and defends GS.

Notwithstanding the position of some of its leaders, Fatah had, on the whole, supported the resistance and its steadfastness during the Israeli aggression. It shelved its 44th anniversary celebrations and called for unity and the formation of a government of national consensus to shoulder the reconstruction of GS and the distribution of the aid. Moreover, the Central Committee of Fatah declared its readiness for dialogue without conditions and external pressure.¹⁶¹ Meanwhile, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported that Israel may return GS to the PA in Ramallah if the former controls it, on which a member of Hamas political bureau defiantly remarked, "Who assumes that he will return aboard an Israeli tank, is misled."¹⁶² In response, Fatah leader Sa'ib 'Uraiqat said that if Israel waits for one thousand years, the PA will not return to rule GS on its tanks. We have quitted because of differences, and will not return except by consensus.¹⁶³

'Abbas turned down an invitation by the Qatari Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Al-Thani to attend an emergency Arab summit in Doha on 16/1/2009 to discuss the Israeli aggression on Gaza, excusing himself by saying that if he attends "he will be slaughtered from one vein to another."¹⁶⁴ Hence, Qatar invited the representatives of the resistance, and Khalid Mish'al delivered in the Summit's inaugural session the speech of Hamas and the resistance, which provoked on one side the issue of who has the right of representing the Palestinians, and was, on the other side, a tremendous political victory to Hamas and its government in

GS. But this episode infuriated the Palestinian presidency, who authorized some of its advisors to strongly express Ramallah's fury and dismay. Yasser 'Abed Rabbo bitterly said that the Qatari prince had stepped over the red lines,¹⁶⁵ while other Fatah leaders maintained that the Qatari invitations to the leaders of the factions has deepened the schism, and that they represent a bias towards Hamas, and an attempt to have a regional axis at the expense of the Palestinians.¹⁶⁶

Hamas has consistently argued that it gained effective and popular legitimacy through its election victory and the capture of the majority seats in the PLC. Moreover, it felt that its dismissed government is the legitimate administration that should run the affairs until the formation of a new government. Besides, Mahmud 'Abbas' term of the Presidency had already expired by virtue of the Palestinian Basic Law. Hamas was furious of being deprived from all access to the PLO and by the total Fatah control of the Organization, even years after the constitutional expiry of the terms and functions of its councils. That's because it was the force that defended—alongside the resistance forces—the Palestinian people in GS and the ones who made Israel fail in achieving any of its aims in the war on GS. Hamas fury was also due to the ongoing suffocating siege of GS, and its calculated and deliberate isolation at the Arab and international levels. This frustration, coupled with the elation resulting from victory in the Gaza war, had triggered Hamas to call for a new national authority. This provoked, as mentioned above, turmoil on the Palestinian scene. However, this uproar was absorbed through the dialogue sessions that placed the reform of the PLO as a priority on the agenda of the issues under discussion by the Palestinian factions.

Goldstone Report

The scandal of demanding to postpone the vote on Goldstone Report had profoundly embarrassed and confused the PA in Ramallah. Besides, it aggravated tension, widened the crisis of confidence within the Palestinian arena and poisoned the environment of the reconciliation, which had ultimately led to the postponement and complication of the endorsement of the Egyptian document.

In April 2009, the United Nations HRC, which is composed of 47 states, formed a mission headed by the South African judge, Richard Goldstone, to investigate the Israeli war on Gaza. The 452 page report, issued in mid September 2009, condemned what it considered the Israeli collective punishment on the people of the GS, found the conduct of the Israeli armed forces constitutes grave breaches of the



Fourth Geneva Convention which sought to guarantee the protection of civilians. The Report had, moreover, charged Israel with deliberate killing and torture, extensive destruction of property, employing the Palestinians as human shields, and deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects (individuals, whole families, houses and mosques) without any military rationale for such violent actions. The Report came to the conclusion that some of these acts would constitute war crimes and may amount to crimes against humanity. Simultaneously, the report accused, and in more precise wording, the Palestinian armed groups of having caused terror, of deliberately attacking civilian population and that these actions would constitute war crimes and may amount to crimes against humanity. The report recommended that the UN Security Council should require Israel to launch investigations into these serious allegations. Israel and the relevant authorities in GS to launch appropriate investigations and a committee of experts should report at the end of six-month period to the Security Council on its assessment of relevant domestic proceedings..., otherwise they will refer the situation in GS to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC).¹⁶⁷ The significance of this Report is that it was issued by an official international body, and that it provides a road map, so to speak, that will probably hold Israel and several of its political and military leaders accountable to what they did in front of international courts, and in a number of European countries whose Judicial systems allow the tracking of war criminals.

The PA, through Ibrahim Khraishi, the permanent observer of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva, agreed late Thursday night to delay until March a vote set for Friday, on 2/10/2009, at the HRC in Geneva that would have endorsed the Goldstone Report. The pretexts given by the PA for this delay appeared to be confused and contradictory. In a nutshell, the excuse was that this delay was demanded by the major powers and Europe, as well as other blocks in the Council, including Arab, Islamic, African and Non-Aligned countries, because a longer time was allegedly needed to closely and meticulously study the Report.¹⁶⁸ Mahmud ‘Abbas claimed that the PA has no right “to present, withdraw or postpone a request, because it is just an observer-member in both the Human Rights Council and the United Nations.”¹⁶⁹

But the decision of the PA in this respect has shocked many quarters that cared for the Palestinian issue, and the justification was not convincing to them. Thus, a great media uproar and extensive public anger had erupted, particularly so when it was revealed that the delay was on the demand of the PA, that the pro-Palestinian

blocks—Arab, Islamic and the non-alliance countries—had simply yielded to the desire of the Authority, and that the draft decision would have passed by a comfortable majority, about 33 members. Moreover, in an interview with al-Arabiya News Channel, dated 8/10/2009, Nasir al-Qudwah, a member of Fatah Central Committee and a former representative of the PLO in the UN, who has wealth of experience on this issue of voting and coordination mechanisms, said that it is very well known that in matters related to the Palestinian issue “the decision is the prerogative of the Authority,” that it had committed a blunder by asking for postponement, and that the Arab countries had nothing to do with the decision.

There were persistent news that the PA was subjected to huge Israeli-American pressure, whereby the “Americans argued that pushing the report now [then] would derail the Middle East peace process that they are trying to revive.”¹⁷⁰ It was also rumored that Israel had threatened and blackmailed the Authority through visits that Israeli security and military officials paid to Ramallah, where they threatened ‘Abbas to release some audio and video recordings that reportedly establish his role in the war on GS. Moreover, the director of the Israel Security Agency—ISA (Shabak), Yuval Diskin, visited ‘Abbas’ headquarter just one day before the postponement of the vote on the report, and told ‘Abbas that “if he did not ask for a deferral of the vote on the critical report on last year’s military operation, Israel would turn the West Bank into a ‘second Gaza.’”¹⁷¹

However, with these strong accusations against the president and the leadership of the PA in Ramallah, and under considerable pressure from the Executive Committee of the PLO and the Central Committee of Fatah, President ‘Abbas ordered the formation of a committee headed by Hanna ‘Omeira, a member of the Executive Committee of the PLO, to investigate the circumstances and conditions that led to the shelving of the decision.¹⁷² But this directive perplexed many observers, including two members of Fatah Executive Committee, ‘Abdul Rahim Mallouh and Ghassan al-Shak’a, who expressed their astonishment that the formation of this committee was announced by Yasser ‘Abed Rabbo, even though the issue was not deliberated in the Executive Committee. Moreover, it is worth noting that the committee was asked to know the reasons for the postponement, and not to pinpoint and hold accountable who is behind it.¹⁷³ Perhaps this ambiguity was because President Mahmud ‘Abbas had personally taken the decision, particularly so because there had been wrangling within the Executive Committees of the PLO and Fatah that accused President ‘Abbas of yielding to pressure to withdraw the report.¹⁷⁴



Muhammad Hourani, a senior Fatah member, maintained that there is a consensus among the Fatah seniors that the presidency is responsible for withdrawing the report.¹⁷⁵ But another leader of Fatah and a member of its Central Council, Nabil ‘Amr, had explicitly and openly held President ‘Abbas personally and squarely responsible for the postponement.¹⁷⁶

President ‘Abbas and the PA have not expected such furious reactions and wide condemnation of this postponement. However, they did their utmost best to absorb the anger and to overcome the crisis. Under pressure, they admitted the mistake, Ibrahim Khraishi, the permanent observer of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva, said, “This is a mistake, we did not expect these reactions, particularly at the Palestinian popular level,” and added that confusion had accompanied the discussions for postponement, for which “the Palestinian leadership” is considered responsible.¹⁷⁷

Officially, Fatah opposed the postponement,¹⁷⁸ but it rejected Hamas’ “exploitation” of the matter. Though several of Fatah leaders had publicly voiced their anger, the Organization did not take any measure to disclose and punish the culprit. All the Palestinian factions, including PIJ, PFLP, DFLP and PFLP-General Command (PFLP-GC), also condemned the postponement. In addition, Bassem Khoury reportedly resigned from the cabinet, as economy minister, in protest.¹⁷⁹

Initially, Hamas’ position towards Goldstone Report was not clear and decisive; it alternated between endorsement and reservation. Isma‘il Haniyyah, the premier of the government in GS, welcomed the report, which, in his words, “showed clear condemnation of the Israeli occupation for committing war crimes in the besieged Gaza Strip.” Similarly, Hamas spokesperson Fawzi Barhoum said that this report is an additional and absolute evidence of the war crimes that the occupation committed in GS, and that the international community is required “to prosecute Israeli officials as war criminals.”¹⁸⁰ But another leader of Hamas, Isma‘il Radwan, maintained that “the report is political in nature, unbalanced, unfair and not objective because it equated between the murderer and the victim,” and that it tried “to appease the Zionist enemy by accusing the resistance and Hamas of committing war crimes.”¹⁸¹ ‘Izzat al-Rishq, A member of Hamas political bureau, argued that the report “has positive aspects through its emphasis that the Zionist entity has committed crimes against humanity,” but he criticized the other part of the report which “equated between the killer and the victim by making false

accusations against Hamas.”¹⁸² However, Hamas had soon used strong language to condemn the postponement of the report, while it tactically underplayed its shortcomings in the hope that this will encourage the endorsement of the report, and thus provides a probable opportunity to hold Israeli leaders accountable and to prosecute them for their crimes in GS. Initially, President ‘Abbas and several leaders of the PA drew attention to Hamas’ objections to the report, and accused the movement of political blackmailing. But Hamas distinguished between its objections to the accusations recorded in the report against it, and its unanimous position against the postponement of the voting, and to held accountable those in the Authority who were behind the shelving.

Khalid Mish‘al dismissed the position of the Authority as “shameful,” “cheap” and “disgraceful,” and added that the “blood of children and women that was shed in Gaza will curse those who sacrificed the blood of the Palestinians.”¹⁸³ Isma‘il Haniyyah described this episode as “unprecedented negligence of the blood of the martyrs and the rights of the Palestinian people,” and he viewed the deferral of the vote as “reckless, a political and national crime, a great harm to the Palestinian reconciliation.”¹⁸⁴ An official communiqué of the dismissed government in GS considered the postponement of the vote on the report a “dangerous crime,”¹⁸⁵ while Muhammad Nazzal of Hamas described the deferral as “defeatist and immoral.”¹⁸⁶ This spirit of anger and condemnation was also expressed by many other leaders of Hamas.

‘Izzat al-Rishq maintained that Hamas viewed ‘Abbas’ formation of the investigation committee as “a blatant and theatrical move to cover up his suspected role in the postponement,”¹⁸⁷ “a piece of eye wash,” and “a personal attempt to evade responsibility.”¹⁸⁸ As emphasized by its leaders Mahmud al-Zahhar, Osama Hamdan and others, Hamas was of the conviction that the decision of postponing the voting had its negative impact on the prospects of the reconciliation document.¹⁸⁹

However, to air the extensive political tension, and under pressure from different quarters, the PA in Ramallah demanded that the Report be discussed in an emergency session of the United Nations HRC.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, in a further attempt to absorb the fury, restore the initiative and corner Hamas, the PA signed the Egyptian document. On 16/10/2009 the HRC endorsed the Goldstone Report by a large majority, which was enthusiastically welcomed by the PA in Ramallah and the government of GS, and by Fatah, Hamas and the other Palestinian factions.



The decision was also widely commended in the Arab and Islamic worlds, and internationally by the supporters of human rights in general and the rights of the Palestinian people, in particular.¹⁹¹

The budging of the PA within only two weeks and its admittance of the mistake demonstrates the extensive power and impact of the popular opinion and the media. It also shows the profound fury and anger that dominated the Palestinian street. Nonetheless, since nobody was held accountable for the postponement, and Fatah had by one way or another regained the initiative, the popular and media campaign had a long way to go to achieve its desired objectives through a systematic, organized and continuous drive and strife. Moreover, this development had also shown that there is still room for the political leadership to bet on the “weak memory” of its peoples to return to the stagnant status quo ante.

Conclusion

The Palestinian internal scene is still experiencing disarray and schism, which negatively affect all aspects of the national program, and the Palestinian struggle at all levels—local, Arab and international. The differences between Fatah and Hamas and the governments of Ramallah and GS are essentially a reflection of a deep political and ideological conflict. It is essentially a dispute between two visions that have not been thus far able to reconcile over issues that are related to the priorities of the national struggle, the way of administering the struggle with the occupation, the paths of resistance and peace, and the acclimatization with the Arab and international legitimacies.

The steadfastness and bravery of the resistance during the war on Gaza (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) was a tremendous popular political and media boost to Hamas and its government, and to the resistance trend. On the other hand, it triggered a sense of helplessness among the enemies and adversaries of Hamas to topple it by force. It was also an impetus to go ahead with the national dialogue. Meanwhile, the performance of the PLO and the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah was so colorless and weak, that it was not in line with the huge challenges of the war and its aftermath. But the glamour of “steadfastness and victory” had soon been absorbed by a handicapped Palestinian, Arab and international environment that was incapable of building on it. Thus, the wound of the Gazans was allowed

“to bleed and rot.” As for the financial aid allocated for the reconstruction of GS, it was not only denied access to the Strip, but was also used to politically pressurize and blackmail the dismissed Hamas government.

However, the war improved the reconciliation environment. Egypt patronized the dialogue which had substantially progressed, particularly between Fatah and Hamas. But Hamas raised some objections to the final draft of the Egyptian reconciliation document on the grounds that some important agreed upon issues were changed or amended. But the Egyptian government and Fatah, who had already signed the document, refused any review of the paper, and the reconciliation process had once more stalled.

The predicament of legitimacies—be them incomplete, non-existing or prohibited—continues to be a major issue of contention in Palestine. This is particularly so with regard to the PNC, the Central Council and the Executive Committee of Fatah, the Emergency Government in Ramallah and the Caretaker Government in GS. Such complexities glaringly show, at least on the administrative level, that the reform process requires that the entire Palestinian house be put in order, and that this should not stop with the conduct of elections or the formation of a provisional government.

After a long awaiting of 20 years, Fatah had, finally, convened its sixth congress, in which it managed, with formidable difficulties, to reorganize its internal affairs. ‘Abbas and his supporters emerged victorious, while some of the historical leaders, notably Faruq Qaddumi, were excluded, the domestic trend superseded its Diaspora counterpart, and both the security forces and the pro-peace trend acquired a considerable status in the Organization. However, Fatah has a long way to go on the organizational aspect, its fight of internal corruption, fixation of strategic paths and renewal of its cadres.

The performance of the Presidency and the Authority in Ramallah on Goldstone Report had profoundly embarrassed them. For their demand, under Israeli-American pressure, to postpone its discussion and voting for a further six months, had exposed them to an outcry, extreme fury, and a series of bitter accusations within Palestinian, Arab and Islamic sectors. However, after chaotic confusion and counter accusations, the Presidency and the Authority in Ramallah were compelled to ask that the report be voted on. This revealed the crucial importance of public awareness and effective media campaigns in the pursuit of national aspirations.



Nothing much or new had been achieved during the year 2009, on the level of reorganizing the Palestinian house, and neither had, in 2010, a successful national reconciliation, free and fair elections and the reorganization of the PLO and its institutions been achieved. Whereas making, the achievement of a meaningful reconciliation that effectively promotes the Palestinian national project will continue to be at stake. This will be the case, as long as the options of the resistance and the peace path are not conclusively settled, and the external factor is instrumental in the Palestinian decision.

Endnotes

- ¹ *Addustour* newspaper, Amman, 23/1/2009.
- ² *Al-Hayat* newspaper, London, 8/3/2009.
- ³ *Asharq Alawsat* newspaper, London, 9/3/2009.
- ⁴ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, London, 9/3/2009.
- ⁵ *Addustour*, 9/5/2009.
- ⁶ *Alrai* newspaper, Amman, 13/5/2009.
- ⁷ *Al-Hayat*, 20/5/2009.
- ⁸ See *al-Quds al-Arabi* and *al-Khaleej* newspaper, al-Shariqa, 21/5/2009.
- ⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/7/2009; and see also site of Aljazeera.net, 30/8/2009.
- ¹⁰ Quds Press International News Agency, London, 19/5/2009.
- ¹¹ *Al-Hayat*, 21/5/2009.
- ¹² *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 21/5/2009.
- ¹³ *Al-Hayat*, 23/6/2009.
- ¹⁴ See Reuters News Agency, 24/8/2009; and *al-Hayat*, 26/8/2009.
- ¹⁵ See *Asharq Alawsat*, 27/8/2009 and 1/9/2009.
- ¹⁶ *Haaretz* newspaper, 14/8/2009.
- ¹⁷ *Alittihad* newspaper, Abu Dhabi, 27/12/2009.
- ¹⁸ *Al-Hayat*, 2/3/2009.
- ¹⁹ *Al-Hayat*, 21/5/2009.
- ²⁰ See the study of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) on the financial situation in Gaza (Arabic), <http://www.pecdar.ps/userfiles/file/emp.%20report.pdf>
- ²¹ *Felesteen* newspaper, Gaza, 13/4/2009.
- ²² *Al-Hayat*, 22/1/2009.
- ²³ See *al-Hayat* and *Alarab* newspaper, Doha, 26/1/2009.
- ²⁴ *Felesteen*, 2/3/2009.
- ²⁵ See *al-Hayat*, 19/2/2009.
- ²⁶ See *Felesteen*, 23/2/2009.
- ²⁷ *Al-Hayat*, 24/2/2009.
- ²⁸ See the statement of Khalil al-Hayyah, *Felesteen*, 12/11/2008.
- ²⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/3/2009.
- ³⁰ *Al-Hayat*, 1/3/2009.
- ³¹ *Felesteen*, 19/3/2009.
- ³² See *Asharq Alawsat*, 11/7/2009; and the statement of Mahmud Zahhar, *Alarab*, 11/7/2009; and the statement of Khalil al-Hayyah, Quds Press, 13/7/2009.
- ³³ *Al-Hayat*, 20/8/2009.
- ³⁴ See for example the statement of Mahmud 'Abbas, *al-Ayyam* newspaper, Ramallah, 1/3/2009; and his statement in *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/3/2009; and the statement of Sa'ib 'Uraiqat in *al-Hayat al-Jadida* newspaper, Ramallah, 9/6/2009.



- ³⁵ See the statement of Isma'il Radwan, *Asharq Alawsat*, 11/4/2009; and the statement of Khalil al-Hayyah, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 20/4/2009; and see *al-Hayat*, 4/6/2009.
- ³⁶ *Al-Khaleej*, 22/3/2009; and see the statement of Rabah Mohanna concerning the suggestion of the PFLP, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 28/3/2009; and *Asharq Alawsat*, 11/4/2009.
- ³⁷ See the statement of Mahmud al-Ramahi, *al-Khaleej*, 20/7/2009; and see also the statement of Hasan Khraishi, *Asharq Alawsat*, 5/7/2009.
- ³⁸ *Felesteen*, 10/6/2009.
- ³⁹ See *al-Khaleej*, 8/7/2009; and *Alarab* 18–19/8/2009; and *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 19/8/2009.
- ⁴⁰ *Asharq Alawsat*, 2/7/2009.
- ⁴¹ *Al-Hayat*, 2/7/2009.
- ⁴² See the statement of 'Izzat al-Rishq, Quds Press, 2/10/2009; and the statement of Isma'il Haniyyah, *al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 8/10/2009.
- ⁴³ See *al-Hayat*, 8 and 11/10/2009; and *al-Akhbar* newspaper, Beirut, 9/10/2009.
- ⁴⁴ *Almustaqbal* newspaper, Beirut, 12/10/2009.
- ⁴⁵ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* and *al-Hayat*, 15/10/2009.
- ⁴⁶ *Assafir* newspaper, Beirut, 13/10/2009.
- ⁴⁷ *Al-Khaleej*, 15/10/2009.
- ⁴⁸ For Hamas's remarks on the Egyptian paper see Aljazeera.net, 18–19/10/2009; and *Asharq Alawsat*, 20/10/2009; and *al-Sharq*, Doha, 23/10/2009; and *al-Hayat*, 26/10/2009.
- ⁴⁹ See, for example, the statement of Osama Hamdan, Quds Press, 7/1/2009; and the statement of Musa Abu Marzuq, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 10/1/2009.
- ⁵⁰ Palestine News Agency (WAFA), 23/10/2009.
- ⁵¹ Reuters, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵² *Al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵³ *Felesteen*, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵⁴ *Al-Hayat*, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵⁵ *Almustaqbal*, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵⁶ Site of Arabs 48, 23/10/2009.
- ⁵⁷ *Al-Hayat*, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵⁸ Site of The Palestinian Information Center (PIC), 24/10/2009.
- ⁵⁹ *Al-Ahram* newspaper, Cairo, 30/10/2009.
- ⁶⁰ *Al-Hayat*, 13/11/2009.
- ⁶¹ WAFA, 5/11/2009.
- ⁶² *Al-Hayat*, 6/11/2009.
- ⁶³ For the support of the Executive Committee of the PLO see *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 6/11/2009; and for the support of the Fatah's Revolutionary Council see *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/11/2009; and for the support of the presidents of Israel, USA and Egypt and the king of Jordan see *Almustaqbal*, 6/11/2009.
- ⁶⁴ Reuters, 25/11/2009.
- ⁶⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 17/12/2009.
- ⁶⁶ See for example the statement of Fawzi Barhoum, *Felesteen*, 17/12/2009; and the statement of Musa Abu Marzuq, *Assabeel* newspaper, Amman, 26/12/2009.

- ⁶⁷ *Felesteen*, 29/1/2009.
- ⁶⁸ The statement of Sa'ib 'Uraiqat, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 30/1/2009.
- ⁶⁹ The statement of Hussein al-Sheikh, *Asharq Alawsat*, 30/1/2009.
- ⁷⁰ The statement of 'Azzam al-Ahmad, Aljazeera.net, 29/1/2009.
- ⁷¹ From the communiqué of the PNC, *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 1/2/2009.
- ⁷² *Al-Hayat*, 4/2/2009.
- ⁷³ *Asharq Alawsat*, 3/2/2009.
- ⁷⁴ For Hamas's position, see the statement of Sami Abu Zuhri, *al-Khaleej*, 18/8/2009; and the communiqué Palestinian Government in the GS, PIC, 18/8/2009; and Hamas's communiqué, *Okaz* newspaper, Jeddah, 22/8/2009.
- ⁷⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 25/8/2009.
- ⁷⁶ Wafa, 26/8/2009; and see *al-Hayat* and *Asharq Alawsat*, 27/8/2009.
- ⁷⁷ See *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 27/8/2009.
- ⁷⁸ *Al-Khaleej*, 29/8/2009.
- ⁷⁹ Wafa, 26/8/2009.
- ⁸⁰ *Alghad* newspaper, Amman, 28/8/2009.
- ⁸¹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 13/4/2009.
- ⁸² *Alghad*, 22/4/2009.
- ⁸³ *Alghad*, 11 and 13/5/2009.
- ⁸⁴ See *Asharq Alawsat*, 12/5/2009; and *Alghad* and *al-Khaleej*, 11/5/2009.
- ⁸⁵ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 13/5/2009.
- ⁸⁶ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 16/5/2009.
- ⁸⁷ *Asharq Alawsat*, 6/6/2009.
- ⁸⁸ *Alghad*, 15/6/2009.
- ⁸⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 6/7/2009.
- ⁹⁰ Quds Press, 12/7/2009; and Aljazeera.net, 15/7/2009.
- ⁹¹ *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 14/7/2009.
- ⁹² *Asharq Alawsat*, 15/7/2009.
- ⁹³ *Alghad*, 17/7/2009.
- ⁹⁴ *Alghad*, 11/5/2009.
- ⁹⁵ *Asharq Alawsat*, 1/8/2009.
- ⁹⁶ See the statement of Faisal Abu Shahla, *Asharq Alawsat*, 2/8/2009.
- ⁹⁷ *Al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 9/8/2009.
- ⁹⁸ There were lots of news and press releases on prohibiting Fatah's representatives in GS from participating in the conference, especially in the days preceding and during the conference.
- ⁹⁹ *Al-Khaleej*, 10/8/2009.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Al-Khaleej*, 13/8/2009.
- ¹⁰¹ *Asharq Alawsat*, 20/10/2009.
- ¹⁰² Ma'an News Agency, 13/4/2010.
- ¹⁰³ *Al-Hayat* and *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 16/8/2009.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 13/8/2009.



- ¹⁰⁵ See for example *al-Hayat*, 3/1/2009; and *Asharq Alawsat*, 8 and 10/1/2009.
- ¹⁰⁶ The statement of Ra'fat Nasif, *Felesteen*, 22/1/2009.
- ¹⁰⁷ The statement of Ra'fat Nasif, *Asharq Alawsat*, 25/1/2009.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Felesteen*, 20/2/2009.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Asharq Alawsat*, 25/2/2009.
- ¹¹⁰ *Ma'an*, 12/3/2009.
- ¹¹¹ *Asharq Alawsat*, 11/6/2009.
- ¹¹² See *al-Quds al-Arabi* and *al-Hayat*, 13/6/2009.
- ¹¹³ *Felesteen*, 3/7/2009.
- ¹¹⁴ See *Felesteen*, 16 and 17/12/2009.
- ¹¹⁵ *Felesteen*, 29/7/2009.
- ¹¹⁶ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 25/7/2009.
- ¹¹⁷ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 20/4/2009.
- ¹¹⁸ PIC, 29/11/2009.
- ¹¹⁹ Quds Press, 4/7/2009.
- ¹²⁰ *Felesteen*, 15/9/2009.
- ¹²¹ *Assabeel*, 13/11/2009.
- ¹²² *Assabeel*, 13/10/2009.
- ¹²³ *Al-Hayat*, 6/7/2009.
- ¹²⁴ See *al-Hayat*, 7/7/2009.
- ¹²⁵ *Felesteen*, 11/2/2009.
- ¹²⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 16/6/2009.
- ¹²⁷ *Asharq Alawsat*, 28/7/2009.
- ¹²⁸ *Al-Hayat*, 12/8/2009.
- ¹²⁹ Sama News Agency, 31/5/2009.
- ¹³⁰ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 5/6/2009.
- ¹³¹ *Felesteen*, 9/6/2009.
- ¹³² *Felesteen*, 2/6/2009.
- ¹³³ See *al-Khaleej*, 6/3/2009; and *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 7/7/2009.
- ¹³⁴ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/6/2009 and 7/7/2009.
- ¹³⁵ 'Adnan al-Damiri, the spokesman of the security forces, *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/6/2009.
- ¹³⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 17/6/2009.
- ¹³⁷ *The Guardian* newspaper, London, 17/12/2009,
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/dec/17/cia-palestinian-security-agents>
- ¹³⁸ See for example a statement issued by an Israeli source, *Arabs* 48, 12/4/2009; and Quds Press, 7/7/2009 quoting Hebrew radio; and *Alittihad*, 12/12/2009.
- ¹³⁹ See *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 16/12/2009.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Haaretz*, 20/11/2009.
- ¹⁴¹ Sama, 28/12/2009.
- ¹⁴² See PIC, 22/1/2009; and *Felesteen*, 11/2/2009; and *Alarab*, 4/2/2009.
- ¹⁴³ *Alghad*, 3/4/2009.

- ¹⁴⁴ PIC, 22/1/2009; and see *Alghad*, 13/5/2009.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Asharq Alawsat*, 25/1/2009.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Alarab*, 7/7/2009; and *Felesteen*, 7 and 18/7/2009; and Quds Press, 31/8/2009.
- ¹⁴⁷ See the statement of Fawzi Barhoum, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 1/9/2009.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Al-Khaleej*, 8/6/2009.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 15/12/2009.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Felesteen*, 20/8/2009.
- ¹⁵¹ The media have covered those events, especially during the period of 14–17/8/2009.
- ¹⁵² See *Assabeel* and *Albayan* newspaper, Dubai, 18/8/2009.
- ¹⁵³ See Quds Press, 22/8/2009.
- ¹⁵⁴ *Felesteen*, 20/12/2009.
- ¹⁵⁵ The Executive Summary of the Fifteenth Annual Report on the Status of Human Rights in Palestine, The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), <http://www.ichr.ps/pdfs/e-exec15.pdf>
- ¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 276.
- ¹⁵⁷ Mahmud ‘Abbas speech in The Arab American University-Jenin (AAUJ), *al-Hayat*, 14/10/2009.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Asharq Alawsat*, 29/1/2009.
- ¹⁵⁹ See the statement of Isma‘il Radwan, Quds Press, 18/1/2009; and the statement of Salah al-Bardawil, *Alittihad*, 18/1/2009.
- ¹⁶⁰ See Quds Press, 13/1/2009.
- ¹⁶¹ See for example *Addustour*, 4/1/2009; and *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 19/1/2009.
- ¹⁶² *Assabeel*, 6/1/2009.
- ¹⁶³ *Assafir*, 16/1/2009.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Assafir*, 17/1/2009.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 17/1/2009.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Al-Hayat* and *Asharq Alawsat*, 17/1/2009.
- ¹⁶⁷ Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, Human Rights Council, 12th session, General Assembly, United Nations (UN), 25/9/2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf>
- ¹⁶⁸ See for example the statement of Nabil Abu Rudaina, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 3/10/2009.
- ¹⁶⁹ Wafa, 5/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁰ *The New York Times* newspaper, 1/10/2009.
- ¹⁷¹ *Haaretz*, 17/1/2010; and al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi electronic newspaper, 4/10/2009.
- ¹⁷² See *al-Hayat* and *Asharq Alawsat*, 5/1/2009.
- ¹⁷³ See *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 6/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁴ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 3/10/2009; and *Asharq Alawsat*, 5/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁵ *Asharq Alawsat*, 9/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁶ Aljazeera.net, 7/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Asharq al-Awsat*, 10/10/2009; and see also the statement of Yasser ‘Abed Rabbo, *The Guardian*, 7/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁸ See *Alghad* and *al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 4/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁹ *The Guardian*, 7/10/2009.



¹⁸⁰ *Al-Khaleej* and *al-Hayat*, 17/9/2009.

¹⁸¹ *Al-Watan* newspaper, Abha (Saudi Arabia), 16/9/2009; and *al-Khaleej*, 17/9/2009.

¹⁸² PIC, 19/9/2009.

¹⁸³ PIC, 2/10/2009.

¹⁸⁴ *Al-Khaleej* and *Alarab*, 6/10/2009.

¹⁸⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 4/10/2009.

¹⁸⁶ PIC, 3/10/2009.

¹⁸⁷ PIC, 4/10/2009.

¹⁸⁸ *Felesteen*, 8/10/2009.

¹⁸⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 7/10/2009; and *Assabeel*, 9/10/2009.

¹⁹⁰ *Asharq Alawsat*, 10/10/2009; and Aljazeera.net, 9/10/2009.

¹⁹¹ See PIC, 6/10/2009; and *al-Quds al-Arabi* and *al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 17/10/2009; and *Asharq Alawsat*, 18/10/2009.

This Report

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10 is the fifth in a series of annual resourceful scientific studies. It discusses the developments of the Palestinian issue in this period, in an objective and comprehensive manner. The meticulous analytical reading of events tries also to foresee the future. This Report has become a basic reference in Palestinian studies, it is a must to all those concerned.

An outstanding team of 14 academics and experts contributed to this Report in eight chapters. They covered the internal Palestinian situation, the Israeli scene and the Israeli-Palestinian relations, the Arab, Muslim and international stances toward the Palestinian issue. This Report focuses also on the issue of Jerusalem and the holy sites, whereas, the demographic and economic indicators are studied and analyzed in two separate chapters.

Undoubtedly, this Report is a serious addition to the field of Palestinian studies.

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10



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