

# The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10



Edited By

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# **Chapter Two**

## ***The Israeli-Palestinian Scene***



# The Israeli-Palestinian Scene

## *Introduction*

The Israeli-Palestinian scene witnessed during 2009 a bundle of developments on the domestic, population, economic and security levels. The most prominent domestic and population developments were respectively the 18th Knesset elections and their consequent effects, and the continuous decline of Jewish immigration to Israel. Like the previous year 2009, recorded further repercussions of the global economic crisis on Israel. On the security level, the Israeli security institution had been absorbed in several obsessions related to its 2006 war on Lebanon, the war on GS (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) and the developments in the Iranian nuclear issue. The relation with the Palestinians was affected by the aggression on GS and the continuity of security coordination between the PA and the Israelis. However, no tangible developments were recorded during 2009 and 2010 on the peace process, and in the last quarter of 2010 the insistence of Israel on continuing the building and the expansion of settlements hampered the peace process.

This chapter attempts to give an analytical study of the Israeli-Palestinian scene with regard to the Israeli political map, the Israeli population, economic and security affairs, and the interaction of Israel with the internal Palestinian scene and the peace settlement process.

## *First: The Israeli Internal Political Scene*

Israel had experienced during 2009 several developments, notably the continuation of the aggression on GS, the 18th Knesset elections, the formation of an ultra-right government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, and the stalemate in the peace process with the Palestinians. Moreover, there was the release of Goldstone Report that recorded Israeli violations of international law, and its impact on Israel at the internal, regional and international levels. Israel had furthermore intensified its siege of GS and continued its settlement in Palestinian territories notwithstanding the call of the international community to stop this growing activity. Besides was



the escalation of extremism among various sectors of the Israeli society, and the discrimination against the 1948 Palestinians.

This chapter attempts to comprehensively study the overall developments and political changes in the Israeli internal scene during the year 2009.

### **1. The 18th Knesset Elections**

All the three major Israeli political parties, Kadima, Labor and the Likud, expected to capitalize in the 18th Knesset elections the victories of the Israeli army in GS war. These and other Israeli parties had therefore insisted that the elections be held on their specified schedule, 10/2/2009, and had unanimously supported the war on Gaza and the drive to liquidate Hamas. However, the failure to achieve a decisive victory in this war and to dislodge Hamas from power had triggered various Israeli quarters to loudly call for the postponement of the elections.<sup>1</sup>

The opinion polls conducted during the electioneering campaign suggested that the Likud's performance in the elections would supersede that of Kadima, and that the Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel is Our Home) will win a sufficient number of Knesset seats to be ahead of the Labor Party<sup>2</sup> and secure the third position. This means that the centrist parties, Kadima and the Labor, were unable to capitalize in their election campaigns the war on GS, that had been conducted by their own government—in alliance with some small parties—under the premiership of Ehud Olmert.

The outcome of the opinion polls, which had been subsequently confirmed by the election results, revealed the inclination of the Israeli street towards the right, even the extreme right, which called for the continuation of the war on Gaza.<sup>3</sup>

The programs of the political parties presented to the Israeli public on the eve of the elections showed that Yisrael Beiteinu placed national security at the top of Israeli's priorities, never accepted that the "eternal capital of Israel" be subject to any form of negotiations and supported the settlement activities. The Sephardic ultra-orthodox Jewish party Shas fully supported the settlement drive in the so-called "land of Israel," refused to allow Jerusalem to be an item of negotiations with the Palestinians and opposed Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories except when such a move leads to the rescue of the life of the Jews.<sup>4</sup>

The positions of the ultra-orthodox Ashkenazi party United Torah Judaism (*Yahadut HaTorah*), were similar to those of Shas, even more extremist on some issues.



The settlers' two parties, the National Union Party (*Halhud HaLeumi*) and the New National Religious Party (NRP) (Jewish Home) (*Habayit Hayehudi*), want to impede any attempt to freeze the settlements, and had even advocated the extension of the settlement projects to include Galilee and Negev in order to block Arab majority in these localities.

The 18th Knesset elections were conducted at a time when the two major Israeli parties, Likud and Labor, had suffered continuous weakness. Kadima maintained its parliamentary strength in these elections, as it won 28 seats out of the 120 Knesset seats and the Likud got 27 seats, while the Labor Party got 13 seats only. This indicates weakness and decline in the popularity of the major traditional-ideological parties, and their failure to win a clear parliamentary majority (Here, we take into consideration that Kadima members are ex-members of the traditional parties).<sup>5</sup>

The opinion polls and the outcome of the elections revealed noticeable weakness among the religious Zionist parties and the election lists of the immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Religious Zionism was represented by Mafdal, but this party lost much of its appeal, which has previously impelled its leadership to cooperate during the 17th Knesset elections of 2006 with another religious Zionist party, National Union Party, and to form in 2009 another partisan platform, under the name of the Jewish Home, in preparation for the 18th Knesset elections. Similarly was the case with the parties of the Russian immigrants. Previously these immigrants voted for parties that strictly spoke on their behalf, like Yisrael Be'aliyah, but the significant social and political changes that they experienced, and their acclimatization to the Israeli way of life triggered them to rally behind the rapidly growing Yisrael Beiteinu, under the leadership of Avigdor Lieberman, which was open for all Israelis who accept the party's extreme rightist approach and orientation.

The Arab parties in Israel had on the whole maintained their strength. They were three in number: Firstly, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (*Hadash*), secondly, United Arab List, which is composed of the Islamic Movement, the southern wing, Arab Movement for Renewal (*Ta-al*) and the Arab Democratic Party, and, thirdly, National Democratic Assembly (*Balad*).

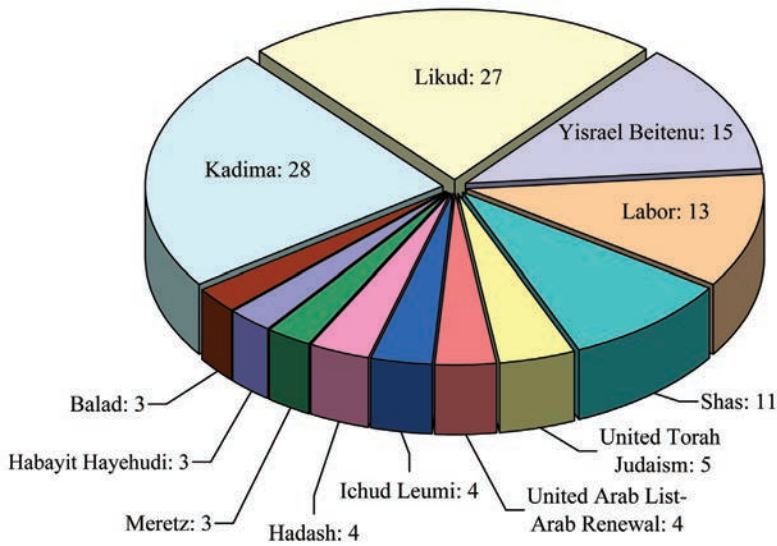


**Table 1/2: Comparing the Outcome of the 18th Knesset Elections with That of the 17th Knesset Elections<sup>6</sup>**

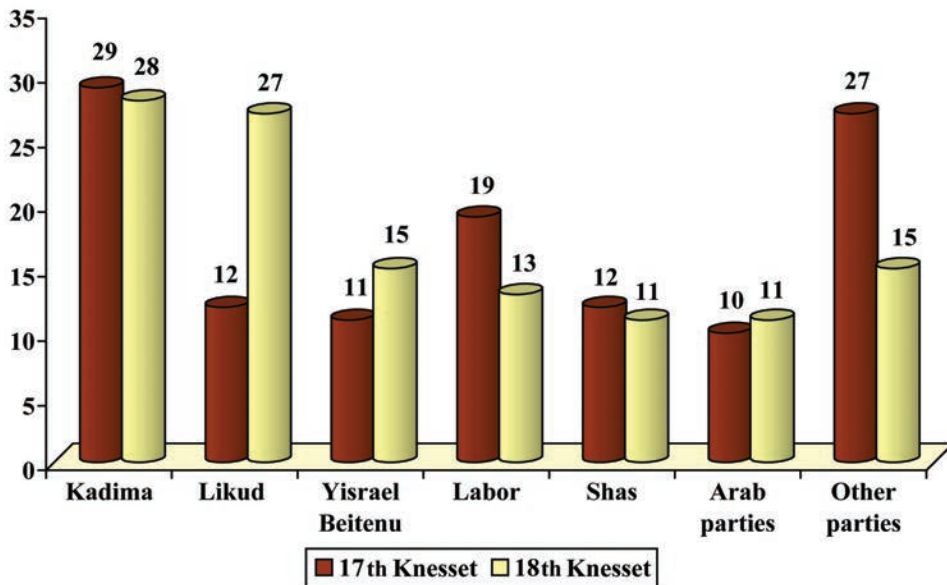
List name	17th Knesset 28/3/2006		18th Knesset 10/2/2009	
	No. of valid votes	No. of seat	No. of valid votes	No. of seat
<b>Kadima</b>	690,901	29	758,032	28
<b>Likud</b>	281,996	12	729,054	27
<b>Yisrael Beiteinu</b>	281,880	11	394,577	15
<b>Labor</b>	472,366	19	334,900	13
<b>Shas</b>	299,054	12	286,300	11
<b>United Torah Judaism</b>	147,091	6	147,954	5
<b>United Arab List-Arab Renewal</b>	94,786	4	113,954	4
<b>Ichud Leumi</b>	224,083	9	112,570	4
<b>Mafdal</b>			Form with other parties the Habayit Hayehudi Party	
<b>Hadash</b>	86,092	3	112,130	4
<b>Meretz</b>	118,302	5	99,611	3
<b>Habayit Hayehudi (Mafdal and other parties)</b>	-	-	96,765	3
<b>National Democratic Assembly (Balad)</b>	72,066	3	83,739	3
<b>Pensioners Party (Gil)</b>	185,759	7	17,571	-
<b>Number of eligible voters</b>	<b>5,014,622</b>		<b>5,278,985</b>	
<b>Total votes</b>	<b>3,186,739</b>		<b>3,416,587</b>	
<b>Valid votes</b>	<b>3,137,064</b>		<b>3,373,490</b>	



### The Outcome of the 18th Knesset Elections



### Comparing the Outcome of the 18th Knesset Elections with That of the 17th Knesset Elections



## **2. Election Results Analysis**

The 2009 Knesset elections had glaringly demonstrated the weakness of the major parties and the decline of all kinds of ideological commitment, which, subsequently, had its impact on the governing coalition. The complexity and heterogeneity of the Israeli society had its repercussions on the character and form of the successive Israeli governments. However, all coalition governments had usually revolved around one or two major parties, though this tendency has progressively lost momentum, which, in turn, had repercussions on the governing coalitions.

The rest of the parties represent specific social sectors: three religious ones, National Union Party of the settlers, three Arab parties and the progressively declining leftist Meretz Party.

Thus, the 18th Knesset elections reflected the weakness and the decline of the leftist parties, particularly the Labor Party, and the noticeable rise of the rightist parties. Moreover, the party, whose head is usually assigned to form a coalition government, was not as dominant and prevailing as was the case during the first three decades since the foundation of Israel. Now, it needs to form a coalition of a large number of parties, which in turn will blackmail politically and financially.<sup>7</sup>

As expected, Kadima won 28 seats, Likud 27, Yisrael Beiteinu 15, Labor 13, Shas 11, United Torah Judaism 5, Jewish Home 3, National Union 4, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality 4, National Democratic Assembly 3, New Movement-Meretz 3.

Tzipi Livni, the leader of Kadima, expected to be asked by the Israeli President Shimon Peres to form the new government. But the rightist parties refused her premiership and rallied behind Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of the Likud, who had thus gained the required parliamentary majority to form the government. These parties included the secular-oriented Yisrael Beiteinu and the religious-oriented Shas.

### **Voting among the Arabs**

In the 18th Knesset elections, 53% of the total Arab voters participated, and the Arab lists got 310,263 of these votes. The United Arab List of the traditional and Islamic forces got 113,954 votes, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality



(a socialist party) got 112,130 votes and the National Democratic Assembly (a nationalist party) (see table 1/2). Interestingly, the Democratic Front, which strongly advocated cooperation between Jews and Arabs, was supported by as much as 16,000 Jewish voters—the highest number it has ever had. The voters for the socialist party have slightly increased. Whereas, National Democratic Assembly voters have slightly decreased, perhaps due to the absence of its founder ‘Azmi Bishara’s.<sup>8</sup>

The pattern of the voting of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel in these elections reflects their bitter frustration and increasing grudge against the Israeli parties, who used to get thousands of their votes in the past. This reveals their profound protest against the policies of the successive Israeli governments, particularly after the war on GS.<sup>9</sup> Though official reports admit that extensive discrimination has been exercised against these unfortunate people, none of the Israeli governments tried to lift this bias and oppression, and the citizenship status of the Arabs in Israel remained far behind that of the Israeli Jews.

The observations on the participation of the 1948 Palestinians in these elections may be summarized in the following points:

- The sharp and accelerating decline in Arab voting during the last three electoral rounds: 62% in 2003, 56% in 2006 and 53% in 2009. This was due, partially at least, to the feeling of hopelessness within the Palestinians circles of the possibility of a meaningful change in the Israeli political system, and to the campaign of boycott of the elections organized by the Islamic Movement under the leadership of Sheikh Ra’id Salah.
- Emphasis on the national inclination of the Arab voting, for as much as 85% of their votes were given to non-Israeli parties. This development has, in fact, strengthened the tendency towards electoral polarization between the Jews and the Arabs that appeared as early as the 1970s, and which reflected the growing adherence to the political identity. Moreover, it showed the profound disappointment and the distancing of the Palestinian Arabs from the Israeli state that is based on racial discrimination and favoritism to the Jews.
- The overwhelming majority of Arab voting to Israeli parties came from the Druze, who were represented by three Members of Knesset (MK), one in each of the following parties: the Likud, Kadima and Yisrael Beiteinu. Besides, another Druze MK, Said Naffaa, belonged to the National Democratic Assembly.



- Though the internal electioneering of the Palestinian Arabs has become less important within the prevailing polarization, an important observation worth recording, namely geographical bias. While the traditional party of the United Arab List is popular in rural and Bedouin areas, i.e., basically in Triangle area and Negev. The other two trends were favored in the Christian towns and in the areas that usually vote for the communists and socialists (Democratic Front), and amongst the middle class and the elite (Assembly), basically in Galilee.<sup>10</sup>

### **3. The Ruling Coalition: Alliance of Political Adversaries**

Once asked to form a new government, Netanyahu approached the leaders of the political parties hoping to have a stable government of a broad coalition. The only communality between the parties of the new coalition was Zionist principles and the so-called right of the Jews in the “land of Israel,” but they had to forgo some of their demands for the sake of the formation of this 32 minister cabinet. Hence, there are many differences in orientation between the ministers of this government, particularly on some religious and global issues.

Having failed to secure an absolute majority for his party in the Knesset election, Netanyahu faced considerable pressure during his negotiations and drive to form the new government. Hence, he was obliged to allocate many ministerial posts to the coalition parties other than his party, which triggered many voices of opposition within his own party. Nonetheless, he managed to sternly impose his will.

The weakness of the major ruling party, the Likud, and the numerous coalition parties may initially give the impression of a fairly stable ruling coalition, but, in fact, it is liable to collapse once a major partner withdraw from it. Hence, throughout the second half of 2009 Netanyahu persistently tried to persuade Kadima to join his coalition government, and, on failing, he strove to disintegrate the party by attempting to incite some of its members to join the Likud. If only five of Kadima MKs switched to the Likud, Netanyahu will continue in power even if any party withdraws from the coalition government. Thus, it will lessen the government tendency to the extreme right.<sup>11</sup> But we have to caution that Netanyahu himself is an extremist and a manipulator, and that “moderate” policies might provoke troubles for him within his own party, the Likud.



Netanyahu's cabinet is indeed oversize, in terms of ministers and their deputies, which is another indicator of the weakness of the government. Historically, so long as a ruling Israeli party had a comfortable majority in the Knesset, and had the majority in the coalition government, the cabinet will be small in size. While Yitzhak Rabin's cabinet of 1992–1995 was composed of 17 ministers that of Netanyahu included 30 ministers, in addition to a good number of deputy ministers. Netanyahu's government suffers from two basic weaknesses that are both related to its ministerial size. First, the premier was compelled to sharply increase the ministerial posts and to allocate many of them to the coalition parties at the expense of his own party. Secondly, due to the oversize of the government, one third of the MKs occupy ministerial posts. This development obstructs the legislative function of the Knesset and over burdens the MKs as they have also to sit in parliamentary committees. Netanyahu's government is supported by 69 MKs in comparison to 45 in the opposition camp, while 5 members of the Labor Party deliberately absented themselves in protest of their party's affiliation to a ruling coalition that includes some ultra-right parties.<sup>12</sup>

The following are some selected broad points of the "Policy guidelines of 32nd Government of Israel":<sup>13</sup>

The Government will actively seek to fortify the national security and bestow personal security on its citizens while vigorously and determinedly fighting against violence and terror.

The Government will advance the political process and act to promote peace with all our neighbors, while preserving the security, historic and national interests of Israel.

The Government will advance a program to deal with the economic crisis and act to create economic conditions that will allow for sustainable growth, as well as create and maintain jobs in the economy.

The Government will strive for social justice by reducing social gaps and uncompromisingly fight against poverty through education, employment and an increase in assistance to the weaker segments of the population. (...)

The Government will preserve the Jewish character of the State and the legacy of Israel, as well as honor the religions and traditions of members of other religions in the country in accordance with the values of the Declaration of Independence.

In his address to the Knesset, Netanyahu undertook to resume peace negotiations with the PA on the issues of economy, security and stability, but he ignored mentioning the Palestinian state lest he provokes the opposition of Yisrael



Beiteinu and Shas that adamantly refuse its existence side by side with the state of Israel.<sup>14</sup> With this background in mind, Netanyahu conditioned the resumption of negotiations on the Palestinian recognition of the Jewishness of Israel, though he later tactically retreated to claim that this is a condition for concluding a final agreement that ends the conflict once and for all. However, the Palestinian state that the ultra-right Netanyahu may, if at all, entertain would be in name only, effectively nothing more than an extended Palestinian self-rule. Such a scenario will expose the 1948 Palestinians to further persecution or transfer, or, alternatively, they may be affiliated to the Palestinian entity while residing in their present homes in return for the continuation of the Jewish settlements in the WB.<sup>15</sup>

Opinion polls, conducted immediately after Netanyahu's government received the Knesset's vote of confidence, revealed that large sectors of the Israeli society did not accept its big size, and, in particular, doubted its ability to confront the socio-economic challenges.<sup>16</sup> Another opinion poll opined that Netanyahu was as bad as Olmert, and 57% supported the two-state solution.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, his subsequent address at Bar-Ilan University was instrumental in gaining support, temporarily at least, for his internal and external policies.<sup>18</sup>

#### **4. The Continuous Disintegration of Parties**

Both Kadima and the Labor parties had experienced conflicts and disintegration in the course of 2009. Livni, the leader of Kadima, who had not been called by the Israeli President to form the new government and rejected to join Netanyahu's coalition, was opposed by a number of Kadima's MKs, lead by the party's second man, Shaul Mofaz. They contested her leadership and asked for primary elections to choose a new leader for the party, but she strongly resisted this proposal on the assumption that it was importunate.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, further splits appeared in Kadima, which triggered some analysts to expect the party's eventual disintegration. Similarly was the case with the Labor Party, where a group of its leaders, led by five MKs, contested the leadership of Ehud Barak, whom they accused of ignoring the values of the party and dragging it to a rightist government.<sup>20</sup> They threatened to form a new group, but subsequently budged. However, the most prominent among them, Ophir Pines-Paz, resigned in early 2010 from the Knesset in protest of Barak's policies, retreat from the party's principles, loss of many seats in the Knesset, and the decline of the party's popularity among broad sectors of the Israeli society.<sup>21</sup>



## 5. Corruption Charges Against Israeli Politicians

Faced by many charges of corruption and money laundering, Ehud Olmert submitted early in 2009 the resignation of his government, which led to early Knesset elections. Investigations of charges of administrative malpractices and bribery also continued against other ministers and politicians. For example, Avigdor Lieberman, the leader of Yisrael Beiteinu, was so involved in some criminal charges that Attorney General Menachem Mazuz, at the Israel Bar Association's annual Eilat conference, "criticized Avigdor Lieberman's appointment as foreign minister, saying the Yisrael Beiteinu chairman would never have been given this job in a 'properly run country.'"<sup>22</sup> Israeli police's National Fraud Investigation Unit will submit their recommendations on filing an indictment. It is not known if Mazuz will recommend filing criminal charges against Lieberman, and in any case, such a development is likely to take time, experts said.<sup>23</sup>

The cabinet member and the leader of the rightist ultra-Orthodox Shas Party, Eliyahu "Eli" Yishai, was strongly suspected for receiving bribes while in office occupying the portfolio of the minister of interior. His Knesset colleague, Shlomo Benizri, was imprisoned by an Israeli court for bribery, money laundering and violation of public trust.<sup>24</sup> Yishai organized a campaign to persuade the Israeli president to pardon Benizri, but to no avail.

An opinion poll revealed that as high as 82% of the respondents believed that their leaders are heavily involved in corruption, and that their country, Israel, is high in the list of corrupt states.<sup>25</sup> There were other cases of corruption, money laundering and violation of trust against Israeli leaders. Ehud Barak, for example, was accused of taking advantage of his positions as a former premier, minister of defense and chief of general staff to secure exemption from taxes following the transfer of ownership of his own companies to his daughters.<sup>26</sup> He also got free airfares to his wife, which exposed him to a reprimand from the government attorney general and to a smear media campaign. An Israeli court imprisoned the former Minister of Finance Abraham Hirschson for embezzling funds when Hirschson headed the National Workers Organization (NWO) labor union. The list is so long, including senior local and municipal officials, that The Movement for Quality Government in Israel intensified its campaign to educate the Israeli public of the dimensions of the problem, reveal all kinds and forms of corruption, and to file charges against politicians and officials involved in such malpractices.<sup>27</sup>





## 6. Goldstone Report Unites the Israeli Political Parties

Goldstone Report provoked the anger of all Israeli parties, be them on the extreme right or left. Both the Israeli President Peres and Premier Netanyahu declared that it was unfair, and that Israel was dragged into the war on GS in defense of its citizens against the missiles launched by Hamas from Gaza. They, moreover, declared that the Israeli government strongly rejects the charges against the army and the former government. Israel, the America's pro-Israel lobby, the American administration and other concerned global political organizations tried to shelve this report and to block its deliberation in the United Nations. Netanyahu declared that he will never allow Ehud Barak, Olmert and Livni to be dragged to the Hague Tribunal to face the charges launched by this report against them, He, moreover, defended the trio by claiming that they were doing their national duty in defending Israel, its citizens and interests.<sup>28</sup> Netanyahu had even claimed that the report hinders efforts to promote the peace process as well as encouraging terror organizations around the world.<sup>29</sup> However the 574 page report, that was supported by ten thousand pages of information and 188 individual interviews,<sup>30</sup> concluded that there was solid evidence of Israel's violations of human rights during its war on GS, which may tantamount to crimes against humanity.<sup>31</sup> However, under international pressure, Netanyahu proposed the formation of committees within the army institution to investigate some cases in which international laws were violated, but without committing his government to cooperation with international organs to investigate the reported malpractices during the war. Interestingly, all political parties had without exception rallied behind the total rejection of the report and all its contents. However, some analysts within and outside Israel had read the Israeli refusal of the report and its findings as a de facto admission of the crimes. Netanyahu's government declared that it will issue its own report that refutes all that came in Goldstone Report.<sup>32</sup> The year 2010 witnessed heated debates on this report and its Israeli counterpart, and Israel is bound to demand that the international community accepts its view.

However, a good number of Israeli generals and politicians are exposed to the probability of arrest in some European countries, particularly Britain, as some legal institutions had already filed warrants of arrests and charges against them, particularly Barak and Livni and others.





## 7. The Political Positions of the 1948 Palestinians

The year 2009 was politically eventful for the Palestinians in Israel. Notably was their extreme anger against the war on Gaza, which they had particularly aired out by massively voting in the 18th Knesset elections for the Arab parties.

Many reports issued by Israeli human rights centers had indicated steady decline in the status of the 1948 Palestinians. This was particularly so after the formation of Netanyahu's extreme-right government, and the numerous declarations by ministers and politicians that threatened the Arabs and dismissed them as second class citizens, even demanding that some strict conditions be imposed upon them if they were, in their words, to be full citizens. Many racial laws were enacted in 2009, which restricted freedom of expression and political rights. Their primary objective was to deprive the 1948 Palestinians from their Arab linguistic and cultural identity and other rights. Some Israeli politicians had conditioned the right for Israeli citizenship on loyalty oath to the "Jewish" state or mandatory military or civil service, and the recognition of the Zionist version on the establishment of Israel. All this contradicts the fundamentals of democracy where rights are not associated with, or conditioned on, anything.<sup>33</sup>

In May 2009, the government supported a draft law that prohibited the Palestinians in Israel from Commemorating *al-Nakbah* (1948 war), which stipulated imprisonment to those who violate its dictates. But the 1948 Palestinians strongly resisted this law because it denies them their natural, historical and emotional right to reflect on their peoples' catastrophe. Hence, the law was revised where imprisonment was replaced by suspension of government funds to any organization that celebrates this occasion. The Israeli Minister of Education, Gideon Sa'ar, prohibited the inclusion of *al-Nakbah* in the school curriculum of the Arab schools.<sup>34</sup> Again, this decree contradicts the basic human rights of an individual to reflect on a catastrophe that his land, country and people had suffered.<sup>35</sup>

The 1948 Palestinians viewed the Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz's order to a change in roadside signs across Israel's highways so that the all names appearing on them in English and Arabic would be a direct transliteration of Hebrew, as a violation of the law that recognizes Arabic as one of the two official languages in Israel, and as yet another step to tarnish their national culture and to marginalize the Arabic language, hence ultimately changing some of the historically significant and culturally loaded Arabic names.<sup>36</sup>



The main slogan of Avigdor Lieberman, the leader of Yisrael Beiteinu, in the 18th Knesset elections was a provision to associate Arab rights with their loyalty to Israel and its laws. MK David Rotem of the same party, submitted a Loyalty bill that stated that anyone seeking an Israeli citizenship would have to pledge their allegiance to the State of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. Other sections of the amendment demanded the pledge be a prerequisite to getting an Israeli ID. It also determines that the interior minister would be allowed to annul the citizenship of a person who did not fulfill the duty of serving in the army or performing an alternative service.<sup>37</sup> But the bill was knocked down in the Ministerial Committee on Legislative Affairs, largely because of its total rejection by the Arabs and some liberal Jews.

The above draft law indicated an increasing racial discriminatory tendency in the Israeli street, which had by then reached up to the Israeli stronghold of democracy, the Knesset. Analysts and observers are inclined to maintain that this orientation will aggravate in 2010, where additional racist draft laws will be submitted to irritate the Palestinians, make life difficult for them and to deprive them from their basic citizenship rights as specified in “Declaration of Independence” that was signed by the founders of Israel on the establishment of the state on 14/5/1948.<sup>38</sup>

A 2008 survey and an accompanied analysis by Prof. Sammy Smooha of Haifa University indicated that only 41.4% of the Palestinians in Israel recorded their recognition of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state compared to 65.6% in 2003. The survey showed that a profound change in the political stand of the Palestinian Arabs had occurred after the Second Lebanon War in 2006, and had further accelerated after the war on Gaza, namely they demanded a quick two-state solution. We should record here that the establishment of a Palestinian state side by side with Israel has become the demand of the majority of the Palestinians in Israel. For the establishment of such a state will provide a national home for the rest of the Palestinians, and thus solve their problem and improve their conditions.<sup>39</sup> As for the Palestinians in Israel themselves, they are not prepared to move to a Palestinian state established in the WB and GS because they adhere to their Palestinian lands and homes that have become under the Israeli control at a historical time in 1948. Thus, they view Israel as an organizational framework for their life, notwithstanding the constraints and difficulties that they suffer.



In a related vein, the Palestinians in Israel do not trust the Israeli system of justice, particularly after the publication of the Or Commission that investigated the role of the police in the October 2000 incidents in which 13 Palestinian Arabs in Israel were killed in cold blood by police fire. Nonetheless, the attorney general ordered the closure of the case against the policemen involved in this crime. Besides this grave injustice, there were the increasing extreme rightist tendencies of successive Israeli governments, and the frequent discriminatory statements by ministers against the Arab citizens in Israel. All these had strengthened Palestinian opposition against those and other racist discriminatory policies.<sup>40</sup> There were measures like appealing for legal and judicial aid from human right centers like The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (Adalah), or by indicating that they will file cases in international organizations to disclose the Israeli policies, as was the case with Durban Conference that was held in South Africa to confront racism, and in which some Palestinian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Israel were represented.

Meanwhile the Israeli had sharply and consistently decreased government funds extended to Arab towns and villages in Israel, and actively pursued the destruction of the houses there under the pretext of lack of building licenses. Apparently, this drive was parallel with what Netanyahu's government was doing in Jerusalem and other towns in the WB, where houses were also demolished under the very same excuse. It has become evident that the Israeli government was persistently pursuing its plans to displace the Palestinians in Israel and in the WB as part of its grand scheme to seize more Arab lands for its settlement project. Though the Follow-up Committee for Arab Citizens in Israel had issued a series of statements and took many stances and measures against these policies,<sup>41</sup> the drive of destruction of Arab houses will apparently increase in the following years, and bloody clashes between the 1948 Palestinians and the Israeli police will most likely take place. Another reason for this likelihood is the continuation of Israeli policy of Judaization of Jerusalem and other holy sites, especially in East Jerusalem. It is worth noting here that the Islamic Movement in Israel plays a major role in rallying and alerting Palestinian public opinion to the Israeli plans in East Jerusalem, fundamentally with regard to the holy sites, especially *al-Aqsa* Mosque.



All in all, the Arab political forces in Israel developed a unified political stand against the policies of the Israeli ultra-right governments, particularly those that conditioned their surrender of Arab rights on performing some specified obligations. The Palestinians in Israel were also unified in their condemnation of the Israeli aggression on GS, and in their urgent demands for reconciliation between the Palestinians factions, stoppage of shedding the blood of the brothers, and to direct all their energy against the Israeli occupation. Due to these and other positions, the Palestinians in Israel are expected to face further restrictions, hardship and arrest under the assumption that they constitute an immediate and grave danger to Israel. Thus, under the guise of security to its territories, people and national project, Israel would forcefully try to seize the rest of the Palestinian lands and properties.

## ***Second: The Most Prominent Population, Economic and Security Indicators***

### **1. The Population Indicators**

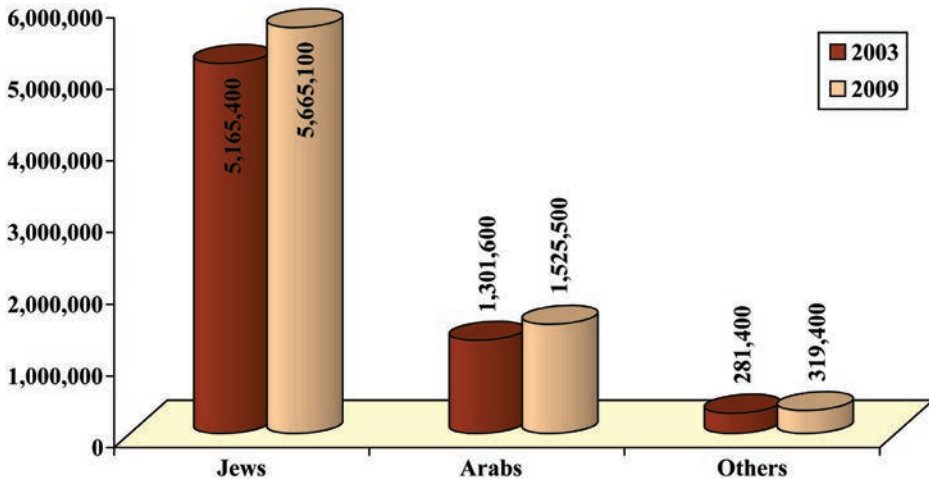
The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) estimated the total population of Israel by the end of 2009 to be about 7.51 millions, of whom 5.67, i.e., 75.4%, are Jews. While about 319 thousands, i.e., 4.3%, are tabled by the CBS as “others,” those are mostly immigrants from Russia, countries of the former Soviet Union and East Europe, whose Judaism is not recognized, or non-Arab Christians. As for the Arab population, including those in East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, they were about 1.53 millions, i.e., 20.3% of the total population (see table 2/2). If we subtract the population of the latter, about 271 thousands, then the 1948 Palestinians are about 1.25 million, about 17% of Israel’s total population.<sup>42</sup> The data from an internal Israeli Civil Administration report list about 313 thousand settlers in the WB,<sup>43</sup> except those in East Jerusalem. According to The Applied Research Institute—Jerusalem (ARIJ), the number of Jewish settlers in the WB totaled 580 thousands, of whom 236 thousands reside in East Jerusalem and 344 thousands in the rest of the WB.



**Table 2/2: Population of Israel 2003–2009**  
(Population estimates do not include foreign labor)<sup>44</sup>

Year	Total population number	Jews	Arabs (including the population of East Jerusalem and in the Golan Heights)	Others
2003	6,748,400	5,165,400	1,301,600	281,400
2004	6,869,500	5,237,600	1,340,200	291,700
2005	6,990,700	5,313,800	1,377,100	299,800
2006	7,116,700	5,393,400	1,413,300	310,000
2007	7,243,600	5,478,200	1,450,000	315,400
2008	7,374,000	5,569,200	1,487,600	317,200
2009	7,510,000	5,665,100	1,525,500	319,400

**Population of Israel in 2003 and 2009**



In 2009, the average rate of population growth in Israel was 1.8%, the same rate since 2003. The Israeli population growth is 90% natural, as during the year 2009 a sum of 160 thousand persons were born while 39 thousands died.<sup>45</sup> However, the rate of population growth in the Jewish settlements of the WB is higher than that in Israel, i.e., 3.8%, which is primarily attributed to the religiosity of the settlers.<sup>46</sup>

According to the CBS, 14,569 immigrants came to Israel in the year 2009, compared to 13,699 in the preceding year (see table 3/2). However, this figure is not in line with that of the Jewish Agency for Israel, which estimated the number



of immigrants in 2009 as 16,200.<sup>47</sup> This discrepancy might be attributed to the possibility that one source records the actual immigrants while another gives the probable ones, and a third includes the tourists who had later changed their minds and opted for migration from Israel. However, the figure for 2009 confirms the tendency of a general decline in immigrations to Israel since 2000, as most of the sources for this immigration had already been exhausted, and most of the Diaspora Jews reside in advanced countries, the USA and Europe, where there are no compelling reasons for them to immigrate to Israel in big numbers. Interestingly, the decline in immigration to Israel coincides with a rise in counter immigration from the country, by an annual average of about ten thousands immigrants.<sup>48</sup> This had also coincided with stagnation in the numbers of Jews worldwide, except in Israel, which is not attributed to immigration as may be assumed, but is an outcome of the decline in natural growth and desertion of Judaism.<sup>49</sup>

According to Natan Sharansky, Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, about half of the 2009 immigrants to Israel came from the former republics of the Soviet Union and East Europe, while the rest were from North America, Europe and South America. These statistics record that 88 Jewish immigrants to Israel came, via other countries, from Arab countries: Morocco, Yemen, Tunisia and Lebanon. Correspondingly, Jewish emigration from Ethiopia to Israel had significantly decreased from 1,582 immigrants in 2008 to less than 300 during 2009.<sup>50</sup>

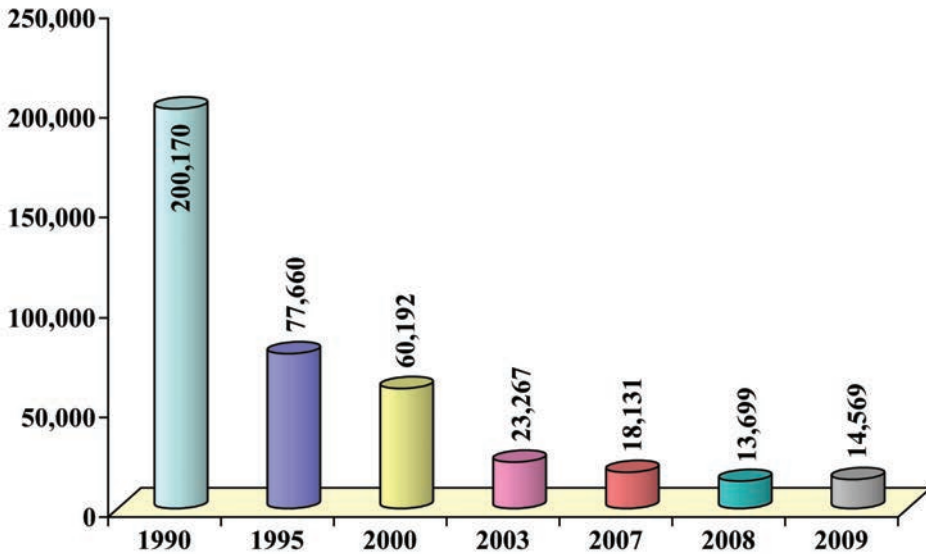
**Table 3/2: Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2009<sup>51</sup>**

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. of immigrants	200,170	176,650	77,350	77,860	80,810	77,660	70,919	66,221	56,727	76,766	60,192

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
No. of immigrants	43,580	33,565	23,267	20,898	21,168	19,267	18,131	13,699	14,569	1,229,469

### Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel (Selected Years)



In a statement to the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Professor Sergio Della Pergola, an expert on Jewish demographics and the head of the Shlomo Argov chair of Israel-Diaspora Relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said that “there are currently 13.3 million Jews living in 100 countries all over the world, 41% of which have made Israel their home.” However, Pergola warned against what “can lead to the sacrificing of many Jewish characteristics and eventually its basic value system” due to an increased tendency for interfaith marriage, whose rate reached to 75% in the states of the former Soviet Union. “In the US [United States of America] the figure is close to 55%, in France and England over 40%, in Canada 35%, in Australia 25%, and in Mexico 10%.”<sup>52</sup>

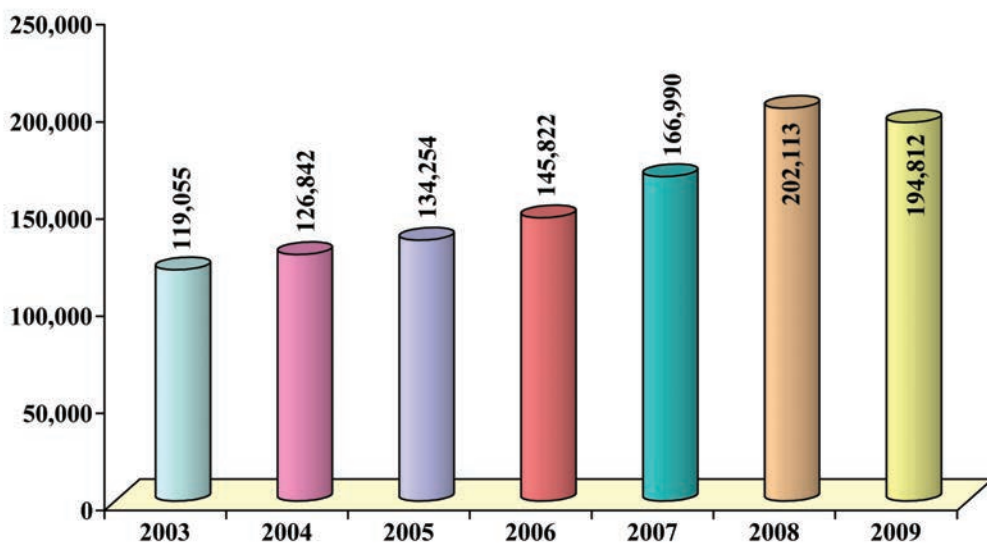
## 2. The Economic Indicators

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the year 2009 totaled about 766.12 billion Shekels, compared to 725.14 billion shekels in 2008, i.e., an increase of 5.7%. But counting this growth in dollars shows that it had actually decreased by approximately 3.6% (from \$202.11 billion in 2008 to \$194.81 billion in 2009). This is due to the rise in the rate of exchange of the dollar versus the Shekel, which, according to official updated statistics, rose from 3.5878 Shekels per Dollar as the average for 2008 to 3.9326 Shekels per Dollar as the average for 2009.



**Table 4/2: Israeli Gross Domestic Product 2003–2009<sup>53</sup>**

Year	GDP (million shekels)	GDP (\$ million)	Shekel exchange rate (according to Bank of Israel)
2003	541,500	119,055	4.5483
2004	568,505	126,842	4.482
2005	602,504	134,254	4.4878
2006	649,854	145,822	4.4565
2007	686,011	166,990	4.1081
2008	725,142	202,113	3.5878
2009	766,118	194,812	3.9326

**Israeli Gross Domestic Product 2003–2009 (\$ million)**

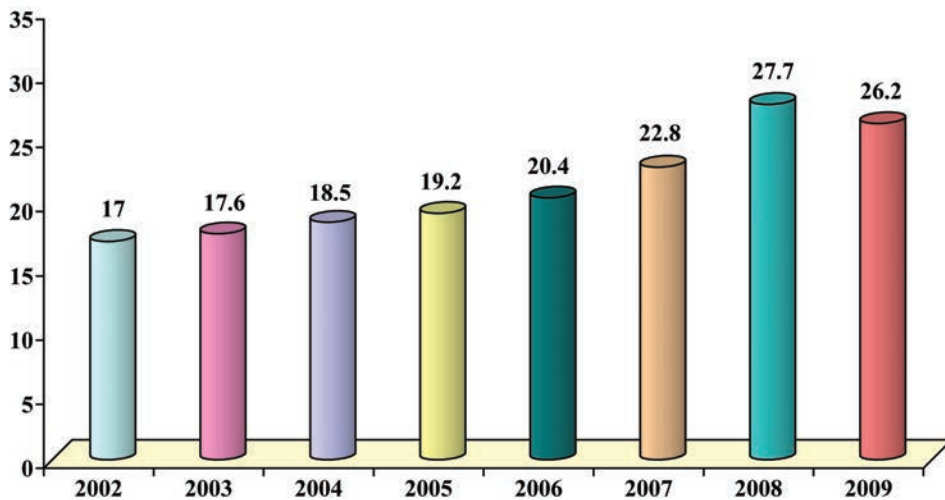
According to the official statistics, the per capita income in Israel increased from 99,215 to 102,969 Shekels, respectively in 2008 and 2009. But in terms of dollars, it had actually decreased, from \$27,653 in 2008 to \$26,183 in 2009, because of the above appreciation in the rate of exchange of the dollar versus the Shekel.



**Table 5/2: Israeli GDP per Capita 2002–2009**  
**at Current Prices (\$ thousand)<sup>54</sup>**

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
GDP per capita	17	17.6	18.5	19.2	20.4	22.8	27.7	26.2

**Israeli GDP per Capita 2002–2009 (\$ thousand)**



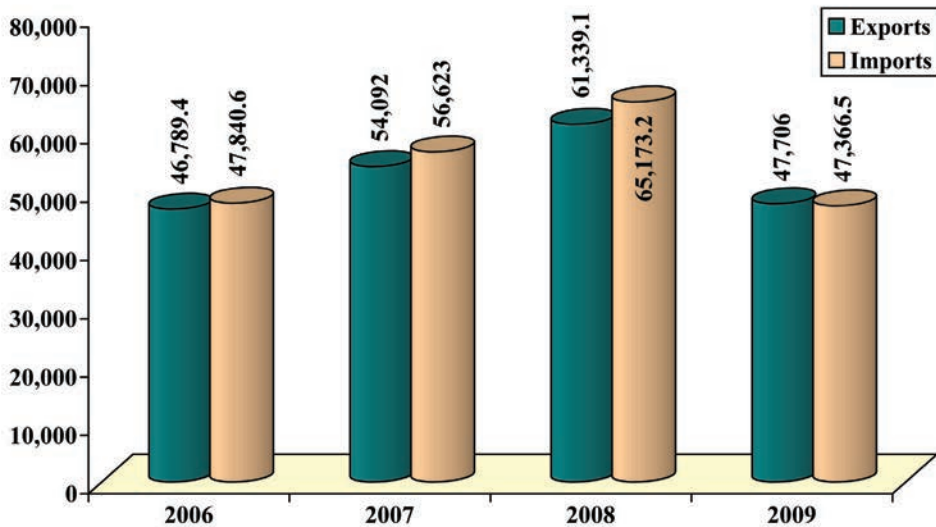
The overall budget for 2009 totaled about 316.5 billion Shekels, with a deficit of 6%, while that of 2010 approximately reached 321.5 billion Shekels, with a deficit of 5.5%.<sup>55</sup>

The Israeli exports for 2009 totaled \$47.71 billion, compared to \$61.34 billion in 2008, i.e., a decrease of 22%. As for the imports, they also decreased from \$65.17 billion in 2008 to \$47.34 billion in 2009, i.e., a shrink of 27% in 2009 (see table 6/2). The impact of the global economic crisis on the international markets was largely responsible for this significant drop in both the Israeli exports and imports for the year 2009. This is particularly so with Israel's major trading partner, the USA, where the overall size of both the Israeli exports and imports to America decreased in 2009 by 16% and 27% respectively.

**Table 6/2: Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2006–2009 (\$ million)<sup>56</sup>**

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009
Exports	46,789.4	54,092	61,339.1	47,706
Imports	47,840.6	56,623	65,173.2	47,366.5



**Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2006–2009 (\$ million)**

The USA continues to be Israel's first trade partner. In 2009, the exports of Israel to the USA totaled \$16.72 billion, about 35% of the overall Israeli exports, while its imports from the USA for the same year reached \$5.85 billion, approximately 12.3% of the totality of the imports. Israel compensates its trade deficit with most of its trading partners with the trade surplus with the USA, which amounts to about \$11 billion. Indeed, this is a gigantic support to the Israeli economy (see table 7/2).

Belgium is still Israel's second best trade partner, largely because of trade in diamonds and other precious minerals. Israel exports and imports to and from this country in 2009 respectively totaled \$2.36 and \$2.57 billion. Next comes Germany where Israeli exports to it was \$1.44 billion, and imports from it reached \$3.36 billion. China and Switzerland were the fourth and fifth trade partners, respectively. However, Hong Kong retreated in 2009 to the sixth rank of Israeli trade partners, where Israeli exports to and imports from it respectively totaled \$2.87 billion and \$1.11 billion. The rise of Israeli exports to Hong Kong seems to be because it constituted a center for re-exporting Israeli goods to different parts of the world. However, the Israeli official statistics that records Hong Kong as the destination of Israeli goods does not mean that they always go there to be re-exported later, but some of them go to Cyprus or other transit points from which they are re-exported to the region, including Arab countries.

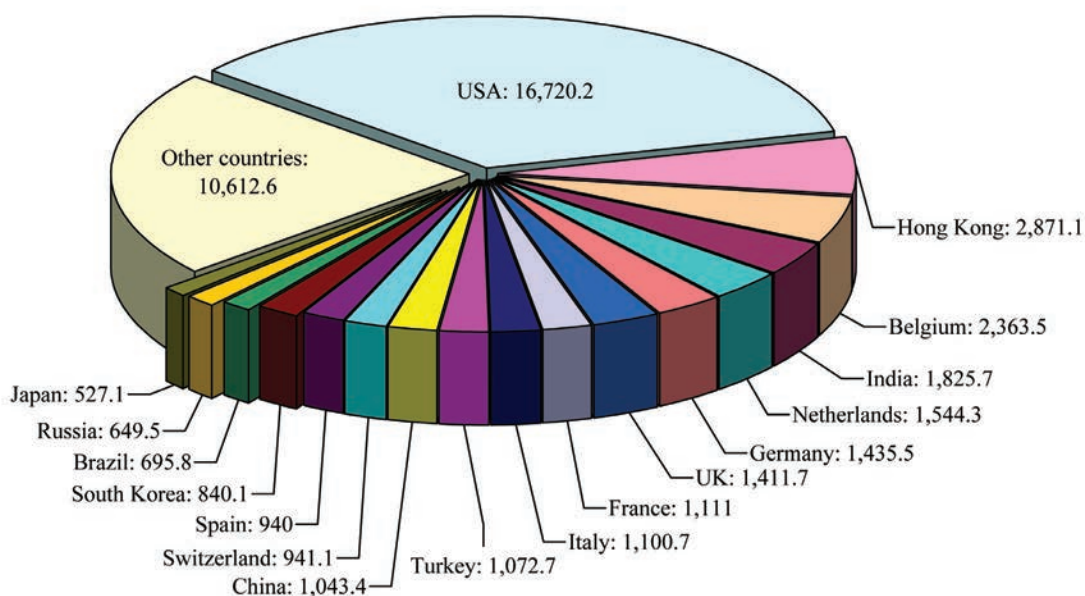
Besides the USA, Belgium, Germany and Hong Kong, and during 2009, there were other prominent destinations for Israeli exports: India (\$1.83 billion), then Netherlands (\$1.54 billion), followed by the United Kingdom (UK), France, Italy and Turkey. The noticeable rise in Israeli exports to India appears to be associated with trade in armament. As for the most prominent countries from which Israel imported some of its needs, they are: China (\$3.52 billion), Switzerland (\$3.29 billion), Italy (\$2.13 billion), followed by UK, Netherlands, Japan and then France (see table 7/2).

**Table 7/2: Israeli Exports and Imports with Selected Countries**  
**2006–2009 (\$ million)<sup>57</sup>**

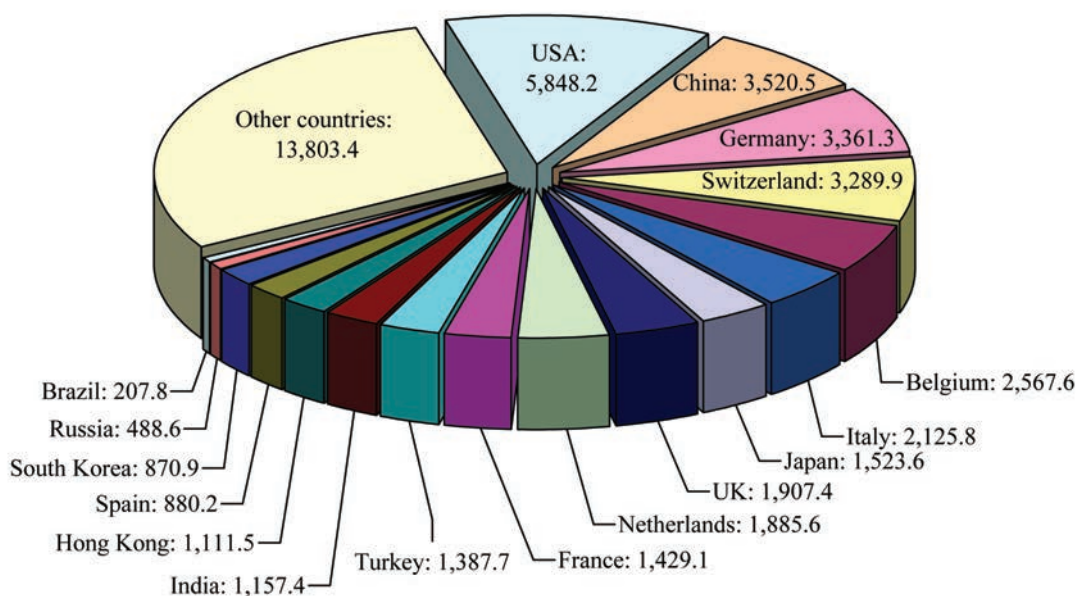
Countries	Israeli exports to:				Israeli imports from:			
	2009	2008	2007	2006	2009	2008	2007	2006
<b>USA</b>	16,720.2	19,972.5	18,906.8	17,957.2	5,848.2	8,034.4	7,848.9	5,919.5
<b>Hong Kong</b>	2,871.1	4,140.8	3,118.4	2,776.1	1,111.5	1,813.7	1,747.5	1,527.5
<b>Belgium</b>	2,363.5	4,618.7	4,070.8	3,068.4	2,567.6	4,250.3	4,454.9	3,936.9
<b>India</b>	1,825.7	2,361.3	1,613.7	1,289.4	1,157.4	1,648.8	1,689.6	1,433.7
<b>Netherlands</b>	1,544.3	2,035	1,609.3	1,312.2	1,885.6	2,465.3	2,090.3	1,786.8
<b>Germany</b>	1,435.5	1,950.6	1,913	1,757.9	3,361.3	3,940.5	3,484.3	3,201.4
<b>UK</b>	1,411.7	1,892.7	1,938.1	1,601.7	1,907.4	2,519.9	2,681.4	2,458.6
<b>France</b>	1,111	1,298	1,313.2	1,092.2	1,429.1	1,889.2	1,480.9	1,301.5
<b>Italy</b>	1,100.7	1,668.8	1,284.4	1,072.7	2,125.8	2,553.7	2,302.1	1,839.4
<b>Turkey</b>	1,072.7	1,609.9	1,195.8	821.2	1,387.7	1,825.3	1,606.9	1,272.7
<b>China</b>	1,043.4	1,293.5	1,040.6	958.8	3,520.5	4,244	3,476.9	2,427.7
<b>Switzerland</b>	941.1	1,210.4	1,036.1	809	3,289.9	3,973.6	2,882.3	2,805.9
<b>Spain</b>	940	1,108	1,106	903	880.2	959.1	811.9	749
<b>South Korea</b>	840.1	818.5	746.1	650	870.9	1,103.2	945.4	893.6
<b>Brazil</b>	695.8	1,172	671.6	465.7	207.8	297.2	270.7	209.4
<b>Russia</b>	649.5	777	611.5	524.6	488.6	1,047.1	1,398.8	1,141.6
<b>Japan</b>	527.1	883	769.6	792.8	1,523.6	2,226.7	1,882.1	1,292.3
<b>Other countries</b>	10,612.6	12,528.4	11,147	8,936.5	13,803.4	20,381.2	15,568.1	13,643.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,706</b>	<b>61,339.1</b>	<b>54,092</b>	<b>46,789.4</b>	<b>47,366.5</b>	<b>65,173.2</b>	<b>56,623</b>	<b>47,840.6</b>



### Israeli Exports to Selected Countries 2009 (\$ million)



### Israeli Imports from Selected Countries 2009 (\$ million)



In the face of global crisis, and according to a report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF):

Israeli output growth was amongst the last to fall below trend, among the mildest hit, and one of the earliest to stage a recovery. Output is projected to have been no worse than flat overall in 2009, and was up in both Q2 and Q3 2009 began to restore a measure of confidence since the beginning of the second quarter of the year 2009... The economy was shielded from the global downturn by the absence of prior housing or bank credit booms, high household savings rates, and the fact that investment goods and consumer durables—demand for which contracted sharply—are mostly imported from abroad. But the strength of output also owes much to the public debt reduction and structural reforms of the past decade, as well as the specific policy responses to the crisis... While output, consumption, and confidence are close to their Fall 2008 levels, exports, imports, and fixed investment are far from fully recovered. Unemployment has edged up to some 8%, the stock of bank credit to corporates has fallen through much of the year, and inflation has been above target for much of that time...

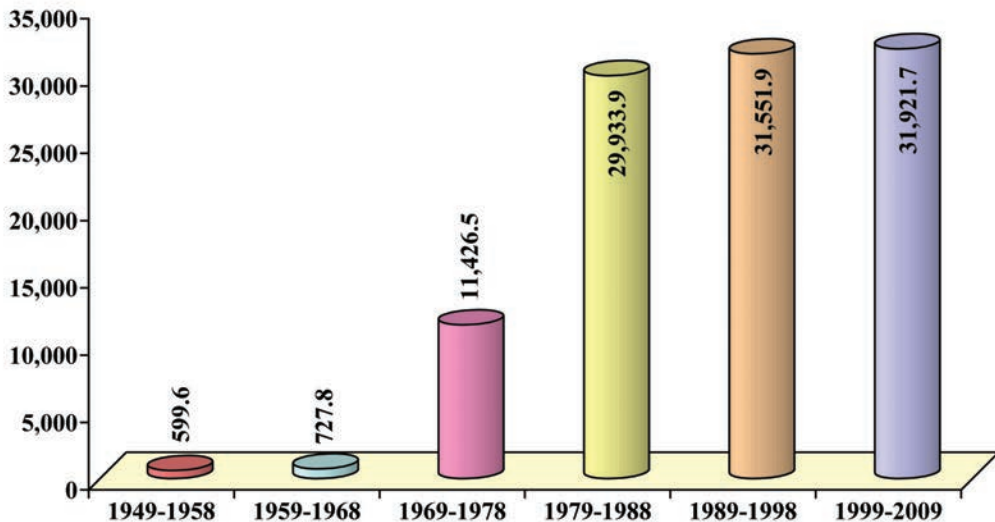
As for the forecast for the year 2010, the projected GDP is expected to grow by 2.5%.<sup>58</sup>

Though Israel is considered a rich and developed country, it still receives a US foreign annual assistance. The military assistance that it received in 2009 amounted to \$2.55 billion, compared to \$2.38 billion in 2008. Hence, the aid that America extended to Israel during the period 1949–2009 reached, according to the report of Congressional Research Service (CRS), \$106.16 billion (see table 8/2).

**Table 8/2: American Aid to Israel 1949–2009 (\$ million)<sup>59</sup>**

Period	Total
1949–1958	599.6
1959–1968	727.8
1969–1978	11,426.5
1979–1988	29,933.9
1989–1998	31,551.9
1999–2009	31,921.7



**American Aid to Israel 1949–2009 (\$ million)**

Israel got an American aid of \$1.22 billion during the period 1949–1967, which jumped to \$11.53 billion during the period 1968–1978. Since the conclusion of Camp David Accords with Egypt in 1979 and until Oslo Accords of 1993, the American aid to Israel totaled \$45.93 billion, which increased to \$47.48 billion during the duration 1994–2009.<sup>60</sup>

However, with the significant improvement of the Israeli economy in the mid 1990s, the American financial aid to Israel has become less convincing to many sectors of the American society and to the world at large. Hence, in 1998 the American administration concluded a deal with the Hebrew state to gradually reduce over a period of ten years its economic aid, which had by then totaled \$1.2 billion, i.e., starting the year 2000 and by an annual rate of \$120 million. Correspondingly, America will annually increase during the same period its military aid to Israel by \$60 million, so that the total military aid will gradually grow over this decade from \$1.8 billion to \$2.4 billion. Moreover, in:

August 2007, the Bush Administration announced that it would increase US military assistance to Israel by \$6 billion over the next decade. The agreement calls for incremental \$150 million annual increases in [Foreign Military Financing] FMF to Israel, starting at \$2.55 billion in [Fiscal Year] FY2009 and reaching \$3.15 billion by 2013 through 2018.<sup>61</sup>

### 3. The Military Indicators

By 2009 the Israeli military institution was obviously considerably troubled by five “obsessions”: the totality of the Palestinian situation, Iran and its nuclear project, the security dimensions of the new American policy towards the Middle East, the armament of what Israel calls “radical groups in the region,” in an obvious reference to Hamas and Hizbullah, and, finally, stability in neighboring Arab states. The significant repercussions of the wars on GS and Lebanon, respectively late 2008 and in the summer of 2006, had impelled Israel to give utmost attention to the readiness and alertness of its military and security forces. Though the Israeli government had done its level best, through what it called “deterrence message” and “calm” along its frontiers with Lebanon and the GS, many observers opined that the Israel was unable during 2009 to decisively settle these issues in its favor. These worries continued during 2010 and no decisive action was taken too.

One of the most important military indicators that took place at the outset of 2009 was a memorandum of understanding that Israel signed on 16/1/2009 with the USA, which prohibited “supply of arms and related materiel and weapons transfers and shipments to Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza.” The impact of this provision materialized on the ground by the end of the year, where international efforts were intensified to prohibit the smuggling of arms to GS, and the Egyptian regime built a steel wall across its frontiers with GS. One of the most important provisions of the above memo was that:

United States will work with regional and NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] partners to address the problem of the supply of arms and related materiel and weapons transfers and shipments to Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza, including through the Mediterranean, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and eastern Africa.

Moreover, among the tools that will be pursued is the “enhanced US security and intelligence cooperation with regional governments on actions to prevent weapons and explosives flows to Gaza that originate in or transit their territories; including through the involvement of relevant components of the US Government,” and that the “United States will accelerate its efforts to provide logistical and technical assistance and to train and equip regional security forces in counter-smuggling tactics, working towards augmenting its existing assistance programs.”<sup>62</sup>





Within the international and Israeli efforts to prohibit smuggling of arms to GS, a French frigate, *Germinal* (F735), started immediately after the war on Gaza to supervise the coasts of the Strip. France's presidential office has announced that the French warship will conduct "surveillance in international waters off Gaza, in full cooperation with Egypt and Israel."<sup>63</sup> Quoting the American network CBS, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* published an article on 26/3/2009 to the effect that the Israeli Air Force carried out an attack, in January, against a convoy of trucks in Sudan carrying arms for Hamas in the GS. It added that 39 people riding in 17 trucks were killed, while civilians in the area suffered injuries.<sup>64</sup>

The Israeli military institution had given great attention to Goldstone Report during the second half of 2009, and the report is still having an impact at the military and political levels in the country. It embodied evidence of serious violation of human rights and international law prior to and during the period 27/12/2008 to 18/1/2009. The report viewed the siege of GS as collective punishment, and pointed to violations of the human rights of the Palestinians in Israel and in the WB. The report has seriously damaged world wide the reputation of the Israeli army, that has been repeatedly exhibited by the Israeli authorities to be of high moral standard. Moreover, it encouraged the tracking of the accused Israeli politicians and army officers in the international court of justice and in the relevant courts in all parts of the world.

Meanwhile the Israeli military institutions continued during 2009 to actively implement the Tefen 2012 plan that was submitted in 2007 after the summer 2006 war on Lebanon. It concentrated on steps to be taken to strengthen the army and to improve the capabilities of training, ammunition reserves, arms purchase, combat means, and armament. The plan had particularly addressed the issues of human resources, land forces, and reserve forces.<sup>65</sup>

Within the drive to derive lessons from the wars on Lebanon and GS, Israel conducted, during the period 31/5/2009-4/6/2009, the most extensive nationwide drill "Turning Point 3":

It is aimed at training the Israeli home front, from the government level down to the plain citizen level, and will simulate a comprehensive regional war. According to the scenario, the war will involve Hamas, Hizbullah and Syria. Palestinians will carry out terror attacks, and Israel's Arabs will riot in masses.<sup>66</sup>





Within their plan to improve Israeli's missile capability to confront the presumed Iranian threat, the Israelis conducted with the USA, during the period 21/10/2009–3/11/2009, largest-ever joint military exercises ever held by the countries, Juniper Cobra. The aim was to jointly test four ballistic missile defense systems, in which the American destroyer USS Higgins (DDG-76) participated. The maneuvers were operated under the assumption of a comprehensive and heavy missile attack on Israel from Iran, Syria, Lebanon and GS in order to study the degree of preparedness in Israel, and coordination between the American and Israeli defense capabilities to repel such an attack.<sup>67</sup>

In the same vein, the Israeli military reported that it had conducted a successful high-seas test of the Barak missile defense system, in July 2009 the experiment involved a simulated enemy missile targeted at a ship, with the Barak system intercepting the missile. A top-ranking Navy official said the Barak defense system hit and destroyed the enemy missile. The Barak is launched from an upright position, thus saving room on the deck of the ship and enabling it to hit targets in a 360 degree range around the ship. The same sources spoke of manufacturing a more sophisticated missile than the C802 radar-guided missile, which damaged an Israeli warship during the war of summer 2006 on Lebanon.<sup>68</sup>

Moreover, according to Channel 10 of the Israeli television, Patriot missile unit of the Israeli air force had destroyed, within a secret operation conducted in July 2009 at Palmachim air force base of Rushon LeZion city, a mocked infiltration of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) via the northern frontiers. A senior officer of the Israeli air force reported that this is related to the development of another system that constitutes an important addition to the air defense capability, as it complements the two systems, Iron Dome system and Arrow-2 Missile Interceptor System (Hetz). Some military sources described this successful experiment as encouraging and useful to the Israeli air defense system, which had been heavily demoralized after a long range missile intercept test utilizing the Improved Arrow-2 was aborted.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, the armaments development authority Rafael (Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd) indicated that the first complete short-range missile interception "Iron Dome" system is expected to become operational as early as summer 2010 to intercept al-Qassam and Grad rockets.<sup>70</sup> It is worth noting that the Israeli military establishment had more than once fixed a time for activating this system, but backed down and postponed it, because of its doubtful



effectiveness and high cost—a single missile costs many thousands compared to less than one thousand dollars per one Palestinian missile.<sup>71</sup>

In a related development some foreign media sources disclosed that Israel carried out a major military exercise over the eastern Mediterranean and over Greece during the first week of June 2009, in which more than one hundred F-16 and F-15 planes participated. The exercise also included Israeli helicopters that could be used to rescue downed pilots. The helicopters and refueling tankers flew more than 900 miles (about 1,448 kilometers), which is about the same distance between Israel and Iran's uranium enrichment plant at Natanz.<sup>72</sup> These maneuvers provoked the concern of some circles on the role of the Israeli air force in the eastern Mediterranean, and whether this is related to a probable military strike against Iran.

In October 2009, Israeli top military leadership expressed their fury over Turkey's decision to cancel an annual multinational air force drill (annual Anatolia Eagle drill) that would have included the US and NATO because it opposed Israeli participation, and demanded that their government take punitive action against Turkey. But the Israeli government was not willing to aggravate tension with Ankara, and was satisfied by the American decision to totally withdraw NATO's participation in the drill.<sup>73</sup>

In November 2009, some Israeli fighters participated with the Italian air force in a major maneuver over the Mediterranean Sea that was launched from an Italian base in Sardinia island. According to the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*, Israel participated with five F-15 and five F-16 planes that are allocated for long range strategic bombardment. Israel's joint maneuvers with the European air forces give it the opportunity to test its fighting theories, the suitability of its machinery for coordination with foreign armaments and the safety of its fighters. Some military sources reported the growing inclination of the Israeli army to be trained and to coordinate with foreign armies.<sup>74</sup>

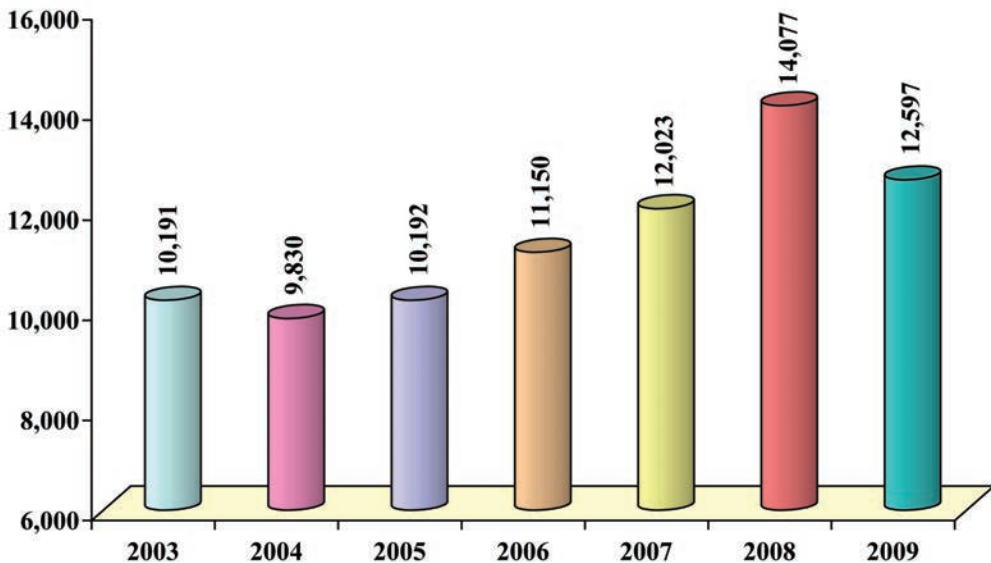
The Israeli military consumption in 2009 totaled 49.54 billion shekels (\$12.6 billion),<sup>75</sup> while the estimated one for 2010 totaled 53.2 billion Shekels (\$14.2 billion).<sup>76</sup> As demonstrated in tables 4/2 and 9/2, the military budget (in Shekels) for 2003 constituted 8.6% of the domestic product, while that for 2009 was 6.5%. The overall outcome from all this is that the military burden on the financial resources is decreasing, though the military budget is increasing. The same outcome applies when calculating the budget in dollars.



**Table 9/2: Israeli Military Consumption 2003–2009<sup>77</sup>**

Year	Military consumption (million shekels)	Military consumption at current prices (\$ million)	GDP* (million shekels)	Percentage of military consumption compared to GDP (shekels)
2003	46,351	10,191	541,500	8.6%
2004	44,060	9,830	568,505	7.8%
2005	45,739	10,192	602,504	7.6%
2006	49,690	11,150	649,854	7.6%
2007	49,393	12,023	686,011	7.2%
2008	50,504	14,077	725,142	7%
2009	49,539	12,597	766,118	6.5%

\* Review table 4/2.

**Israeli Military Consumption 2003–2009 (\$ million)**

Notwithstanding its central position in the state and the society, the Israeli army suffers the problem of recruiting suitable fighters.<sup>78</sup> *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper claimed that 1,900 eligible recruits for military services in 2009 failed to report to the recruitment offices, thus they are considered evaders. Moreover, the rate of recruitment of the Palestinian Druze had also retracted during the last years by 50%.<sup>79</sup>

### ***Third: Aggression and Resistance***

Israel continued its aggression on the Palestinian people throughout 2009. The first month of the year witnessed a total Israeli war on GS, in which hundreds were killed or wounded, in addition to the huge destruction of houses and infrastructure. However, after the war both Israel and Hamas observed an undeclared truce that continued until the end of the year. This was reflected in the stoppage of firing Palestinian missiles and bombs towards the surrounding Israeli towns, and, in return, Israel refrained from formidable military actions against GS. In WB, Israel had a different kind of truce, which was characterized by coordination between the security forces of the PA and Israel. While continuing during 2009 to close the crossings into the GS and to intensify its siege, Israel maintained its incursions and arrests in the WB.

As reported by Israel Security Agency—ISA (Shabak), there has been an especially sharp drop in rocket attacks during 2009: 566 rockets were launched this year until 24/12/2009, compared to 2,048 the year before, of which 406 were launched this year took place in January, during Operation Cast Lead. In the WB and Jerusalem there were 636 attacks registered in 2009, compared to 983 in 2008. More than 90% of the attacks in the WB and Jerusalem involved firebombs.<sup>80</sup>

#### **1. The Killed and Wounded**

The brutal fire of the occupation forces lead to the killing of 1,181 Palestinians, 1,148 from GS and 33 from the WB, including Jerusalem. Amongst the killed, 473 were under 18 years of age and 126 women. Due to the Israeli war on GS, January 2009 was the bloodiest month of the entire Arab-Israeli conflict since 1967, as in it alone 1,076 persons were killed.<sup>81</sup> The wounded during 2009 were 4,203 Palestinians, amongst whom 3,521 were in GS and 682 in the WB.<sup>82</sup> According to a report by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the over all number of the Palestinian casualties during the war on Gaza (27/12/2008–19/1/2009) were 1,334 dead, of whom 417 children, 108 women and 120 senior citizens, and 14 paramedics, while the wounded were 5,450.<sup>83</sup> However, according to Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) 1,419 were killed, at least 5,300 were wounded, and 5,356 houses were destroyed, while a further 16 thousands were damaged.<sup>84</sup>



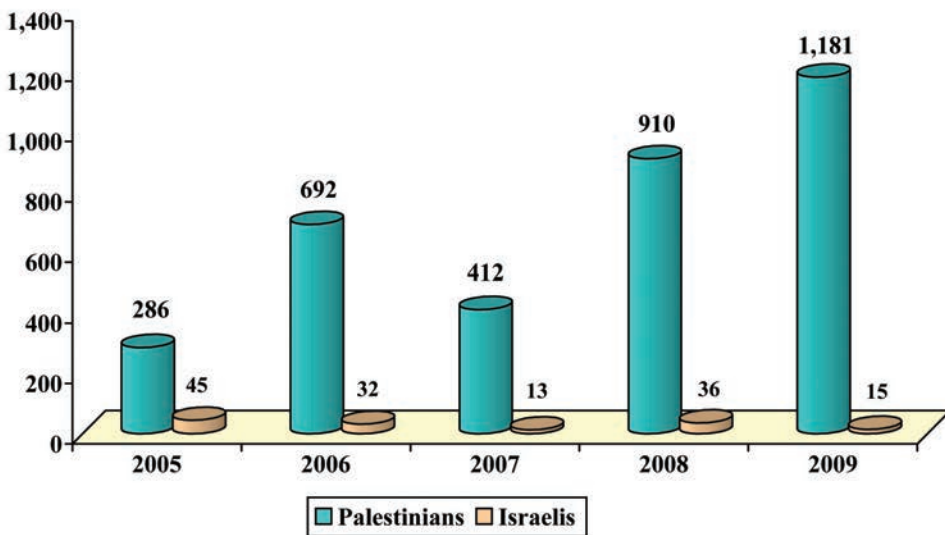
Correspondingly, the Shabak recorded that during 2009 fifteen Israelis were killed as a result of Palestinian operation amongst whom nine during the Israeli war on Gaza, a soldier was killed by an explosive device at the GS border line, five civilians and soldiers were killed by high trajectory launchings and four soldiers were killed by friendly fire. As for the injured Israelis during 2009, they were about 234, of whom 185 were wounded during the Cast Lead operation.<sup>85</sup> However, it is worth mentioning that the Palestinian resistance estimated that 80 Israeli soldiers were killed during the war on GS, in addition to several others and hundreds of casualties in the Israeli cities and towns surrounding the GS.<sup>86</sup>

**Table 10/2: The Killed and Wounded Among the Palestinians and the Israelis\* 2005–2009<sup>87</sup>**

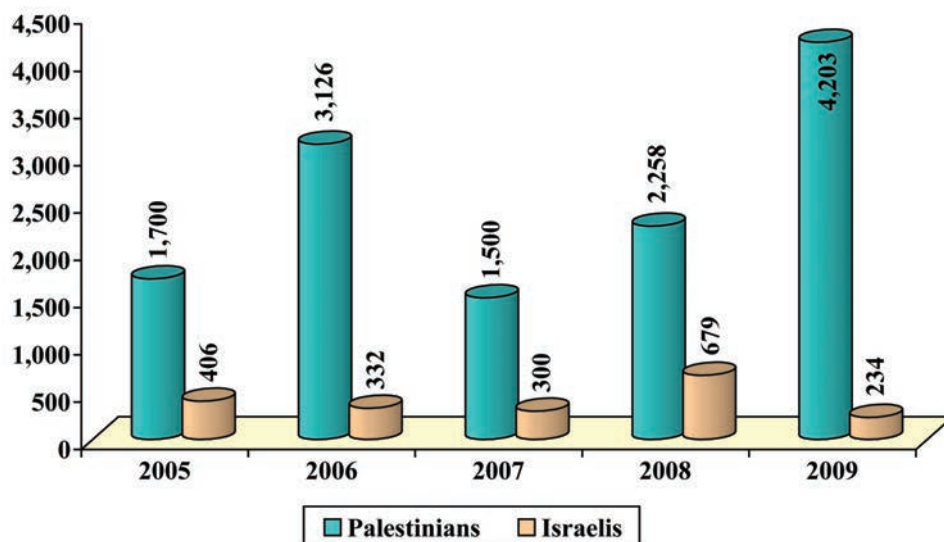
Year	Killed		Wounded	
	Palestinians	Israelis	Palestinians	Israelis
2005	286	45	1,700	406
2006	692	32	3,126	332
2007	412	13	1,500	300
2008	910	36	2,258	679
2009	1,181	15	4,203	234

\*The numbers of Israelis, killed and wounded, are based on Israeli estimation.

#### The Killed Among the Palestinians and the Israelis 2005–2009



### The Wounded Among the Palestinians and the Israelis 2005–2009



The testimonies published in *Haaretz* newspaper of several Israeli soldiers who participated in the war on Gaza reveal the brutality and the crimes committed by the Israeli army. They spoke of cases of killing in cold blood innocent and unarmed Palestinians, including children and women. “Their testimony runs counter to the Israel Defense Forces’ claims that Israeli troops observed a high level of moral behavior during the operation.” Interestingly these statements were of the soldiers who are graduates of the Yitzhak Rabin pre-military preparatory course at Oranim Academic College in Tivon.<sup>88</sup>

It is worth noting that a Swedish journalist, Donald Bostron, published in an August 2009 issue of the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* a report “that Israeli soldiers are abducting Palestinians in order to steal their organs.” This led to a diplomatic tussle between Israel and Sweden. The report recorded testimonies in this respect by members of Palestinian families.<sup>89</sup> In the same vein, quoting the director of Abu Kabir forensic institute, an Israeli television channel reported that the Israeli army had taken during the 1990s parts of the skins of each body, be it Arab or Jew, that reached the institute to be transplanted in wounded or burned Israeli soldiers. The report said that the person in charge of this operation was an officer medical doctor Ariel Elad, a then member of the Knesset. The same report recorded the theft of the corneas of some of the dead bodies sent to the institute.<sup>90</sup>

## 2. Prisoners and Detainees

Like its predecessor, 2009 was catastrophic for the detained Palestinians in the Israeli prisons, as by the end of the year their number totaled 7,500, amongst whom were 34 women, 310 children, 17 MPs and two ministers, in addition to several political activists. The prisoners from the WB totaled 6,630 (300 from Jerusalem), 750 from GS, and about 120 from the Arabs in Israel.<sup>91</sup> Additionally, many were from different Arab nationalities, including five from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights,<sup>92</sup> 27 from Jordan,<sup>93</sup> a Saudi detainee and many others from the Sudan and Egypt who crossed the borders for different reasons.<sup>94</sup> Amongst the detainees were 5,325 convicted in courts, of whom 800 received life imprisonment once or more, 1,865 awaiting trials, 304 administrative detainees, and six presumed by Israel to be “unlawful combatants.”<sup>95</sup>

During 2009, the occupation authorities arrested about five thousand Palestinians, an average of 14 per day, while the average in the preceding year was 16 daily. Most of the arrests were in the WB and Jerusalem, 4,054 cases, while in GS 1,078 cases, including one thousand in January during the war on GS, of whom only 20 remained in the occupation prisons. In the same year, nearly 1,200 orders of new arrests or renewed administrative arrests were issued, while detainees from GS were dealt with as “unlawful combatants.” Moreover, the number of arrested fishermen in the high seas facing GS shores increased during 2009. Their boats and other fishing equipments were usually confiscated, and they were exposed to pressure and blackmail during the investigations. Besides, increasing numbers of patients were arrested while passing through Beit Hanoun (Eretz) crossing for treatment abroad, and they were often subjected to interrogation and pressure to cooperate with the occupation.<sup>96</sup>

**Table 11/2: The Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails 2009<sup>97</sup>**

No. of detainees on 1/1/2009	No. of detainees on 31/12/2009	Detainees during 2009		No. of women by the end of 2009	No. of children by the end of 2009
		WB	GS		
9,000	7,500	4,054	1,078	34	310



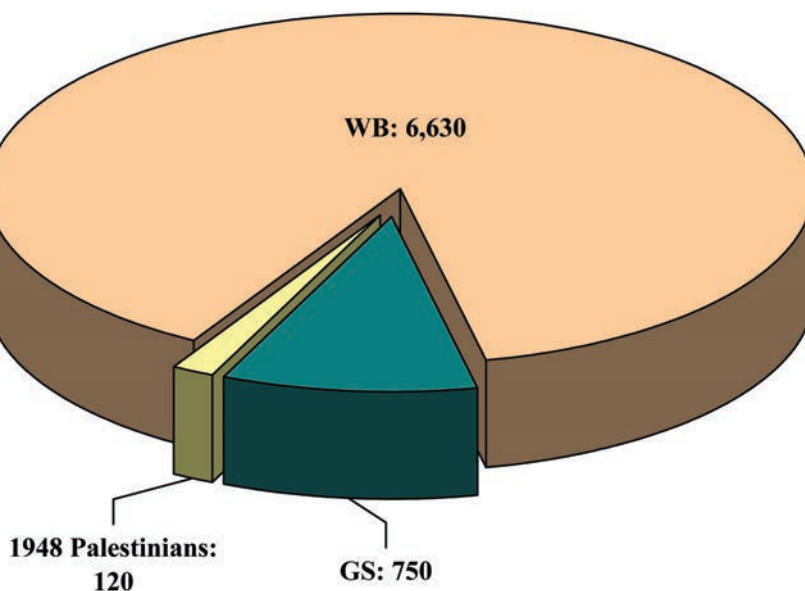
**Table 12/2: The Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails According to Geographic Locations by the End of 2009<sup>98</sup>**

WB	GS	1948 Palestinians	Total
6,630	750	120	7,500

**Table 13/2: The Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails According to Their Legal Status by the End of 2009<sup>99</sup>**

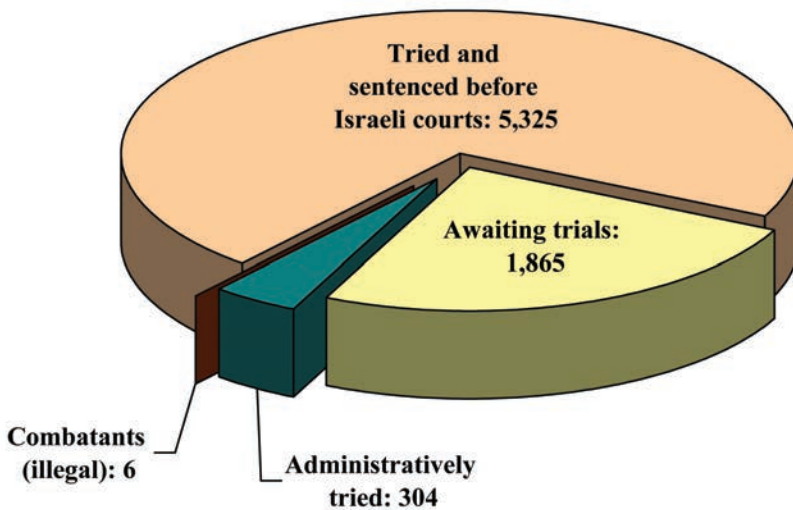
Tried and sentenced before Israeli courts	Administratively tried	Awaiting trials	Combatants (illegal)	Total
5,325	304	1,865	6	7,500

**The Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails According to Geographic Locations by the End of 2009**





## The Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails According to Their Legal Status by the End of 2009



Meanwhile, Hamas continued in 2009 the arrest of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in GS. Since his arrest in June 2006, Hamas conditioned his release to be through a deal in which about one thousand Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli jails should be released. Notwithstanding the active German and Egyptian mediation, no deal was concluded during the year 2009. However, on receiving a video tape that demonstrated that Shalit was still alive under Hamas detention, the Israeli government released in October 20 Palestinian women detainees.<sup>100</sup>

By the end of 2009, the negotiations for a deal faced three obstacles posed by the Israeli side. Objection to 50 detainees included in the 450 that are in Hamas' list, insistence to deport 130 of the 400 detainees that it previously agreed to release, and refusal to include in the deal any of the detainees who carry the Israel nationality.<sup>101</sup>

The conditions of the detainees deteriorated during 2009, because of the Israeli increasing oppressive measures, which included poor medical services, torture, refusal of one-on-one visits with the detainees by their relatives under the guise of the so-called "security prohibition," or collectively as was the case with the families of GS detainees. In addition, prisoners continued to have limited food, clothes and covers, and their personal cash was confiscated. A report by the

Palestinian Ministry of the Detainee's Affairs demonstrated that all the detainees were exposed to one of forms of psychological or physical torture, humiliation in public and in front of family members, and that the majority suffered more than one kind of torture. This was considered a constant policy towards those who were arrested or detained. Moreover, the report ascertained that all the Israeli security personnel who participated in the occupation operation were involved in these inhuman practices. The most dangerous development during 2009 in this respect was the formation of a ministerial committee to study the conditions of the detainees in order to design new ways and means to intensify pressure and misery on them, and to seek revenge on them. In 2009, 'Obeida Maher Dweik, a 25 year detainee, was murdered in an Israeli prison because of medical negligence. Though wounded when arrested, on 26/8/2009, he did not receive any medical treatment; on the contrary he was tortured until he succumbed to death on 13/9/2009.<sup>102</sup>

#### ***Fourth: The Israeli Position Towards the Internal Palestinian Scene***

Since the victory of Hamas in the PLC elections of 2007 and the defeat of Fatah, the Israelis found themselves dealing in a Palestinian setting that was engaged in a political and geographical split. Hamas controlled GS, but it was isolated politically and exposed to an Israeli, regional and international siege, while Fatah controlled WB with Israeli tacit recognition, and local, regional and international support. During the preceding year, 2008, the borders of the Israel with both GS and the WB remained relatively calm, and Israel maintained "the status of no peace no war" in its dealing with the Palestinians, without feeling an urgency for a peace settlement, especially after the end of its war on GS in January 2009.

During the year 2009, Israel strove to achieve a bundle of strategic objectives in the Palestinian arena. It tried to reach to a political settlement with the PA under the presidency of Mahmud 'Abbas, but according to its vision and conditions. This demonstrated that Israel was not serious in its peace advances for many reasons. If a settlement is to be at hand, the issues of the final settlement, like Jerusalem and the refugees, are bound to cause the collapse of any government coalition, be it led by Kadima or the Likud. Moreover, the then ruling coalition felt that time is in favor of Israel, because it had so far enabled it to impose many facts



on the ground, and to actively pursue its effort to secure the downfall of Hamas or, at least, to weaken its control on GS. Thus, Israel followed a double strategy in dealing with the internal Palestinian situation, which combines deterrence in dealing with Hamas and its government in GS, and to “seek a peace deal” with whom it viewed as “the moderates of the PLO” in the WB.

According to the estimate of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israeli policy in the WB was two-pronged: first was the Annapolis process, which did not achieve a permanent agreement yet succeeded in sustaining political momentum on the Palestinian issue and earning international support, including among the pragmatic Arab states. Second, efforts continued with the help of the international community to advance “state institution building” in the WB and improve the daily life of the Palestinian population, while insisting on the Palestinian fulfillment of their security obligations and preventing the consolidation of Hamas influence in the WB.<sup>103</sup>

The Israeli policy during the course of 2009, which was to all intents and purposes the same as that of the international community and most of the regional powers:

offered Fatah an opportunity to present itself to the Palestinian people as an alternative to Hamas that is better able to advance Palestinian national political interests and effect a change in daily life (e.g., removal of roadblocks, greater freedom of movement, and an improved economic situation). Fatah’s leadership now expects that this development, along with efforts to rehabilitate the movement’s ideological and organizational frameworks-as expressed in the sixth convention-will help regain the public’s confidence. However, while Fatah’s success largely depends on a renewal and successful conclusion of the political process with Israel, the conditions for this do not currently exist. Israel demands that Fatah recognize its Jewish character and agree to an end to the conflict, yet at the same time continues with settlement expansion. The Fatah leadership lacks any real potential to relax its principles regarding the permanent agreement’s core issues, such as Jerusalem and the right of return...<sup>104</sup>

In an article published by the Israeli writer Alex Fishman in *Yedioth Ahronoth* of 24/7/2009 revealed that during recent months a team of Israelis and Palestinians, together with a former member of Dayton’s team, has been meeting to draft a detailed security annex to the Geneva Document.<sup>105</sup> This annex “resolves the relations between the state and the state-to-be.” This is how, Fishman says, “sheep



and wolves are supposed to live together.” It is the only detailed security document that exists to which the Palestinians have agreed and will, it is reported, form the basis for the final status arrangements that will be proposed by President Obama for his final status agreement to be completed within two years. “This document,” explains Fishman, “is the closest thing to a practical and actual plan that was drafted by agreement by the Israelis and the Palestinians.” In terms of timing, the agreement is supposed to be implemented in full within 30 months. The main components of the security annex are:

1. The principle of non-militarization of the PA; precise details of what weaponry and equipment Palestinians may and may not possess.
2. A third security force to be brought in “as a balance.”
3. The stationing by Israel of an Israeli infantry battalion in the Jordan Valley.
4. The stationing of three multi-national battalions to be deployed along the Jordan Valley, with one battalion to be deployed along the Philadelphi Road in GS.
5. An “Israeli presence”—two early-warning stations—in the non-militarized Palestinian state.
6. The Israel Air Force would be able to carry out training flights over the WB and Israeli “involvement” at the border crossings between the Palestinian state, Egypt and Jordan would continue.<sup>106</sup>

Correspondingly, Israeli policy versus Hamas and its government in GS did not change, despite the change in government after the 18th Knesset elections from a centrist government lead by Kadima to a rightist administration dominated by the Likud Party.<sup>107</sup> It continued to be based on three assumptions:

1. Hamas is irrevocably opposed to recognizing or coming to terms with Israel’s existence.
2. Economic, political, and military pressure will affect the Hamas regime either by prying away its popular base, forcing it to modify its behavior significantly, or (most desired and least likely) destroying it as an organization.
3. Direct talks with Hamas are pointless and likely to be counterproductive, because there is nothing to talk about. This assumption is reinforced by Hamas’s virtually identical stance with regard to its talking with Israel.<sup>108</sup>



It worth noting here that Hamas has sent repeated signals that it is ready for a limited “lull” or a long term armistice that may extend for a decade.<sup>109</sup> Hamas offers these ideas within the framework of a peace settlement negotiated by Fatah, which gives the Palestinians dominance over the WB, GS and East Jerusalem, and to which Hamas raises no objections and is accepted by the Palestinians in a plebiscite.<sup>110</sup>

According to the estimates of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the year 2009, Israel’s initial objective in GS is to stop firing of missiles and to observe the international obligation of maintaining the three conditions of the Quartet in dealing with Hamas. But by the end of the lull in December 2008, Israel faced squarely the two choices it had. It could have tried to completely eradicate Hamas and its infrastructure. Alternatively, it could have accepted what most military and political analysts had been saying for several years—that Hamas could not be destroyed militarily. Hence, Israel launched its war on GS, codenamed “Cast Lead,” but it failed, and Israel was obliged to withdraw, thanks to the bravery and steadfastness of the resistance. Israel never tried to reoccupy GS throughout the year 2009.<sup>111</sup>

The Israeli assessment was that the results of the fighting should be leveraged to strengthen Israeli deterrence, establish a stable security situation without any agreement with Hamas, and intensify efforts to prevent Hamas’ rearmament. It was recommended that the Egyptian and international role in preventing smuggling be strengthened, and that the international effort be bolstered to prevent a humanitarian crisis in GS. Pressure on the civilian population should be reduced with the cooperation of the PA and in a way that will not translate into a strengthening of Hamas.<sup>112</sup> However, in the wake of Operation Cast Lead, Hamas has been deterred from any further military confrontation with Israel that might topple its government, and aspired to preserve security calm. Correspondingly, Israel has adopted a policy that strengthens it both at home and abroad: through Egypt it is conducting an indirect dialogue with Hamas to formulate a deal for the release of the captive soldier Gilad Shalit, and it is avoiding military action to defeat it. In a parallel move, Israel continued its effort to weaken Hamas, and prohibit its rearmament, besides its siege of GS.<sup>113</sup>

The war brought back to the forefront the political problem that Israel had evaded to respond to before the war, namely, how Hamas and Israel can “co-exist” in the foreseeable future as none of them can uproot the other? Many analysts opined that it:



should have been clear to Israel, or to anyone who was familiar with Hamas's thinking, death and destruction would not, under virtually any circumstances, persuade Hamas's leadership or its rank and file to acquiesce to permanent Israeli control or to shift their allegiance to Fatah. In fact, the results following the end of hostilities were predictable: Hamas was politically strengthened, Fatah was further weakened, and Israel was further isolated.<sup>114</sup>

Before and after the war, Israel had persistently maintained that the threat that GS will pose in the next stage will be, with or without Hamas consent, closely associated with the "Worldwide or Global Jihad" organizations notably al-Qaeda. This deliberate association between GS and the activities of al-Qaeda against American allies was triggered by the Israeli drive to broaden the international targeting of Hamas. It is also in line with a study conducted for Washington Institute for Near East Policy by Yoram Cohen, the former deputy director of ISA, and Matthew Levitt, the American former deputy assistant treasury secretary for intelligence and analysis, which maintained that al-Qaeda's fighters in Iraq who will leave the country after the American withdrawal will seek refuge in GS. The study had also exaggerated the *Salafi-Jihadi* phenomenon in GS and presented the *Salafi-Jihadi* groups as an evil destructive force that may participate at any time in attacking Israel and American allies in the region.<sup>115</sup>

A reading of the sequence of events suggests that the Palestinian schism and the stalemate in the reconciliation effort will continue to govern the Israeli position towards the domestic Palestinian situation during 2010. However, the Israeli double strategy is unlikely to lead to a change in the balance of power in the Palestinian scene in favor of the PA in Ramallah for many reasons, of which the most important are the following: First, the continuous Israeli disregard to the Palestinian rights, as the best that Israel may concede in a peace settlement will not at best be acceptable to the most "moderate" Palestinians. Secondly, most of the Palestinians view the security coordination between the PA and Israel as a consolidation of the occupation, and that it is essentially directed against a Palestinian partner, namely Hamas. All this is likely to drain in future the popularity of Abu Mazin and Fatah, and to erode the gains that the PA reaped as a result of assuming the security responsibility in several cities in the WB, and from removing the barriers and "normalizing daily life." It, moreover, will probably impress upon the Palestinians that Fatah had once more, after Oslo Accords, failed to terminate the occupation via negotiations and the peace path, which means the stagnation of the peace process and the continuation of the



de facto Israeli policy, thus making the probability of the establishment of a Palestinian state an impossible mission. There is a consensus among experts in political sociology that a politico-social impasse in a place normally expresses itself in a violent military manner. In fact, the possibility of the renewal of the Palestinian *Intifadah* (uprising) against Israel in the WB had been frequently entertained during late 2009 and early 2010.

Correspondingly, by the end of 2009, it had been persistently maintained that Israel may launch against GS a war of the kind that it did at the beginning of the year. This probability was emphasized in a defiant tone by a number of Israeli political and military leaders. Additionally were Israel's targeting, after every launching of a missile from GS, some of the Palestinian activists, and the limited and virtually routine bombardment operations throughout the years on the tunnels' district along the Egyptian borders. Hence, the question is whether Israel will tend in 2010 to intensify its pressure and consolidate its deterrent policy against Hamas, or opt for a total aggression as it earlier did? A careful reading of the sequence of events and connecting them with each other gives us sufficient evidence to argue that Israel will be inclined towards the former option rather than engaging itself in a new war. For it is still the party that benefits from the Palestinian geographical and political schism. Furthermore, Israel is not sure that the occupation of GS and the collapse of Hamas would lead to quick and decisive outcome. Besides, Israel is still in a state of shock by Goldstone Report on its latest war on GS. Over and above all this, Israel's "restrained" behavior, so to speak, synchronizes with Egypt's intensification of the siege and construction of the so-called "steel wall" on its borders with GS.

### ***Fifth: The Path of the Political Settlement***

In a nutshell, the political stagnation that started in 2008 had continued in 2009, and the PA itself had confessed that the negotiations had reached to a virtual deadlock. This is attributed to three main reasons:

1. The scandals that besieged the government of Ehud Olmert at the end of its term and lead to its downfall. Additionally was the failure of his successor Tzipi Livni to form a government, which led to early elections that brought an ultra-right government under the premiership of Benjamin Netanyahu, which is the most extreme government in the history of Israel.





2. The declaration by the PA of the stoppage of negotiations with Israel in protest of its war on GS in late 2008 and early 2009.
3. The growing disappointment in the administration of Barack Obama and his electoral slogan of change. His undertaken during the election campaign to swiftly move to revive the peace process and resume negotiations, and to give priority to conclude a Palestinian-Israeli agreement during his presidency had soon vanished. His administration quickly retreated from those pledges, especially the stoppage of building settlements. Thus, till the end of 2009, no success was recorded for the American effort to resume the negotiations, on the contrary, Israel aggressively pursued its hostile military and political agenda. America's quick retreat indicates the probability that it lower the ceiling of its expectations. This means that it will focus on developing modest confidence building measures, and to strive to reduce the losses in anticipation of an opportune time to resume the negotiations.

Amongst other objectives, the war on GS, which continued during the opening part of 2009, aimed at forcing the Palestinians to the negotiation table to conclude an agreement that achieves the gist of the American-Israeli goals and interests at the expense of the fundamental rights and interests of the Palestinians. As Tzipi Livni, the former minister of foreign affairs and leader of Kadima, used to say, this agreement will be "a shelf agreement,"<sup>116</sup> which means that the conclusion of a deal does not necessarily mean that it will be hurriedly implemented. Rather the Israeli strategy is to conclude an agreement at this time of Palestinian schism, but the implementation would have to await the restoration of authority in GS to the PA, that should demonstrate its ability to build strong institutions capable of fighting "terrorism," liquidation of its infrastructure, confiscation of its weapons and arrest of its personnel.

The position of Barack Obama on the Israeli war on GS was disappointing. The sheer human sympathy that he voiced before officially assuming his presidency, on 20/1/2010, remained basically the same after he has officially taken the presidency. For he focused on a ceasefire, according to the Israeli conditions, on the stoppage of smuggling of weapons to GS, on taking security and international measures that deprive the resistance from the acquisition of armaments, and the dependence of lifting the siege, the reconstruction effort and the achievement of reconciliation on the acceptance of Hamas, or the government in which it may participate, of the Quartet's conditions.





However, the above adverse narrative does not necessarily belittle the change that Obama had achieved early in his presidency, namely the priority that he gave to the issue of peace in the Middle East at large, particularly the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. He called several leaders of the region, including the Palestinian President, besides appointing the presumed pragmatic, serious and balanced George Mitchel as his special peace envoy to the region.

However, other developments indicated that the new American President did not conclusively decide his line of policy on the Palestinian issue. For he had also appointed the popularly known friend of Israel Hillary Clinton as his secretary of state, as well as a number of pro-Israel advisors, of whom the most prominent is Dennis Ross. Moreover, Obama emphasized the priority of the security of Israel and the American strategic alliance with it, and rejected any “violence” against it. The dilemma of Obama is that while on one side aspiring to achieve peace in the Middle that his predecessors failed to attain, he, on the other hand, does not want to apply the necessary pressure on Israel. He plans to convince it through offering some incentives and exercising light pressure, and by emphasizing that the establishment of a Palestinian state has become an important prerequisite to American national security, and that of Israel too.

This duplicity characterizes the American policy in the era of Obama, and may lead to its failure in future. The good intentions of the American President alone are not enough.

However, Obama had given noticeable attention to the political process, as seen in the shuttle diplomacy by his peace envoy George Mitchel, the frequent visits of his Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and his own declarations and addresses, particularly his historic speech in the University of Cairo. In his speech, he emphasized the necessity of seeking “a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect.” He also expressed that there is “no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable.” and that he is committed to achieve peace, and added, “The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.”<sup>117</sup>

Obama’s administration had exerted considerable effort to convince the Israeli government to avail the necessary prerequisites for the resumption and success of the peace process in return for steps towards normalizing Arab relations with it.



He, moreover, promised to present a tangible peace plan that includes short phases and guarantees for its implementation.

However, the Israeli intransigence constituted a formidable stumbling block to the American effort, particularly so after the election of Netanyahu's government. It is reputed to be one of the most extremist, racist and hostile governments in the history of Israel, whose priority is for security, expansion and economic peace. It, moreover, depends on a broad political and parliamentary base, and the opposition, which lacks a strong leader, is too weak to challenge it. This is due to the diminishing influence of the leftist parties and the peace camp, and the increasing bickering within Kadima, the major opposition party.

The first half of 2009 witnessed tension in the American-Israeli relations that reached its zenith in the first stormy meeting between Obama and Netanyahu, after which the latter was compelled, in an address that he gave in June 2009 in Ilan University, to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state, but accompanied this presumable retreat with impossible conditions. This made his acceptance of a Palestinian political entity merely formal and practically meaningless. Amongst what he mentioned in this addresses were:<sup>118</sup>

1. A fundamental prerequisite for ending the conflict is a public, binding and unequivocal Palestinian recognition of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people...
2. There must also be a clear understanding that the Palestinian refugee problem will be resolved outside Israel's borders...
3. Judea and Samaria, the places where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David and Solomon, and Isaiah and Jeremiah lived, are not alien to us. This is the land of our forefathers... Within this homeland lives a large Palestinian community. We do not want to rule over them... [But] the territory under Palestinian control must be demilitarized with ironclad security provisions for Israel...
4. Israel needs defensible borders [i.e., the rejection of the 4th June, 1967 frontiers]...
5. Jerusalem must remain the united capital of Israel with continued religious freedom for all faiths...
6. The territorial question will be discussed as part of the final peace agreement. In the meantime, we have no intention of building new settlements or of expropriating additional land for existing



settlements. But there is a need to enable the residents to live normal lives, to allow mothers and fathers to raise their children like families elsewhere. The settlers are neither the enemies of the people nor the enemies of peace. Rather, they are an integral part of our people, a principled, pioneering and Zionist public...

7. The Palestinians must decide between the path of peace and the path of Hamas. The Palestinian Authority will have to establish the rule of law in Gaza and overcome Hamas. Israel will not sit at the negotiating table with terrorists who seek their destruction...

Though containing something new, Netanyahu's conditions do not reflect a paramount change, they are too demanding for any Palestinian to accept. However, they help the Israeli government to gain the satisfaction of the American administration, but without antagonizing the extremists in Israel or threatening the survival of Netanyahu's government.

What Netanyahu could not say was, however, voiced by Avigdor Lieberman, the minister of foreign affairs,<sup>119</sup> who emphasized the impossibility of resolving the conflict during the coming two decades. Moreover, he doubted the legitimacy of Abu Mazin because he does not control GS, and even questioned his legitimacy in the WB.

To block the American and international pressure, Israel took, after months of hesitation, three major steps:

1. To announce the acceptance of the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state if the Palestinians accepted the Israeli conditions.
2. A ten month moratorium on new residential housing construction in the WB, starting late November 2009, which does not include Jerusalem, settlement units in progress and public facilities.
3. To initiate a series of measures to improve the living conditions of the Palestinians, namely removal of earth mounds, to ease movement within the WB, and with the outside world and Israel, and to agree to improve the economic conditions.

Though not changing the essence of Israeli policy, these steps aborted the growing international pressure on Israel, and channeled it, for sometime at least, towards the Palestinian side.

This transfer had become feasible because of the numerous internal and external political and economic difficulties that the American administration had confronted: the opposition of some influential quarters in America to Obama's Health Care



Reform Bill, the formidable difficulties in the conduct of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the deteriorating situation in Pakistan, Iran and other parts of the world. Hence, Obama's administration was unable to resist the pressure of Israel and America's pro-Israel lobby. The ultimate outcome was the withdrawal of the American demand to stop the settlement building, and the inability of the American administration to submit a tangible peace initiative to be imposed on both sides.

The American retraction had shocked the Palestinian leadership, who had betted on the presumably new American position and the strength that it thought to have gained after Fatah's sixth congress, and the holding of a special session of the PNC to fill the vacant posts in the Executive Committee of the PLO. Hence, the PA refused to resume the negotiations with Israel unless and until it adheres to three obligations spelled out in the Road Map, which it never did since this plan was drawn five years ago. These obligations were:<sup>120</sup>

- Total settlement freeze, including natural growth, and especially in Jerusalem.
- Adherence to a specific and clear reference to the peace process.
- To resume the forthcoming negotiations from the point that they stopped at in the previous round.

The American administration had committed three additional errors of judgment that weakened the Palestinian president and impelled him to declare that he will not run for the presidency in the next elections. By then it was difficult for Abu Mazin to resume the negotiations on the Israeli conditions. Instead, he rejected to be satisfied by a written American and international guarantee to establish a Palestinian state, and insisted that all issues be submitted to the negotiation table, including Jerusalem and the refugees, and to conclude a deal within two years.

These American errors of judgment were:

1. Pressing the Palestinian president to participate in a tripartite meeting with Obama and Netanyahu, held in September 2009. Despite the fact that Abu Mazin had more than once declared that he will not meet Netanyahu unless and until he declares a total stoppage of the settlement.
2. Pressure on the Palestinian president to postpone the discussion of Goldstone Report, which provoked a storm of anger that affected the credibility and popularity of Abu Mazin, and constituted a barrier to any future Palestinian flexibility.
3. Obstructing the process of the national reconciliation on the basis of the Egyptian proposal and before the agreement on the resumption of the

negotiations. The participation, also, in stalling over proposed prisoner exchange, so that Hamas will not be strengthened at the expense of Abu Mazin and the PA.

This pushed the US administration in a clear predicament. For it failed to merely resume the negotiations, and lost the first round with Israel. By the beginning of 2010, it found itself facing three scenarios:

- The first scenario is to accept the continuation of stagnation in the peace process, while intensifying the efforts to minimize the damage. To focus also, at this stage, on a transitional solution that embodies modest steps towards confidence building, taken by both the Israeli and Palestinian governments. To encourage the latter to build the state's institutions in order to reach a status in which all parties are ready to resume negotiations and conclude a peace agreement. This means to give up Obama's initial objective of resolving the conflict, and to endorse the advice of Dennis Ross, Martin Indyk,<sup>121</sup> and other pro-Israeli individuals and groups in the USA, i.e., to focus on the administration of the conflict but avoid the risk of resolving it, while striving to revive the peace process in a way that there would be a process but not necessarily a peace.
- The second scenario: to continue pressure on President Abu Mazin until he accepts the resumption of the negotiations without an Israeli commitment to freeze the settlements notwithstanding his repeated pledges not to do so. In other words that he be satisfied with Arab and international guarantees and aid that would hopefully justify this move. In return the president will be rewarded by several measures of confidence building, such as restoring the situation as it was before 28/9/2000, release of a group of detainees, improve the economic conditions, and a pledge to focus the negotiations on the issue of the borders, and to strive to settle it before the end of the ten month moratorium on new residential housing construction in the WB, that is scheduled to expire early July 2010.
- The third scenario: To submit a concrete peace initiative that includes the objectives of the peace process, implementation schedules, the phases and the guarantees. It combines the policy of the carrot and stick that would expectedly stimulate both parties to take risks, but if they do not have the courage to do so, to apply pressure on them until they accept the American initiative.



However, we have sufficient evidence to except that the first scenario will be the most likely one. For even if the American administration has good intentions, it lacks the necessary will to exert pressure, particularly on Israel. But without such pressure no real progress in the peace process will be achieved. What supports this hypothesis is a statement that Abu Mazin said before Fatah's Revolutionary Council, namely that either Israel undertakes the settlement building freeze or America interferes to declare the end of the game.<sup>122</sup>

But this dubious situation could not possibly continue forever, or even for a long period, it is bound to change. Though flourishing economically and militarily, and an *Intifadah* is so farfetched that Israeli security leaders boastfully said that the year 2009 was the quietest in a decade (not more than 15 Israeli individuals were killed during the year), Israel is indeed worried about its existence in the long run. This is particularly so because of the rising credibility and strength of the resistance forces, the Palestinian internal demographic growth and the probability of an international shift in favor of the resistance. The stagnation of the peace process may also open the way for other alternatives, specially a united Palestinian resistance and the restoration of the Arab and international dimensions of the Palestinian issue. Thus, it may help all the parties and states that are against the peace process, like Iran, Hamas and Hizbullah, and it will weaken their moderate counterparts. Furthermore, at one stage in future, the American and Israeli relations with Iran may become so tense that the international sanctions against Iran would be tightened, and the military option against it may become viable, a development that could probably persuade the American administration to actively work for the resumption and success of the negotiations to crystallize a global-Arab-Israeli alliance against Iran.

Israel favors the continuation of the negotiations, but it is not in a hurry to reach to final results and commitments. Its strategy is, in fact, based on the administration of the crisis rather than its resolution as long as it is capable of imposing realities on the ground and continuing its processes of Judaization and Israelization. But Israel is concerned that the Palestinians may give up on the peace settlement track and the two-state solution, that they resort to other alternatives such as the resistance or the one state solution. Moreover, Israel and its legitimacy could face increasing regional and international challenges.

It is worth noting at this juncture that the American administration had over celebrated the mockery of the partial and temporary settlement building freeze,



and Hillary Clinton had even considered it an unprecedented move. Hence forth, America moved from pressing Israel to twisting the arms of the Palestinians.

In this analysis it is not enough to address developments in the American, Israeli and Palestinians fronts only, but it is essential to look into their Arab and international counterparts, especially the partners of the Quartet.

Following the initial bold movements of Obama's administration on the Palestinian crisis, the Arab and international roles towards the issue had retracted, and became confined to supporting the American effort on the basis that it was highly expected to succeed. But they soon came back to the scene after America's quick retreat from its demand of the settlement building freeze and pledge to submit a peace initiative. The US was confronted by strong and intransigent opposition from Israel and the American Jewish lobby.

The European Union (EU) issued a declaration which emphasized that the "Council recalls that it has never recognized the annexation of East Jerusalem. If there is to be a genuine peace, a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states." Furthermore, the "Council reiterates that settlements, the separation barrier where built on occupied land, demolition of homes and evictions are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible." It added that "The European Union will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties." The European Union also called for "the urgent resumption of negotiations that will lead, within an agreed time-frame, to a two-state solution with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security."<sup>123</sup>

France played an active role in this respect, especially after the stumbling of the American efforts. It called for an international conference, similar to that of Annapolis of 2007, to activate the peace process. But this call was unsuccessful because of the huge gap between the Palestinian and Israeli positions on the resumption of the negotiations.

Following Annapolis, Russia had also suggested a conference in Moscow, which, had, in fact, already been accepted internationally in recognition of the country's positive contribution in the peace process. For Russia had maintained a balanced role, whereby it demanded the end of the occupation and the establishment of a



Palestinian state. Moreover, it viewed the settlement as illegal, and kept a channel of communication with Hamas.

The Quartet was during the first half of 2009 rather passive, it only supported the American effort. But when it proved to be unproductive, and the American envoy had failed to persuade Israel to resume the negotiations, the Quartet started to step in. But, on the whole, its role was ineffective as it pursued the policy of “wait and see.”

What deserves attention during 2009 is that the Arab countries—individually and collectively—had virtually ignored the Arab peace initiative, which had only been verbally and casually referred to in announcements and conferences. It appeared to have served its purpose and was no longer the basis of Arab move towards peace, but simply a publicity stunt to absorb the American fury against the Arabs and Muslims after the events of 11/9/2001, and not a final Arab initiative to settle the conflict. If the Arabs do not seriously view their initiative, then who cares?

The Syrian-Israeli path remained stagnant due to the intransigence of the new Israeli government—even more than its predecessor—and the deterioration in Turkey’s relations with Israel, which obstructed the former’s mediation between the two countries.

The Arab position was in a status of limbo and disarray, divided between a call for the resumption of the negotiations and another of working towards the crystallization of a united Arab position. This was reflected in the Arab decline to endorse the Palestinians initiative to ask the UN Security Council to patronize a resolution that recognizes the Palestinian state and draw its borders.

What is confusing about Abu Mazin’s position is that while admitting that the negotiations were deadlocked, he does not call for another option, nor does he initiate a process to select a successor as long as he will not run for the next elections, and after declaring that he, like his predecessor Yasir ‘Arafat, will be assassinated. He even vaguely repeated that the alternative to negotiations is negotiations and to peace is peace, and added, “I will not allow a new *Intifada*. As long as I’m in office, I will not allow anybody to start a new *Intifada*. Never never. But if I leave, it’s no longer my responsibility and I can’t make any guarantees. It could happen.” He, also, told “the Israeli Minister of Defense, Ehud Barak, that he can do an undeclared but total moratorium for five months without announcing it,





without publicity, just tell the Americans. But it must be a total freeze that includes East Jerusalem.”<sup>124</sup> But then later he reduced the duration to three months only. This further weakens Abu Mazin’s position, as the delay of settlement building could be tolerated for such a short period if a final peace settlement is guaranteed during it. Moreover, Abu Mazin appears to have rejected the American proposal of indirect negotiations unless he finds an Arab cover, which practically means that he will eventually accept to resume the negotiations without prior conditions, a development that would further tarnishes his image among the Palestinians, and assures the Israelis of their ability to impose their conditions. This was further demonstrated by the Arab decision to allow indirect negotiations under American patronage for four months. However, the quick Israeli approval of building 1,600 housing units had aborted these negotiations.

An agreement is, in fact, almost impossible because of the extreme Israeli demands: to liquidate the issue of the Palestinian refugees, withdrawal to secured recognized borders but after the annexation of the Jordan Valley and surrounding lands, including Jerusalem, which constitutes not less than 40% of the WB,<sup>125</sup> and the establishment of a Palestinian state under Israeli protection. If Abu Mazin does not agree to resume the negotiations on Israeli terms, the alternative will then be an Israeli political, economic and media campaign that dismisses the PA as being against peace, and an Israeli drive to replace Abu Mazin by a leadership that accepts the resumption of negotiations, and an Israeli-tailored solution.

Meanwhile, some Israeli circles and individuals advocated resort to unilateral action<sup>126</sup> or partial solutions, whereby Israel will voluntarily withdraw from areas that it is willing to forgo in a final settlement. Such a course imposes the Israeli vision of a final peace settlement, while at the same time appears to be harmful to the peace settlement track and the prospect of reducing the misery and hardship imposed on the Palestinians. This probability should not be dropped, especially after fears of a unilateral disengagement from the GS had substantially retracted in that environment of Palestinian political and geographical schism.

Though absolutely pessimistic about the prospects of the negotiations during the era of Netanyahu, Abu Mazin has not yet discarded the option of negotiations. He is just crossing his fingers for an American-European-international pressure on Israel to concede the prerequisites of peace and a final settlement, which will lead



to more achievements than pursuing the other way of resuming the negotiations on Israeli dictates. Or, alternatively, to allow the current status to drift until a change will somehow take place, either by the assumption of power in Israel by a new government that accepts what the present one rejects, the twisting of the hand of Israel by much stronger international pressure, or the organization of a new elections in which Abu Mazin does not run for the presidency, thus a new leadership will bear the responsibility.

The dilemma is that nobody knows when the Palestinian elections will be held if the present environment of schism and disarray prevails. Moreover, the awaiting for new initiatives, particularly from the others is not an effective but a harmful policy, as it may lead to the reluctant acceptance of what the Palestinian leadership currently rejects, or to the complete collapse of the totality of the situation.

Under these dangerous conditions, the Palestinian are urgently required to gallantly have the initiative in their own hands, and to do all that they should and could to rescue their cause, and gain for it the necessary Arab and international support.

The below eight points,<sup>127</sup> which Abu Mazin had considered as basis for the peace process, provide a ceiling that neither he nor any other Palestinian president should supersede:

1. The United Nations resolutions on the conflict, the Road Map, the Arab peace initiative and the vision of a two-state solution based on the Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 1515, while making use of any progress achieved in Camp David, Taba and Annapolis talks.
2. The fixation of the borders should be based on the pre-fourth of June, 1967 borders, though lands may be swapped in kind or cash without affecting the water rights or the geographical contact between the WB and GS.
3. East Jerusalem is the capital of the Palestinian state, without infringing the freedom of others to the sacred lands.
4. A just settlement for the cause of the Palestinian refugees as mentioned in the Arab peace initiative, which became part of the Road Map.
5. The existence of the Jewish settlements in the lands of the Palestinian state is illegal and illegitimate.
6. Security arrangements be undertaken by a third partner along the borders between the Israeli and Palestinian states.



7. The resolution of the water issue in accordance with international law, and the right of the Palestinian state to control its water sources, air space and all that it possesses beneath and above the earth, and the strive towards regional cooperation on the water issue.
8. To close down the issue of the detainees by releasing all of them.

Some serious observations may be recorded on these points. First, the provision of the swapping of lands may be understood as an acceptance of annexing the major settlement blocks in Jerusalem to Israel in a final peace settlement. Moreover, the acceptance of a fair and “mutually agreed” settlement of the refugees’ may give the upper hand to Israel. It will never accept their return, while this is a matter of principle, an issue of natural, legal and historical right that is supported by the international legitimacy, as spelled out in resolution 194, which should be yielded to. However, notwithstanding these and other drawbacks, these eight provisions represent the minimum for the most moderate Palestinians. But they are far away from what Israel may accept, especially at this juncture when the country is ruled by the extremist and racist government of Netanyahu.

The gigantic difference between the Palestinians prerequisites<sup>128</sup> and those which the Israelis are willing to yield makes a resolution of the Palestinian issue extremely farfetched, thus the establishment of a Palestinian state is not at hand. This gap can not be bridged through negotiations only, but by a persistent strive to change the balance of power. Hence, the crystallization of a new Palestinians strategy that restores the credibility of the national Palestinian agenda, namely, to end the occupation by all suitable means, emphasis on the right of return, the establishment of the Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital and the guarantee of rights and equality to the 1948 Palestinians.

The required strategy should capitalize all the means and abilities of the Palestinian people; it gives priority to the ending of the schism and the restoration of unity on the basis of partnership in the leadership, and to be based on democracy, multiplicity, diversity and fair competition. It should guarantee equality, freedom of women and the media, the rule of law, and to refer to the people periodically in fair and free elections that are based on consensus and on a single fundamental principle, the supreme national interest.

The future of a peace settlement depends on regional and global developments. If the Iranian nuclear issue is settled, a specific scenario will emerge, but if it is not,



the door will be open for tightening the sanctions and possibly a war launched by Israel alone or jointly with the USA and some international forces against Iran. If such a war erupts, nobody can forecast its repercussions, but the region will never be the same, irrespective of the outcome of such a war.

The mere suspension of the negotiations, without crystallizing a new strategy that presents a comprehensive alternative that assembles all Palestinian-Arab sources of strength and pressure, will place the Palestinian case in a state of confusion. There will be a hesitation between verbal extremism, hasty, contradictory and vague steps, and the probability of quick and unjustified rush to the resumption of negotiations. With such a fragile political base that has no alternative to the peace track but the peace track, it will be impossible to resist the American-Israeli pressure. This makes the scenario of the resumption of negotiations viable, but only as an excuse to descend from a top of the tree, without presenting effective exits that are capable of achieving the Palestinian national agenda.

The retrogression of the Arab role in 2009 to such an extent that the Arab peace initiative was neither pursued nor withdrawn, but completely disregarded, reveals the Arab paralysis and weakness at a time when the Iranian and Turkish roles are ascending.

In spite of the return of Palestinians to the indirect peace talks, and then to direct talks with the Israelis in 2010, no substantial progress was made. A great setback for the peace process occurred, when Israel insisted that it will not renew the moratorium in the WB, which ended on 26/9/2010. The Israelis continued their building settlements despite the American pressures and incentives. In addition, while the Obama administration announced that it failed to persuade the Israelis to renew the moratorium, it called for the resumption of indirect talks where US officials would shuttle back and forth between the two sides.

As for the Palestinians who were frustrated by the stagnated peace process, the Israeli obstinacy and the US failure, they rejected to return to negotiations. These futile negotiations lack the final reference for the peace process at a time when the occupation continues to expropriate Palestinian lands and create facts on the ground. There were calls among the Palestinian leadership to seek other solutions and alternatives, such as asking the UN and the Security Council to recognize



a Palestinian state on the borders of 4/6/1967. Other threats of dissolving the PA's government escalated during October and November 2010. Although they were not serious, they certainly expressed indignation and concern among the Palestinian leadership, and were attempts to pressure politically both the Israelis and Americans.

## *Conclusion*

The internal scene in 2009 witnessed—amidst the war on GS—the 18th Knesset elections, which led to a paramount supremacy of the rightist parties, specially the Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu, while the leftist parties retracted, particularly the Labor Party.

Within the Israeli partisan levels, the failure to call Tzipi Livni, the leader of Kadima, to form the new government had its repercussions on the party's institutions and organizations. It led, during 2009, to such deep splits within its ranks that some analysts and political observers expected the party's eventual disintegration. In the same vein, the Labor Party experienced an internal revolt led by five of its members, who were dissatisfied with the orientation of its leader, Ehud Barak, whom they accused of dragging the party to a rightist government, thus losing its compass and values.

In the light of the global recession, the Israeli economy achieved in 2009 a measure of confidence, particularly since the second quarter of the year. The economy was shielded from the global downturn by the absence of prior housing or bank credit booms, high household savings rates, and the fact that investment goods and consumer durables—demand for which contracted sharply—are mostly imported from abroad. But the strength of output also owes much to the public debt reduction and structural reforms of the past decade, as well as the specific policy responses to the crisis.

On the security level, the Israeli military institutions continued during 2009 to actively implement the Tefen 2012 plan that was submitted in 2007 after the summer 2006 war on Lebanon. However, the Israeli security institutions had been bothered throughout the year 2009 by five obsessions that they focused on: the general Palestinian scene, Iran and its nuclear issue, the security dimensions of



the Obama administration's Middle East policy, the armament of what Israel calls "radical forces in the region," in an obvious reference to Hamas and Hizbullah and, finally, stability in neighboring Arab states.

With regard to the Palestinian internal scene, Israel tried to capitalize the domestic Palestinian political and geographical schism. It pursued a dual strategy that combines between "peace settlement" and "deterrence." It tried to keep the path of political settlement alive, but with a drive to impose its vision and conditions which had, however, demonstrated the insincerity of Israel to conclude a deal. Correspondingly, it tried to crush, or at least weaken, Hamas' control of GS through military means and by a suffocating siege.

In short, the peace track during 2009 was characterized by a state of stagnation that had started late in 2008. The retrogression of the Arab role prevailed to such an extent that the Arab peace initiative was neither activated nor withdrawn; in fact it was to all intents and purposes totally ignored. During 2010, frustration increased concerning the peace process. A deadlock was reached, when Israel insisted that it will not renew the moratorium in the WB, which ended on 26/9/2010; and when the US failed to halt the Israeli building of settlements, despite the American pressures and incentives.



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Arik Bender, The Need for the Support of the Majority of Knesset Members to Postpone the Elections (Hebrew), *Maariv* newspaper, 8/1/2009, <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/837/739.html>; and Dana Blander, Postponing Elections due to War (Hebrew), site of The Israel Democracy Institute, 11/1/2009, [http://www.idi.org.il/breakingnews/pages/breaking\\_the\\_news\\_83.aspx](http://www.idi.org.il/breakingnews/pages/breaking_the_news_83.aspx)
- <sup>2</sup> For the polls see *al-Hayat*, 25/1/2009.
- <sup>3</sup> *Al-Hayat*, 30/1/2009. It is pointed out here that even with the increase in the right wing supporters in Israel, a poll conducted by *Haaretz* in the beginning of November showed that 57% of the right wing have the will to conduct dialogue with Hamas, see *Haaretz*, 13/11/2009; and *Felesteen*, 14/11/2009.
- <sup>4</sup> *Al-Hayat*, 3/2/2009.
- <sup>5</sup> For more information about this topic, see site of The Israel Democracy Institute, [www.idi.org.il/Parliament/2009/Pages/2009\\_63/D/d\\_63.aspx](http://www.idi.org.il/Parliament/2009/Pages/2009_63/D/d_63.aspx)
- <sup>6</sup> Results of the Eighteenth Knesset Elections, site of The Knesset, [http://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng\\_mimshal\\_res18.htm](http://www.knesset.gov.il/description/eng/eng_mimshal_res18.htm)
- <sup>7</sup> For the 18th Knesset contradictions see the article of Amit Segal "The 18th Knesset Last Chance" (Hebrew) in *Haaretz*, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1066525.html>
- <sup>8</sup> See Oren Yiftachel, "Voting for Apartheid: The 2009 Israeli Elections," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Beirut, The Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS), vol. 38, no. 3, Spring 2009, p. 72; and see Ayman 'Awdeh, The Elections of the Knesset and the Arab Citizens: Participation, Not Voting and Boycott (Arabic), site of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (*Hadash*), [www.aljabha.org/files/moqata3a.doc](http://www.aljabha.org/files/moqata3a.doc)
- <sup>9</sup> As'ad Ghanim and Muhannad Mustafa, *al-Filastiniyyun fi Israel: Siyasat al-Aqaliyyah al-Asliyyah fi al-Dawlah al-Ithniyyah* (Palestinians in Israel: Policies of Original Minority in the Ethnic State) (Ramallah: The Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies (Madar), 2009), p. 341.
- <sup>10</sup> See Oren Yiftachel, *op. cit.*; and see Ayman 'Awdeh, *op. cit.*
- <sup>11</sup> Analysis in Hebrew on disintegration of the ideological parties, the possible withdrawal of parties from government coalition, and shortening the life of the Netanyahu's second government, The Israel Democracy Institute, 31/3/2009, [www.idi.org.il/BreakingNews/Pages/Breaking\\_the\\_News\\_101.aspx](http://www.idi.org.il/BreakingNews/Pages/Breaking_the_News_101.aspx)  
Netanyahu had asked both Kadima and the Labor parties to join his government in order to prevent its disintegration, while having new elections will not change the political map, *al-Hayat*, 21/2/2009.
- <sup>12</sup> *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper, 1/4/2009, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3695323,00.html>
- <sup>13</sup> Policy Guidelines of 32nd Government of Israel, site of Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31/3/2009, [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Current+Government+of+Israel/Policy\\_guidelines\\_of\\_32nd\\_Israeli\\_government\\_2\\_April\\_2009.htm](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Current+Government+of+Israel/Policy_guidelines_of_32nd_Israeli_government_2_April_2009.htm)
- <sup>14</sup> The statements of the Prime Minister Netanyahu in the minutes of the sitting of the Knesset Plenum, 31/3/2009, <http://www.knesset.gov.il/plenum.data/01122709.doc>
- <sup>15</sup> See The Jewish Identity of Israel: Consequences and Implications, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, Strategic Assessment no. 14, Beirut, July 2009, <http://www.alzaytouna.net/arabic/?c=1530&a=94364>
- <sup>16</sup> *Alrai*, Amman, 2/4/2009.
- <sup>17</sup> *Alghad*, 16/5/2009.



- <sup>18</sup> For the poll and the views of politicians in the speech of Netanyahu, see *Haaretz*, from the date of 15/6/2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasite/spages/1093059.html>
- <sup>19</sup> Attila Somfalvi, Mofaz Demands Primaries in Kadima, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 24/12/2009, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3824579,00.html>
- <sup>20</sup> *Alghad*, 20/10/2009.
- <sup>21</sup> Pines-Paz had submitted his resignation from the membership of the Knesset, accusing the Labor Party, led by Ehud Barak, that it gave up its track and its values, and that he granted Lieberman and Netanyahu legitimacy, *Arabs 48*, 7/1/2010, <http://www.arabs48.com/display.x?cid=6&sid=6&id=68002>
- <sup>22</sup> Mazuz was discussing the role of the law enforcement system in setting behavioral norms for public officials. He argued that this system should not have been the primary enforcer of norms; rather, he said, a properly functioning society should have non-legal ways of enforcing norms, such as public pressure. This statement certifies the existence of various forms of corruption, whether within the government or among the Israeli politicians. See *Haaretz*, 1/6/2009, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1089738.html>  
A poll conducted by Sapir College confirmed that Lieberman is the most corrupt in Israel, [http://college.sapir.ac.il/sapir/kenesderot/kenes2009/madad\\_hosen\\_2009.pdf](http://college.sapir.ac.il/sapir/kenesderot/kenes2009/madad_hosen_2009.pdf)
- <sup>23</sup> *Haaretz*, 5/4/2009; site of Arutz Sheva-Israeli National News, 17/6/2009, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/132432>
- <sup>24</sup> The minister Eli Yishai was classified as the second most corrupt politician in Israel, where Minister Avigdor Lieberman was the considered the first. This classification is based on the mentioned before poll that was conducted by Sapir College and that also analyzes the views of respondents and their opinions, *Maariv*, 17/11/2009, <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/967/780.html?hp=1&loc=1&tmp=4242>
- <sup>25</sup> Site of The Israel Democracy Institute conducted a thorough study on the administrative corruption in Israel since it was established until year 2006, [http://www.idi.org.il/RESEARCHANDPROGRAMS/CORRUPTION\\_IN\\_ISRAEL/Pages/Research\\_and\\_Programs\\_Corruption\\_Israel\\_main.aspx](http://www.idi.org.il/RESEARCHANDPROGRAMS/CORRUPTION_IN_ISRAEL/Pages/Research_and_Programs_Corruption_Israel_main.aspx)
- <sup>26</sup> The State Control Committee in the Knesset had discussions concerning this issue on 26/10/2009, see minutes of the session, <http://www.knesset.gov.il/protocols/data/rtf/bikoret/2009-10-26.rtf>
- <sup>27</sup> You can review the large number of cases revealed by the Movement for Quality Government in Israel and those reached its offices, in addition to the large number of inquiries to certain ministers, *Maariv*, 17/11/2009, <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/967/780.html?hp=1&loc=1&tmp=4242>
- <sup>28</sup> *Assafir*, 13/10/2009.
- <sup>29</sup> Netanyahu Considered The Goldstone Report as a Field Court-Martial to Israel (Hebrew), *Haaretz*, 16/9/2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasite/spages/1115061.html>
- <sup>30</sup> The Goldstone Report: Prospects and Implications, al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, Strategic Assessment no. 19, Beirut, 10/1/2010, <http://www.alzaytouna.net/arabic/?c=1530&a=109177>
- <sup>31</sup> Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, Human Rights Council, 12th session, General Assembly, UN, 25/9/2009.
- <sup>32</sup> The army was asked to investigate some cases of artillery shelling into Gaza. Pending the complete report, an interim military report presented some phase recommendations, which stated that the Israeli army acted in a realistic and reasonable way, see the site of News Israel, <http://www.news-israel.net/Article.asp?Code=19187>





- <sup>33</sup> For further details on this law and other discriminatory legislations during 2009, see the issues of *Political Monitoring Report* by Mtanes Shihadeh of the Arab Center for Applied Social Research (Mada al-Carmel), <http://www.mada-research.org/?LanguageId=2&System=Category&MenuId=31&PMenuId=20&MenuTemplateId=1&CategoryId=27>
- <sup>34</sup> Jack Khoury and Tomer Zarchin, Ministers Okay Bill Banning Nakba Day, *Haaretz*, 25/5/2009; and see Naama Talmor and Nir Yahav, Sa'ar Decided: Arabs will no Longer Learn about the Nakba (Hebrew), site of Walla news, 22/7/2009, <http://www.news.walla.co.il/?w=1/1524019>
- <sup>35</sup> According to the annual report of The Association for Civil Rights in Israel, 10/12/2009, see <http://www.acri.org.il/pdf/tmunat2009arabcitizens.pdf>
- <sup>36</sup> To expand on the positions of the Arab Palestinian organizations and the societies of human and citizen rights in Israel on the issue of Hebraizing road signs, see the letter of Attorney Auni Banna of The Association for Civil Rights in Israel to the Israeli Minister of Transportation, 16/7/2009, <http://www.acri.org.il/pdf/shilut160709.pdf>
- <sup>37</sup> About the amendment of the citizenship act in Israel see the text of the draft which was rejected by the Knesset, site of The Knesset, <http://www.knesset.gov.il/privatelaw/data/18/1365.rtf>
- <sup>38</sup> The Declaration stated that the state of Israel will be: "based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations." At the site of Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Guide+to+the+Peace+Process/Declaration+of+Establishment+of+State+of+Israel.htm>
- <sup>39</sup> As'ad Ghanim and Muhannad Mustafa, *op. cit.*, p. 336.
- <sup>40</sup> See the press release of the Division of Communications and Media Relations at the University of Haifa concerning the poll, 18/5/2009, <http://newmedia-eng.haifa.ac.il/index.php?m=200905&paged=2>; and see also the analysis of the results by specialists and political commentators, *Haaretz*, 18/5/2009, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/objects/pages/Article.jhtml?itemNo=430651>
- <sup>41</sup> Muhannad Mustafa, "Democratization, Politicization of the Local Arab Leadership," in As'ad Ghanim and Faisal 'Azaizah, *al-Hukum al-Mahalli al-'Arabi ma' Bidayat al-Qarn al-21: al-Maham wa al-Tahaddiyat* (The Arab Local Governance at the Beginning of the 21st Century: The Tasks and Challenges) (Galilee: Ibn Khaldun-The Arab Association for Research and Development, 2008), pp. 127-152.
- <sup>42</sup> *Alghad*, 31/12/2009, <http://www.alghad.com/?news=473295>
- <sup>43</sup> See Chaim Levinson, West Bank Settlement Growth Slows as Freeze Starts to Bite, *Haaretz*, 2/2/2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1146905.html>  
It should be noted that the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) estimated the number of settlers in the West Bank in 2008 by 414 thousand settlers, where 283 thousands live in Jerusalem Governorate, see [http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/\\_pcbs/Settlements/tab12.htm](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/Settlements/tab12.htm)  
This figure also contradicts a report by The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories - B'Tselem, which estimates the number of Israeli settlers at the end of 2008 by 479,500 settlers.
- <sup>44</sup> Site of Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), [http://www1.cbs.gov.il/www/yarhon/b1\\_e.htm](http://www1.cbs.gov.il/www/yarhon/b1_e.htm)
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- <sup>46</sup> See Chaim Levinson, *Haaretz*, 2/2/2010.
- <sup>47</sup> Site of Jewish Agency for Israel, 28/12/2009, <http://www.jewishagency.org/JewishAgency/English/About/Press+Room/Press+Releases/2009/dec28.htm>



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- <sup>54</sup> For the years 2003–2007, see Bank of Israel Annual Report - 2008, Chapter 1: The Economy and Economic Policy, site of Bank of Israel, 19/4/2009, [http://www.bankisrael.gov.il/deptdata/mehkar/doch08/eng/pe\\_1.pdf](http://www.bankisrael.gov.il/deptdata/mehkar/doch08/eng/pe_1.pdf)  
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<sup>126</sup> Antoine Shalhath, *Israeli Elites, Arabs* 48, 4–18/1/2010.

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## 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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