

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2010/11



Edited By

Dr. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh



Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2010/11



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The Palestinian Strategic Report 2010/11

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	5
List of Tables	11
List of Abbreviations	15
List of Contributors	17
Introduction	25

Chapter One: The Internal Palestinian Scene

Introduction	29
First: The Caretaker Government in Ramallah:	29
1. Postponement of Municipal Elections	30
2. Steps Towards Independence	31
3. The Palestinian State and the Refugees	32
4. The Government, the PLO and Fatah	33
5. The Government and the Resistance	34
6. Measures Against Religiosity	36
Second: The Caretaker Government in the GS	37
Third: Dialogue and Putting the Palestinian Political House in Order	41
Fourth: The PLO and the Presidency of the PA:	45
1. Unchanged Structure and Program	45
2. A Crisis with the PFLP	46
3. Threatening to Resign	47
4. The Corruption Scandal	48
Fifth: The Factions and Palestinian Forces	50
Sixth: Security Coordination	53
Seventh: The Resistance.. Pursuit and Achievement	55
Conclusion	57

Chapter Two: The Israeli-Palestinian Scene

Introduction	65
First: The Israeli Internal Political Scene:	65
1. The Fragility of the Israeli Governing Coalition	66
2. Corruption, Criminality and Sexual Harassment	72



3. The Impact of the Stalled Negotiations with the Palestinians on Israeli Politics ..73	73
4. The Israeli Assault on the Freedom Flotilla and Its Repercussions75	75
5. Discriminatory Manifestations in Israel76	76
6. The Rampant Carmel Blaze and Its Repercussions80	80
7. Boycott of the Settlements80	80
8. Leakage of Confidential Military Documents81	81
Second: The Most Prominent Demographic, Economic and Military Indicators: ..82	82
1. Demographic Indicators82	82
2. Economic Indicators86	86
3. Military Indicators94	94
Third: Aggression and Resistance:101	101
1. The Killed and Wounded101	101
2. Prisoners and Detainees102	102
Fourth: The Israeli Position Towards the Domestic Palestinian Situation105	105
Fifth: The Path of the Political Settlement107	107
Conclusion124	124

Chapter Three: The Palestinian Issue and the Arab World

Introduction137	137
First: The Stances of the League of Arab States and the Arab Summit:138	138
1. The Stance on the Peace Settlement138	138
2. The Stance on the Inter-Palestinian Reconciliation140	140
3. The Stance on Jerusalem141	141
4. The Stance on Easing the GS Siege142	142
5. The Stance on the Assassination of al-Mabhuh144	144
Second: The Stances and Roles of Some Key Countries:145	145
1. Egypt145	145
2. Jordan153	153
3. Syria158	158
4. Lebanon162	162
5. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia168	168
6. The Gulf Countries170	170
Third: Developments of Normalization171	171
Fourth: The Arab Popular Stance177	177
Conclusion179	179

Chapter Four: The Palestinian Issue and the Muslim World

Introduction	187
First: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation	187
Second: Turkey	190
Third: Iran	205
Fourth: Malaysia	214
Fifth: Indonesia	216
Sixth: Pakistan	218
Seventh: Trade Exchange	219
Conclusion	221

Chapter Five: The Palestinian Issue and the International Situation

Introduction	231
First: The Quartet	232
Second: The United States of America	235
Third: The European Union	244
Fourth: Russia	251
Fifth: China	254
Sixth: Japan	256
Seventh: International Organizations:	256
1. The United Nations	256
2. Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations	263
Eighth: International Public Opinion	264
Conclusion	268

Chapter Six: The Land and the Holy Sites

Introduction	279
First: Islamic and Christian Holy Sites:	279
1. <i>Al-Aqsa</i> Mosque	280
2. Jerusalem's Islamic Holy Sites	287
3. Jerusalem's Christian Holy Sites	287
4. Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in the Rest of Historic Palestine	289
Second: The Population Under Occupation:	291
1. The Demographic Battle's Reality	292
2. Attempts to Expel the Palestinians	295
3. Attempt to Promote Jerusalem as a Jewish Residential Center	297



Third: The Settlement and Judaization Process in Jerusalem:	297
1. Taking over Palestinian Neighborhoods	298
2. Settlement Expansion in Jerusalem	301
Fourth: The Struggle over Jerusalem's Cultural Identity:	305
1. Judaizing Names and Landmarks	305
2. The Jewish Heritage List	305
3. The Project to Renovate the Walls and Gates of Jerusalem's Old City	305
Fifth: Israeli Settlement Expansion	306
Sixth: Palestinian House Demolitions	314
Seventh: Confiscation and Destruction of Palestinian Agricultural Lands	315
Eighth: Uprooting Palestinian Trees	315
Ninth: The Separation Wall	316
Tenth: The Water Situation	317
Conclusion	319

Chapter Seven: The Palestinian Demographic Indicators

Introduction	331
First: The Palestinian Population Worldwide	331
Second: The Demographic Characteristics of Palestinians:	334
1. The WB and GS	334
2. The Palestinian Territories Occupied in 1948 (Israel)	343
3. Jordan	343
4. Syria	344
5. Lebanon	345
6. General Comparisons Among Palestinians	347
Third: The Palestinian Refugees	349
Fourth: Demographic Growth Trends	353
Fifth: Israeli Measures to Influence the Palestinian Demographics	354
Sixth: The Palestinian Emigration and Brain Drain:	356
1. Emigration	356
2. Return Migration	357
Seventh: The Palestinians Outside Palestine and the Right of Return	357
Conclusion	361

Chapter Eight: The Economic Situation in the WB and GS

Introduction	367
First: Indicators of Economic Development:	367
1. GDP Growth	367
2. The GDP per Capita Growth	374
3. Consumption, Saving and Investment Indicators	378
4. Public Debt	379
Second: The PA's General Budget (Ramallah):	380
1. Expenditures	381
2. Public Revenues	383
3. General Budget Deficit	386
Third: The Budget of the Caretaker Government in GS	387
Fourth: Work and Unemployment:	390
1. Importance of the Human Element	390
2. Man Power, Labor Force and Employed Persons	390
3. Unemployment	392
4. Child Labor	393
5. Investment Growth and Employment Opportunities	393
Fifth: Industrial and Agricultural Activity:	394
1. Industrial Activity	394
2. Agricultural Activity	397
3. The Private Sector and Its Role in Enhancing Industrial and Agricultural Activities	399
Sixth: Economic Ties with Israel:	401
1. Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements	401
2. Paris Protocol	402
3. The Israeli Control over the Crossings	402
4. Consolidation of External Trade Relations with Israel	403
Seventh: Foreign Aid and Its Orientations:	406
1. Funds of Donor Countries	406
2. International Aid Organizations	410
3. Humanitarian Aid Convoys	411
4. Civil Society Organizations	412



Eighth: The PA and Government Management of the Economic Situation:	413
1. The Palestinian Schism	413
2. Annual General Budget	413
3. Quality and Price Control on Goods	413
4. No Substitute for Palestinians Working in Israel and the WB Settlements ..	414
5. The Anti-Corruption Commission	415
Ninth: The Siege and the Impact of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict on the Economic Situation:	415
1. Severe Economic and Trade Restrictions on Hebron	415
2. The GS Embargo Despite the Partial Easing of the Siege	416
3. Limiting the GS Crossings to One	416
4. Access-Restricted Areas in GS	416
5. Adverse Effects of the Embargo on GS Living Conditions	417
6. Interruption and Irregularity of Electricity Services	418
Conclusion	418
Index	425

List of Tables

Table 1/2: Population of Israel 2004–2010	82
Table 2/2: Numbers of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2010	84
Table 3/2: World Jewish Population by Country at the Beginning of 2010	85
Table 4/2: Israeli Gross Domestic Product 2003–2010	86
Table 5/2: Israeli GDP per Capita 2003–2010	87
Table 6/2: Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2007–2010	88
Table 7/2: Israeli Exports by Commodity Group 2009–2010	89
Table 8/2: Israeli Imports by Commodity Group 2009–2010	89
Table 9/2: Israeli Exports and Imports with Selected Countries 2007–2010	91
Table 10/2: American Aid to Israel 1949–2010	93
Table 11/2: Israeli Military Consumption 2003–2010	99
Table 12/2: The Killed and Wounded Among Palestinians and Israelis 2006–2010 ...	101
Table 13/2: Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails 2010–2011	103
Table 14/2: Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails According to Geographic Locations by the End of 2010	104
Table 1/3: Trade Exchange Between Jordan and Israel According to Jordanian and Israeli Statistics 2009–2010	172
Table 2/3: Israeli Exports and Imports with Some Arab Countries 2007–2010	175
Table 1/4: Trade Exchange Between Turkey and Israel According to Turkish and Israeli Statistics 2009–2010	198
Table 2/4: Israeli Trade with a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries 2007–2010	220
Table 1/6: Excavations Under <i>al-Aqsa</i> Mosque and in Its Periphery, 21/8/2010 ...	281
Table 2/6: The Rise in the Number of Excavations Under <i>al-Aqsa</i> Mosque and in Its Periphery, 21/8/2009–21/8/2010	282
Table 3/6: Most Notable Attacks on the Holy Sites in the 1948 Occupied Territories 2010	289
Table 4/6: Most Notable Attacks on the Holy Sites in the WB 2010	290
Table 5/6: Number of Jerusalem's Residents 2008–2009	292
Table 6/6: Number of the Old City's Residents 2005–2008	294
Table 7/6: Demolished Houses in Jerusalem 2010	296



Table 8/6: Expansions Planned for After the End of the “Settlement Freeze” Period	304
Table 9/6: Number of Buildings Added to Israeli Settlements in WB During 2010	308
Table 10/6: Expansion in the Israeli Settlements Located East and West of the Separation Wall 2010	311
Table 11/6: Group of Knesset Members and the Names of the Settlements in Which They Reside	313
Table 12/6: Israeli Violations in the WB, Including Jerusalem, During 2010, and on a Monthly Basis	316
Table 1/7: Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate According to Their Place of Residence at the End of 2010	332
Table 2/7: Palestinian Refugees Worldwide Population Estimates of 2010	333
Table 3/7: Comparing the Palestinian Total and Refugee Population in the WB and GS 2010	335
Table 4/7: Estimated Population Count by Governorate, 2007 & 2010	339
Table 5/7: Selected Demographic Indicators of Palestinians by Residence	347
Table 6/7: UNRWA-RPRs, 2000 & 2010	350
Table 7/7: UNRWA-RPRs, Their Births and Families by Region	351
Table 8/7: Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2010–2020	353
Table 1/8: Quarterly and Annual GDP Growth in the WB and GS 2009–2010	368
Table 2/8: GDP in the WB and GS 1999–2010	369
Table 3/8: Comparing the Israeli and Palestinian GDP 2006–2010	370
Table 4/8: Quarterly GDP Growth in the WB and GS 2010	371
Table 5/8: GNI and GNDI 2008–2010	373
Table 6/8: Quarterly Evolution of GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 2009–2010	374
Table 7/8: Quarterly Evolution of GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 2010	376
Table 8/8: GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 1999–2010	377
Table 9/8: Comparing the Israeli and Palestinian GDP per Capita 2006–2010	378
Table 10/8: Final Consumption, GCF and Savings in the WB and GS 2008–2010	379
Table 11/8: Total Public Debt Evolution 2000–2010	380

Table 12/8: Evolution of the PA Expenditures 2008–2013	382
Table 13/8: Evolution of the PA Revenues 2008–2013	384
Table 14/8: Evolution of the PA Budget Deficits 2008–2013	386
Table 15/8: Fiscal Operations of the Caretaker Government in GS 2010	388
Table 16/8: Actual Expenditures of a Number of Sectors of the Caretaker Government in GS 2010	389
Table 17/8: Man Power, Labor Force and Employed Persons in the WB and GS 2009–2010	391
Table 18/8: Quarterly Evolution of Unemployment in the WB and GS 2008–2010	392
Table 19/8: Quarterly Evolution of GDP Growth of Industrial Activity in the WB and GS 2009–2010	394
Table 20/8: Evolution of GDP by Industrial Activity in the WB and GS for Selected Years	396
Table 21/8: Quarterly Evolution of Agriculture GDP in the WB and GS 2009–2010	397
Table 22/8: Evolution of Agriculture GDP and its Percentage of total GDP in the WB and GS 1999–2010	398
Table 23/8: Quarterly Direct Credit Facilities 2010	400
Table 24/8: Palestinian Foreign Trade, Selected Years	403
Table 25/8: Imports, Exports and Trade Transaction in the WB and GS by Selected Countries of Origin and Destination 2008–2009	404
Table 26/8: Evolution of External Budgetary Support and Development Financing 2008–2013	407
Table 27/8: Sources of External Financing for the PA 2009–2010.....	409

List of Abbreviations

AIPAC	The American Israel Public Affairs Committee
AOHR	Arab Organisation for Human Rights
BCM	Billion Cubic Meters
CAEC	Committees on Arms Export Controls
CAP	Consolidated Appeal Process
CBR	Crude Birth Rate
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CDR	Crude Death Rate
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
EC	European Commission
ECESG	European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza
EU	European Union
FRC	Fatah Revolutionary Council
FY	Fiscal Year
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GCF	Gross Capital Formation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNDI	Gross National Disposable Income
GNI	Gross National Income
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GS	Gaza Strip
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAI	Israel Aerospace Industries
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INB	Islamic National Bank
ISA	Israel Security Agency (Shabak)
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MCM	Million Cubic Meters
MK	Member of the Knesset



NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA-oPt	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian territory
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PEGASE	Palestino-Européen de Gestion et d'Aide Socio-Economique
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command
PIJ	Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PM	Prime Minister
PMA	Palestine Monetary Authority
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PNP	Palestinian National Plan
PPP	Palestinian People's Party
PWA	Palestinian Water Authority
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US/ USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	West Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Introduction

The year 2010 marks the sixth year for *The Palestinian Strategic Report*. For researchers, specialists and those who are interested in the Palestinian issue, it has become an essential reference on the Palestinian studies. It offers an analytical objective coverage of various events in the Palestinian arena, providing data, surveys and precise updated figures.

The uniqueness and credibility of the *Report* made it one of the most important Palestinian references worldwide. It became a must for specialists, experts academicians, who are interested in the Palestinian issue; besides the libraries of universities and research centers.

The internal Palestinian situation did not make any substantial progress during 2010. However, the reconciliation agreement was signed among the Palestinian factions in May 2011. Nonetheless, no real changes were made during the rest of the year; as the peace process reached a stalemate in 2010–2011, while the Israeli side insisted on continuing construction and expanding settlements in the West Bank.

2011 was the year of the “Arab Spring” in the Arab world. Several Arab countries witnessed popular uprisings demanding either genuine reforms or changing the political system. They achieved different levels of success in some countries, while other countries of the region are still boiling, especially in Syria. A new map is being formed in the Arab world, which will have a tremendous impact on the Palestinian issue. Hence, it is still early to specify the expected changes. Yet, the rise of the Islamists and the establishment of political systems that reflect the will of the people, may lead to more supportive policies towards the Palestinian issue and more independence in the process of decision making apart from the American and western pressure.

This *Report* covers 2010 and almost the first three months of 2011. So, many events which occurred in the rest of 2011, related to the Palestinian issue and the impact of the “Arab Spring,” will be discussed thoroughly in *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12*.



As for the English version, much effort was done, not only to give the right and clear meaning, but also to bring the exact quotations from their English original, besides making sure of using the right terminology for names, places and organizations.

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2010/11 was written by 14 professors and specialized experts. Al-Zaytouna consultants played an important role in evaluating, developing, and refereeing the chapters of the *Report*. Special thanks should go to al-Zaytouna Arabic and English assistant editors and the Archive Department team who played a vital role in preparing the *Report* and putting it into shape. Deepest gratitude is extended to our wonderful team of translators. Special thanks should go to Mr. Tom Charles, whose valuable linguistic revision made the text more comprehensible to native English speakers.

Finally, we thank everyone who encouraged and supported this *Report*. We are always open to advice, guidance, and constructive criticism.

**The Editor,
Dr. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh**

Chapter One

The Internal Palestinian Scene

The Internal Palestinian Scene

Introduction

The year 2010 was a year of stalemate in the internal Palestinian political scene. It continued to be dominated by two completely different political visions, each dominating a specific geographical domain. Hamas and Fatah failed to conclude a deal on security arrangements, thus hampering national reconciliation efforts. As a consequence municipal, legislative and presidential elections were postponed, and no effort was exerted to restructure the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority (PA) continued security coordination with Israel in the West Bank (WB), which reached unprecedented levels. Hamas continued to govern the Gaza Strip (GS).

The unified national project was conspicuously absent in the Palestinian arena, with the political and geographic schism weakening the response to Israeli policies. Israeli plans include building settlements, attempts to deny the right of return, targeting the resistance and preventing it from realizing national goals. However, other developments in the Arab world had direct impacts on the Palestinian arena, where on 3/5/2011 Hamas and Fatah signed an Egyptian-sponsored reconciliation agreement.¹ A ceremony on this occasion was held on 4/5/2011 in Cairo, with the participation of Mahmud ‘Abbas (Abu Mazin), Khalid Mish‘al and other leaders of the Palestinian parties.

First: The Caretaker Government in Ramallah

Prime Minister (PM) Salam Fayyad’s government continued in office notwithstanding its dismissal as illegitimate by resistance factions, and the controversy over its structure within Fatah. It has succeeded in weakening the security and ability of Palestinian resistance in the WB. Fayyad’s office committed to “employing all of the government’s energies and available resources, most especially the capacities of the Palestinian people, to complete the process of building institutions of the independent State of Palestine in order to establish a de facto state apparatus”² by the end of 2011.



No fundamental change took place in the structure and program of the government, with Fatah unable to attain through the Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas its wish for greater representation in the government because the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) remained in abeyance. Moreover, the failure of national reconciliation efforts blocked the formation of a government of national unity that could change the agenda of the government. The prevailing agenda discarded armed resistance and focused on security cooperation with Israel. In addition to building institutions, it committed itself to achieving an economic recovery primarily based on foreign donations and support.

1. Postponement of Municipal Elections

On February 7th, Fayyad’s government declared that it would initiate implementation of the necessary measures to conduct the municipal elections on 17/7/2010. But Hamas and the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (PIJ) argued that in the absence of a Palestinian consensus any election would consolidate the schism,³ and Hamas openly declared that it would not allow elections to be conducted in GS nor participate in the WB. Ziad al-Zaza, the minister of local governance in the caretaker government, said that all decisions taken by the government of Ramallah are illegitimate, and added, “Hamas will not participate in the local elections while the incursions and arrests are continuing and the elected members of the councils are sidelined.”⁴ As a result of this rejection, and in accordance with the advice of the Palestinian elections committee, Fayyad’s government decided on April 25th not to hold elections in the GS.⁵ On June 10th, Khalid al-Qawasmeh, the PA’s minister of local governance, declared the postponement of the elections in all Palestinian territories without fixing a new date for them. He said that this decision was based on Arab, regional and international advice to give a chance for national reconciliation and the lifting of the siege on GS.⁶ Many PLO factions, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Palestinian People’s Party (PPP), and the secretary-general of the Palestinian National Initiative, condemned this decision.⁷

2. Steps Towards Independence

Meanwhile, the government of Salam Fayyad continued its 2009 program of achieving a Palestinian state by 2011. The program's stated aim was to "end the occupation and establish the State of Palestine on the June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital." Thus, it sought to complement "the PLO's endeavors at the regional and international levels." It aimed also "to complete the process of institution-building throughout the homeland and support peaceful popular resistance against the occupation."⁸

Each element of Fayyad's plan and its impact on the ground is described in more detail below:

a. Gradual Building of the State's Institutions in the WB

Prime Minister Salam Fayyad announced the second part of his plan to establish a state, called Homestretch to Freedom. It contains the measures and priorities to be undertaken in the second year of the plan. It also "aims to complete the process of institution-building throughout the homeland and support peaceful popular resistance against the occupation." It seeks "to consolidate state institutions, founded on the principles of integrity, transparency, separation of powers and provision of safety and security to citizens." It envisions a state in which "all citizens will enjoy freedom, justice and equality in a democratic political system based on the principles of pluralism, separation of powers, peaceful transfer of power and respect for human rights." The plan includes ambitious and vital projects, such as the establishment of the Palestinian Central Bank and establishing a Palestinian currency and the issuing of deposit bonds.

The plan added that the government "develop and approve the Law on the Compulsory Civil Service of Youth" and will review "national legislation and policies on labor and employment to ensure equal opportunities."⁹

b. Support of Peaceful Popular Resistance Through Peaceful Marches

This drive focused on a campaign to resist Israeli annexation of certain land in the WB. During the opening session of the fifth Bil'in International Conference on the Popular Struggle in Ramallah, attended by Robert Serry, the United Nations (UN) Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, as well as Arab and international ambassadors, Fayyad emphasized that various strategies, based around peaceful popular resistance, should complement each other to establish the state of Palestine on the 4/6/1967 borders.¹⁰



c. Boycotting Israeli Settlement Agricultural Products

The PA published a black list of 200 products produced in the Israeli settlements of the WB, and urged the Palestinians to boycott them.¹¹ At the end of a week-long drive “to clean” the Palestinian market of WB settlement products, Fayyad handed out leaflets bearing the names and pictures of 500 blacklisted items, ranging from peanuts to door frames.

Approximately three thousand volunteers have visited more than 255 thousand Palestinian homes all over the WB to help householders differentiate between WB settlement products, and the “Israeli” products that the campaign does not target. Fayyad stated that this home-to-home campaign “depends in the first place on the awareness of the citizen.”¹²

Subsequently, Fayyad launched a new campaign called “Shop-to-Shop” which is a part of a months-old boycott door-to-door campaign aimed at “cleansing” WB settlement products. The volunteers, mostly university students, planned to visit more than 66 thousand shops across the WB to inspect them for WB settlement products.¹³

Fayyad also participated personally in the 2010 olive harvest, focusing on two villages; Iraq Burin in southern Nablus and Deir al-Ghusun north of Tulkarem, which were subjected to continuous attacks by Jewish settlers. During the campaign, Fayyad emphasized that the olive tree is a symbol of the Palestinians’ commitment to their land, and that the smallest olive tree is more rooted than the settlements and walls.¹⁴

Even a cursory look at the policies of Fayyad’s government, including the strategy of peaceful resistance of Israel, reveals that they do not go beyond the ceiling of the occupation itself. In fact, the Fayyad government has been an ideal security reality for the Israelis, undertaking all the services and civil responsibilities required under the Geneva Protocols. Hence, the sarcastic dubbing the occupation as “five star occupation” by many of its victims.

3. The Palestinian State and the Refugees

On 2/4/2010, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* asked PM Fayyad if his plan to establish a Palestinian state in 2011 takes into consideration the need to absorb refugees. He answered that the “Palestinians would have the right to reside within the State of Palestine.”¹⁵

These declarations provoked condemnation from various Palestinian factions. ‘Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas’ political bureau, dismissed Fayyad’s statements as compatible with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu’s project of ending resistance by tempting the Palestinian people with power and money. Al-Rishq also denounced Fayyad’s Passover greetings to the Israelis, and accused him of “not belonging to the Palestinian people...he is merely selling them illusions.” He predicted that the Palestinian people will discard Fayyad, and never accept “national degradation,” asking Fatah to distance itself from him.¹⁶

For its part, the PFLP considered that Fayyad had ignored historical facts and bypassed long-established Palestinian national goals and priorities. These priorities include the Palestinian right of return to usurped land in accordance with the UN resolution 194, and the unconditional release of all detainees being held as prisoners of war. Moreover, the PFLP claims Fayyad has propagated rosy illusions to a reality that is characterized by criminality, bitterness and pain, and by escalating atrocities against the Palestinian people, land and nation.¹⁷

Khalid al-Batsh, a leader of PIJ, responded to Fayyad’s statement by saying that the prime minister has not been chosen by the Palestinian people to speak about their non-negotiable right of return. He added that any solution that does not guarantee the return of the refugees to the Palestinian territories that were occupied by Israel in 1948, does not represent the solution wanted by the Palestinian people, and is therefore illegitimate and must be rejected.¹⁸

4. The Government, the PLO and Fatah

The relationship between Fayyad and the PLO faced a barrage of criticism as a result of the presumed encroachment of the former on the functions of the latter. This compelled Fayyad to emphasize that the declaration of the Palestinian state is the prerogative of the PLO, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and in cooperation with the international community.¹⁹ He also stressed that the PLO is the “patron” of all aspects of the Palestinian issue, and not merely the political dimension.²⁰

The major dispute was between Fayyad’s government and Fatah, where the latter was not afforded its appropriate share of cabinet positions. Fatah urged the president of the PA to introduce changes in the government’s structure. Moreover, Fatah’s bloc in the suspended PLC made critical remarks on the government’s performance (Fatah had 11 ministers out of 22) and asked Fayyad to call for a special session to discuss their concerns.



The Fatah bloc in the PLC claimed that it prepared a concept paper on the activation of the functions and supervisory role of the members of the parliament (MPs), during the suspension of the PLC, including the intensification of the work of parliamentary groups, particularly the consolidation of their supervisory role.²¹

The final communiqué of the third meeting of Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) recommended that the President undertakes a cabinet reshuffle in accordance with his constitutional power, without going in to specific details of the extent of this reshuffle. Some high level Fatah leaders claimed that the FRC wanted all major ministries, such as the interior, finance and foreign affairs, to be allocated to members of Fatah instead of being the preserve of close associates of Fayyad. Countering this, some of Fayyad's top advisors maintained that he had no objection to Fatah members occupying any ministry position, except the Ministry of Finance, which he had reserved exclusively for himself.²²

From this political wrangling, all that was publicly declared was that Fatah was demanding sovereignty over ministries, which was not realized in 2011. Some sources maintained that 'Abbas and Fayyad were in agreement on a reshuffle that includes seven ministries only, but without specifying a time frame for it.²³

5. The Government and the Resistance

As a part of its obligations under treaties concluded with Israel, the government in the WB maintained its security cooperation and coordination with Israel, considering armed resistance harmful to the Palestinian national project.

Within this framework, PM Fayyad condemned the attack in the south of Hebron in which an Israeli soldier was killed and three others wounded. Fayyad warned against the dangers of being dragged into a cycle of violence which would prove to be harmful to national interests and serve the Israeli settlement project. He called for defending peaceful popular resistance against the Israeli settlement building and occupation policies. This resistance coupled with the building of state's institutions, constitute the backbone of the political struggle that the PLO leads.²⁴ But Fayyad did not relate accelerating Israeli settlement building activity to the security cooperation which had, in fact, led to the expansion of the Israeli settlement building and the Judiazation of Jerusalem much more than during any previous period.

Fayyad also condemned the second Hebron attack at the end of August, in which four Israeli settlers were killed. He repeated the same caution over armed resistance, and rejected, failing to show an understanding of the local factors and the misery and degradation caused by the Israeli occupation of Hebron. He considered alternative views to his own to be empty slogans contradictory to Palestinian interests.²⁵

In other statements, Fayyad said that there was no security problem resulting from Hamas' opposition in the WB as long as this is done within the law, even if it propagated "defamation and excesses." But he added the caveat that "any leniency on the part of the PA in confronting whoever tries to do what he wants in the time and manner he opts for will have serious repercussions."²⁶

In an unprecedented question and answer session organized by The Israel Project at a private home in Manhattan, attended by 65 businesses, religious and community leaders, Fayyad outlined his vision. He said that violence "has to be dealt out of the equation permanently, regardless of what happens in the peace process." Security, he said, was a vital interest both for Israelis and Palestinians and those who used violence to advance their agendas needed to be prosecuted and punished through due process.

Asked about continuing incitement in the West Bank against Israel and Jews in school text books and in the media, Fayyad said his government was committed to an "incitement-free environment." and he added, "I don't think one can ever say that we have done everything that could possibly be done ... but we are trying." Fayyad also said, "Incitement is a problem and we see it as such." He stressed that using places of worship to whip up hatred was particularly inadmissible.²⁷

On 16/9/2010, a report on Fayyad was issued by analyst Nathan Thrall entitled "Our Man in Palestine". The author was told by David Welch, a former United States of America (US/ USA) assistant secretary of state for near eastern affairs who helped oversee the Dayton mission until December 2008, that in 'Abbas's appointment of an emergency cabinet led by Salam Fayyad, the US felt it had "the best Palestinian Authority government in history." The report considered Fayyad a prime minister who "oversees a government that in a recent Global Integrity Index tied with Iraq as the sixth most corrupt in the world."²⁸

Israeli Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intelligence and Atomic Energy, Dan Meridor, revealed that only one leader of the entire Palestinian leadership enjoys

the respect of the Israeli political leadership, namely Salam Fayyad, whom President Shimon Peres described as “the Palestinians first Ben-Gurionist.” Meridor opined that it is important to cooperate with Fayyad and help him in his efforts to establish a Palestinian state within two years in full coordination with Israel.²⁹

6. Measures Against Religiosity

Within the drive against the resistance and its infrastructure, the PA Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs took a number of measures. It prohibited a number of Friday preachers from delivering speeches in mosques. It also ordered the mosques to lower the volume of its loudspeakers whether when used for *Athan* (call for the prayer) or the recitation of the Qur'an. Hamas and other resistance factions rejected these measures, which they dismissed as a crackdown on religion and religiosity.

In a press conference in the GS, Fawzi Barhoum, the spokesperson of Hamas, held Fatah squarely responsible for this “campaign against the mosques and the pious people in the WB,” and warned of the consequences and repercussions of this dangerous move. Barhoum condemned “this brutal war against our religion, sanctities and religious values,” adding that it seemed to aim at the destruction of ethics in favor of a culture of submissiveness and impudence in order to facilitate normalization with the Israeli occupation that could lead to the liquidation of the Palestinian issue. He gave examples of incidents in which mosques’ speakers and Imams were attacked in the WB. The spokesperson added criticism of Fatah for simultaneously pursuing a plan to grant licenses for alcohol sales, bars and nightclubs, and by allowing the Jericho casino to reactivate and resume its businesses.³⁰

In the same vein, Palestinian resistance factions had accused, in a joint press conference in GS, the caretaker government in Ramallah of orchestrating a campaign against the Islamic ‘*Aqidah* (Islamic Belief), and a parallel one against the Palestinian people in general. They added that this campaign is beneficial only to settlers searching for tranquility, and will serve to divert the attention and interests of the Palestinian youth from the mosques to the nightclubs.³¹

In response to this barrage of accusations, Fatah Spokesperson Osama al-Qawasmeh, issued a communiqué on behalf of Fatah’s Office of Information and Culture accusing Hamas of striving to push the Palestinian people into an arena

of conflicts and religious and tribal sectarianism. Fatah stated that it considered these futile calls doomed to failure. It also accused Hamas of taking advantage of some “administrative and organizational decisions,” undertaken by the minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, who had for many years been in the Hamas camp, to divide Muslims. Fatah argued that a minister has every right to take the necessary decisions to end partisan dominance over the mosques.³² If such statements reflect the position of Fatah, this declaration is useful in demonstrating the confused and contradictory state that the movement has been experiencing. While, on one side, it was significantly marginalized from the decision making center of the Fayyad government; on the other side, the patron and solicitor of its policies.

Second: The Caretaker Government in the GS

Based on its resounding victory in the 2006 general election and in accordance with the dictates of Palestinian law, the caretaker government in the GS viewed itself as the one and only legitimate caretaker government and it continued to perform its affairs as such. However, in effect, this government was heavily preoccupied with the aftermath of the Israeli war on the GS, and attempts at lifting of the continuous siege on GS, which has tightened further, thanks to the Egyptian government. Moreover, in view of the stumbling of reconciliation efforts, insufficient aid had arrived to rebuild what the war had destroyed in GS.

Notwithstanding the brutality of the blockade and the inability of the Palestinian people to rebuild what Israel had destroyed in the 2008–2009 aggression, they remained steadfast, and GS witnessed some modest attempts to rebuild a number of destroyed houses. Amongst those attempts were some initiated by a couple of Emirates philanthropic societies, and similar Qatari initiatives have also been reported. Nonetheless, this is far below the desired target of rebuilding thousands of houses and institutions.

Moreover, the government under the premiership of Isma‘il Haniyyah remained engaged in the issue of lifting the siege, providing the salaries for its civil and military personnel, administrating the crossings and ensuring freedom of movement for the Palestinian people from and to GS.



At this juncture it is necessary to highlight an important and primary, but customarily marginalized issue, namely the influx of weaponry to the GS and its continuous development from within; coupled with the digging of internal defensive tunnels and the preparations required to repel any aggression. Notwithstanding the unwritten ceasefire, and the stoppage of the launching of rockets and other military operations, this development has transferred the resistance to an unprecedented level of being able to confront aggression. It can be speculated that one of the important factors that deterred the Israelis from launching a new war on GS as with Lebanon, is their apprehension of potential repercussions in view of the advancing confrontational ability of the resistance.

In another vein, the Palestinians have succeeded to rally popular, international, and even official support against the siege, most clearly represented by humanitarian aid convoys that came from Europe and the Arab and Muslim world to lift the blockade. The first such convoy was the Artery of Life convoy, led by George Galloway and other activists from 17 countries, which successfully arrived in GS on 6/1/2010 after a 31-day journey from London. It is worth noting here that this convoy faced considerable difficulty in Egypt, including violence in al-'Arish between activists and the Egyptian police that resulted in casualties on both sides, which motivated the Egyptian security apparatus to place Galloway in their blacklist. However, the delay of this convoy instigated a wave of anger in GS that triggered skirmishes along the frontiers between some Palestinians and Egyptian soldiers in which an Egyptian soldier was killed and several wounded on both sides. The Egyptian authorities held Hamas responsible for the killing, but the government of Isma'il Haniyyah claimed that the soldier was killed by a bullet in the back from his own colleague.³³

Two Arab parliamentary delegations visited the GS. The first, composed of 22 MPs, arrived on 15/2/2010, and the second, composed of 47 MPs, arrived on 6/6/2010.³⁴

On 31/5/2010, Israel forcefully confronted the Freedom Flotilla that was carrying various forms of humanitarian aid to the GS. The Mavi Marmara ship, which carried 581 activists, mostly Turks, was violently intercepted by Israeli commandos in international waters, killing nine and wounding 26. Israeli forces arrested the activists, but subsequently returned them to their countries. The raid sparked widespread international condemnation of Israel.³⁵

Indeed, this can be seen as a major political and media defeat for Israel, which was placed in a tight corner and saw a significant worsening in relations with Turkey. Meanwhile, the Freedom Flotilla has become a symbol for those intent on breaking the siege of GS.

The visit of the Secretary-General of the Arab League, ‘Amr Musa, to the Strip on 13/6/2010 was hailed by Isma‘il Haniyyah as a practical step towards ending the blockade. In this first visit since the end of the war on GS in 2009, Musa called for the end of the imposed siege on GS, emphasizing that all Arabs and the entire world reject the siege and support the Palestinians. He demanded that a Palestinian reconciliation deal be concluded immediately, and called upon Gazans to exert pressure on their leaders to achieve this goal.³⁶

The caretaker government in the GS also welcomed a visit from the European Union (EU) High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton.³⁷ This visit and other expected visits to the Strip by ministers of European countries were viewed as an indirect European recognition of the Hamas government. Official recognition did not follow.

PM Haniyyah also welcomed to Gaza a delegation from “The Elders” committee, led by former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, and also included Lakhdar Brahimi, the former UN Envoy and former Foreign Minister of Algeria, and Ela Bhatt, founder of the million-strong Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) of India.³⁸ Haniyyah commended the efforts of the members of “The Elders” and their visit to the besieged Strip, and expressed his hope that such delegations would prove to be positive developments in favor of the Palestinian people.³⁹

The German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Guido Westerwelle, visited GS on 8/11/2010, in a bid to pressure Israel to loosen its blockade. Subsequently, on 24/11/2010, Franco Frattini, the Italian minister of foreign affairs, undertook a similar visit, and on 17/12/2010, Tonio Borg, the foreign minister of Malta followed suit, publicly calling for a total lifting of the blockade of GS.⁴⁰

In an attempt to ease the impact of the siege and to commit the other Palestinian political factions in the administration of the besieged GS, the government suggested in early 2011 to restructure the cabinet, and offered ministerial positions to some factions. The PIJ declined participation in a government that it viewed

as an extension of the Oslo treaties that it rejects; while the PFLP rejected the restructuring on the grounds that it would consolidate the state of schism in Palestinian politics.

The GS government launched an extensive campaign against a large number of agents implanted by Israel during its occupation of GS. The Ministry of Interior declared that it has uncovered several spy rings that use certain websites, exploiting the desperate needs of the citizens under siege, to recruit them to be Israeli agents in GS. However, the ministry initiated an awareness-raising campaign to confront this danger.⁴¹

Ihab al-Ghussein, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior, said that Israeli forces are gathering information in preparation for a new aggression against the GS. In particular, they singled out institutions, cars and houses of Hamas leaders. He announced the arrest of some agents who penetrated the factions by claiming to have joined the resistance, and maintained that these and other agents had a demonstrable role in the Israeli war on GS. The Ministry of Interior displayed some of the electronic devices that were used to disseminate and receive information from the Israeli intelligence officers.⁴²

The Interior Minister in GS, Fathi Hammad, mentioned that the Interior Ministry's security apparatus discovered a Palestinian agent who had been spying for Israel since 1972. He added that this apparatus discovered new Israeli methods of espionage, and had succeeded in confronting the agents.⁴³

The caretaker government in the GS sentenced to death two Israeli spies who caused the deaths of numerous members of the Palestinian resistance and the wounding of others. The head of military justice in GS Colonel Ahmad 'Atallah, said that these sentences were passed down after exhausting all procedures of appeal.⁴⁴ However, some legal and societal organizations denounced capital punishment on the assumption that they "violated the fundamentals of the law that prevent the execution of capital punishment without the prior approval of the head of the state."⁴⁵

Within the government's drive to publicize and focus on the issue of the detainees in Israeli prisons, Isma'il Haniyyah declared 2010 to be the year of the Palestinian detainees in Israel, and demanded that their legitimate cause be addressed in all Arab and international forums. While launching a national campaign to defend the rights of these detainees, Haniyyah announced the formation of The High Supreme

National Committee for the Support of Detainees. He called for an Arab-Islamic fundraising organization to collect donations to support the detainees and their families, and to enable the Ministry of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs to file cases against Israel in international courts.⁴⁶

Third: Dialogue and Putting the Palestinian Political House in Order

Palestinian political reconciliation was perhaps the defining story of 2010, aside from the occupation itself. The attempts and maneuvers around reconciliation are detailed, but are worth considering in detail as they reveal the dynamics at play on the Palestinian political scene. While insisting in the past that its paper on the reconciliation issue should be signed by all the Palestinian factions verbatim, Egypt had by 2010 agreed to annex to it a paper agreeable to all the factions. However, despite this apparent progress, the deadlock on the reconciliation issue had, in reality, continued.

Initially, Fatah had insisted that Hamas should sign the Egyptian paper, and President ‘Abbas refused to have any meetings with Khalid Mish‘al, head of the Hamas political bureau, before this signature. In this respect, ‘Abbas said that within an hour of Hamas’ signature his administration would meet with them, but not before. He also emphasized that the signing ceremony of the reconciliation agreement should take place in Egypt.⁴⁷

Anxious to strike a reconciliation deal, Nabil Sha‘th, a member of the Fatah Central Committee, tried to mediate between the two conflicting parties, and visited the GS for this very specific purpose. But the differences between the two sides were too deep to be resolved. Commenting on this visit, PA President Mahmud ‘Abbas said that Sha‘th did not travel to GS on his own initiative but in compliance with a PA decision. ‘Abbas denied any connection between this visit and the reconciliation, and added, “Sha‘th’s visit was just under this pretext, and his visit to Haniyyah’s house was beyond his terms of reference, and is unacceptable.”⁴⁸ Some non-aligned personalities, under the leadership of independent politician Yasir al-Wadih, also exerted some efforts in the interest of the reconciliation, but to no avail.⁴⁹



Meanwhile, President Mahmud ‘Abbas, informed Libya, Egypt, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Jordan that he would not attend the Arab summit scheduled in Libya on 27/3/2010 to discuss the reconciliation issue if Khalid Mish‘al was also due to attend.⁵⁰ Mish‘al refused to comment on President ‘Abbas’ declarations and said that Hamas was ready to sign the Palestinian reconciliation agreement before or after the summit in Libya.⁵¹

Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Ghait reiterated that the Egyptian reconciliation paper is submitted for signature only, and that all comments will be considered only during implementation.⁵² Hamas repeated its accusations of US obstruction of the reconciliation process, and Mish‘al went as far as to say that the US government had essentially vetoed reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah.⁵³

However, despite the stalling over negotiations, there were increasing indications that Hamas was prepared to be flexible provided that some of its wishes were adhered to. These wishes included the proposed provisional leadership to take charge until the re-election of PLO institutions, which “should not be hampered” in carrying out government functions, and that President Mahmud ‘Abbas forms, in partnership with Hamas, an elections committee and a supreme security committee to supervise the implementation of the reconciliation agreement, as well as to rebuild and restructure security forces in the WB and GS.

The delay in concluding the reconciliation agreement meant that the originally proposed election date of 28/6/2010, had to be postponed, requiring agreement on a new date. Other proposals demanded that the Hamas recommendations must “be annexed to the Egyptian paper and become part and parcel of it,” and that it must be signed by the relevant parties as well as the patrons and guarantors of the reconciliation agreement.⁵⁴

After accusations and counter accusations between the two parties regarding the delay of reconciliation, and the failure of a number of mediation attempts by, inter alia, KSA, Qatar and Turkey, a new breakthrough took place. In a meeting at Mecca between Khalid Mish‘al and the head of Egyptian General Intelligence Service ‘Omar Suleiman, the latter said that he would have no objection to a Fatah and Hamas agreement on the understanding that the proposed agreement address the latter’s remarks on the Egyptian paper before its signature.⁵⁵

This breakthrough coincided with the resumption of direct negotiations with Israel and the intransigence of its government on the issue of freezing the Israeli

settlement building. Many connected the failure of negotiations with Israel and this breakthrough, for the PA, supported by Egypt, would find it tactically useful to reactivate the reconciliation effort in order to put pressure on Israel during negotiations.

The first session of reconciliation talks was held in Damascus on 24/9/2010, during which it was agreed to form a consensus elections' committee and a consensus elections' court, fix a new date for the elections, and to form a caretaker leadership to be in charge until the PLO is restructured in accordance with the provisions in the Egyptian reconciliation paper. 'Azzam al-Ahmad, a member of the Fatah Central Committee and the head of its parliamentary bloc, said that the meeting between Fatah and Hamas resolved three issues: the elections, the elections' court and the PLO. But, he indicated that the issue of security remained pending, and would only be resolved with the help of experts in this area.⁵⁶

Ali Barakah, the senior Hamas political official in Lebanon, said that the movement would discuss with Fatah in Damascus the resumption of Palestinian dialogue under Egyptian patronage. Talks would aim at the formation of a supreme security committee to supervise the reactivation and restructuring of the security forces. He explained that "the two movements had agreed in their previous meeting in Damascus to rebuild and restructure the security forces in the WB and GS concurrently, and not in GS alone," while the formation of the security committee to supervise this rebuilding and restructuring was postponed to the next meeting.⁵⁷

Hamas leader Mahmud al-Zahhar stated that "Fatah has agreed on Hamas's point of view regarding the central elections committee, the judicial committee on elections, and the interim leadership in the PLO, which Fatah had been previously rejected."⁵⁸

In an attempt to resolve the final crucial issue, namely the security arrangements, the two movements met once more in Damascus on 9/11/2010. But the meeting ended acrimoniously with each side blaming the other for the failure to reconcile. While Fatah blamed Hamas for not being consistent in its demands, the latter claimed that Fatah insisted on dominating the supreme committee that was to oversee the security forces in the WB and GS, adamantly refusing Hamas participation in it. Hamas also complained that Fatah wanted to restrict the restructuring of the security forces to the GS only. Hamas suspected that the US and Israel wanted to veto the whole process of reconciliation. Some Palestinian sources attributed the



failure of this meeting to the insistence of Fatah, specifically Majid Faraj, head of Palestinian general intelligence in rejecting any changes to the security forces in the occupied WB.⁵⁹

Some Palestinian sources revealed to *al-Hayat* newspaper that the two sides reached a compromise whereby previous understandings were rewritten. The revised version stipulated that the two movements would name the members of the elections committee, but it ignored the proviso in the September version that this consultation be by “consensus.” However, when Hamas suggested that the phrasing of the compromise be applied to the judicial committee on elections, Fatah objected on the grounds that the judiciary “is independent, and that this independence should not be infringed upon by the movements.” Ultimately, the two sides agreed to add the following phrase, “There should be no differences on the judges” between the Palestinian factions.

On the issue of the provisional leadership, scheduled to be in charge until the reactivation of the institutions of the PLO, Fatah suggested an addition to the expression “the functions of the expected caretaker leadership cannot be annulled”—that was agreed upon previously in the first session—with the phrase “Without contradicting the functions of the Executive Committee of the PLO.” When reviewing the date of the forthcoming elections, the two sides agreed that it should be within eight to twelve months from the signature of the Egyptian reconciliation paper so that the two parties could prepare for the elections in a “free and fair environment in the WB and GS.”

The stumbling block remained the fifth point, namely the security issue. Previously, the two sides had agreed to “rebuild and restructure the security forces in the WB and GS,” but the formation of a supreme security committee, remained unresolved. Sources revealed that the astonishing development in the meeting was the insistence of Majid Faraj, head of Palestinian general intelligence, that there would be no partnership in security matters. Fatah was insisting that political and electoral partnerships were possible, but in security this is impossible. Fatah’s stance was unusual as security forces are commonly founded on national basis without participation or partnership. The Fatah position was viewed by Hamas as a retreat from the previous agreements and a setback to creating conducive environment for reconciliation.⁶⁰

It is worth noting that the delegation led by Majid Faraj to discuss the security issue reveals the position of weakness of Fatah in having no real authority over the security forces and security policy in the WB. Faraj's refusal to discuss WB security forces kept reconciliation talks between Fatah and Hamas in limbo. However, the changes that swept the Arab world at the beginning of 2011, and other significant Hamas-Fatah developments—Haniyyah inviting 'Abbas to meet, and the latter's acceptance—the reconciliation agreement was finally signed between the two parties, on 3/5/2011. A ceremony was held on the next day, with a wide participation of all Palestinian factions. Despite Fatah acceptance of Hamas reservations and resolution of the security issue, there is still a long way to go for the two parties.⁶¹ For the rest of the year 2011, it was evident that President 'Abbas used the agreement for a tactical approach, as no serious steps were taken for its implementation. For several months, only the question of nominating the PA's prime minister was discussed. On the other hand, PLO leadership actively used its position after the agreement, as legal and undisputed leadership of all Palestinian people, to present the application of Palestine to get full membership in the UN. Only when this application was hindered by US, and Hamas got more popularity after the Gilad Shalit exchange deal with 1,027 Palestinian prisoners, 'Abbas took some minor measures by the end of 2011 (see more details in *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12*).

Fourth: The PLO and the Presidency of the PA

1. Unchanged Structure and Program

Notwithstanding the dubious legitimacy of the institutions of the PLO after the expiry of the term of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), the Executive Committee and the Central Council, Fatah, which dominated decision making processes, continued to utilize them. For example, it focused the meetings of the Executive Committee of the PLO on taking decisions legitimizing the negotiations with Israel. However, the difference in the outlooks of Fatah and Fayyad's government was reflected in the difficult relationship of the latter with the PLO.

The conflict between the PLO and the government over the “establishment of the Palestinian state” was so sensitive that Fayyad frequently emphasized that the



PLO is the authority on this issue. Despite that, he continued to initiate and pursue policies on the ground independently and without consultation with the PLO and the Palestinian presidency.

Though the restructuring of the PLO was an item of the reconciliation proposal that all the factions had endorsed, all efforts to implement it on the ground failed because of differences on the crucial security issue. However, the Damascus dialogue of 24/9/2010 between Fatah and Hamas resulted in the re-inclusion of the expression that addressed the “framework of the provisional leadership” of the PLO. It stated that the functions of this caretaker leadership cannot be annulled, being a national consensus that had been agreed upon.⁶² Fatah, on the other hand, demanded later that those functions must not contradict the functions of the Executive Committee of the PLO.⁶³

It is worth noting at this juncture that one of main reasons for the continuation of the schism and failure of reconciliation attempts was the fundamental political difference on negotiations and peace settlement with Israel, as well as differences in attitude on resistance to the Israeli occupation. So fundamental are these issues that any agreement that does not tackle them is bound to be vulnerable.

2. A Crisis with the PFLP

Though the peace process remained stalled, the Executive Committee of the PLO agreed on 8/5/2010 to resume indirect negotiations with the Israelis. This had also been agreed to by the Arab Peace Initiative Follow-Up Committee of the Arab League during a meeting in Cairo.

Both Hamas and PIJ criticized these negotiations, viewing them as slavish submission to the *fait accompli* policy pursued by Israel. Both the PFLP and the PPP voted in the Executive Committee of the PLO against this decision, while the DFLP voiced their reservations on it.⁶⁴

Concurrently with the return of the PA to direct negotiations, despite no progress being made through indirect negotiations, the Executive Committee of the PLO faced a new crisis. On 26/9/2010, the PFLP declared in a press conference that it would freeze its participation in PLO meetings, in protest against the lack of inclusive decision-making on crucial issues, most notably the resumption of negotiations with Israel. The PFLP, the second largest faction in the PLO, cautioned against “the grave consequences and repercussions of the policy of surrender and return to the negotiation table on the basis of the American-Israeli conditions.”

A communiqué delivered by Khalidah Jarrar, a member of the political bureau of the PFLP, emphasized that the conduct of negotiations in this manner would sideline the backing of the UN and its resolutions on the Palestinian issue; would impose an American patronage and make negotiations the only possibility. The communiqué went on to say that the PFLP's decision was motivated by organizational considerations related to the decision making process within the PLO's framework and leadership. The Front warned against what it described as "The slavish, submissive attitude of the inner core leadership of the PLO, and its catastrophic consequences on the Palestinian issue and on the Organization's program, charter and national project."⁶⁵

At the same time, Mahir al-Tahir, the politburo member of the PFLP announced in Damascus that the above position of the PFLP did not indicate its incorporation into "alternative bodies" to the PLO.⁶⁶ However, Jamil Mizher, a member of the PFLP Central Committee, stated that suspension of participation in the sessions of the PLO was a PFLP protest against the resumption of negotiations using a formula that was evidently futile and meaningless. He added that it does not mean withdrawal from the PLO, "the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." Mizher maintained that this position is a card in 'Abbas' hands with which he can defy any side that tries to force him to continue the negotiations irrespective of the current Israeli intransigence.⁶⁷

3. Threatening to Resign

In view of the American failure to convince Israel to stop settlement building, 'Abbas had once more threatened to resign from the presidency of the PA. In this respect, he said that if Israel fails to stop settlement building and American support for negotiations wanes, he will move towards ending limited Palestinian self-rule in the occupied territories, not accepting the role of nominal president of a non-existing authority.⁶⁸ But soon afterwards 'Abbas retreated, and said on 19/12/2010 to the Jordanian newspaper *Alrai* newspaper that he will not relinquish the presidency of the PA, and that he is a man of "a national project," and that the dissolution of the PA would lead to chaos. He said that Palestinians must think of other methods to corner Israel. 'Abbas described the Israeli occupation as the cheapest in history, as "Israel occupies but does not meet its responsibilities or obligations. On the ground, Israel holds the authority; while authority is ours in name only. This ridiculous equation should be resolved."⁶⁹



The Palestinian president declared that he would lead a drive to refer the Palestinian issue to the UN Security Council instead of relying on negotiations that failed to even freeze settlement building. But ‘Abbas stopped short of preparing a draft resolution that dismisses settlement building as illegal. He emphasized that he would not take unilateral actions, such as a declaration of an independent state, which Israel said it would strongly resist. The PLO did not also rush to dissolve the PA, which it considered as its last resort.

In 2010 five countries recognized the Palestinian state: Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia and Ecuador.

Meanwhile, corruption continued to be rife, and was particularly put in the limelight by former Palestinian intelligence officer Fahmi Shabaneh al-Tamimi (discussed in detail below). This mushrooming corruption had seriously put in doubt the viability of the state-building project, which, to many, could not be achieved without liberating the WB, dismantling all settlements, and regaining Jerusalem, the heart of the desired Palestinian state and the basis for its existence.

A detailed look at the position of ‘Abbas after the abject failure of negotiations, despite of the far reaching concessions that he offered, reveals that he was left with no tangible or realistic alternative. Each action suggested by ‘Abbas was in need of serious momentum, but no such momentum was forthcoming.

4. The Corruption Scandal

A new crisis emerged in the midst of the failure of negotiations with Israel and the increasing American pressure exerted on the PA leadership. Accusations of financial corruption were filed by Fahmi Shabaneh al-Tamimi, a senior officer of the PA’s Preventive Security Service (PSS).

On 29/1/2010, in an exclusive interview with *The Jerusalem Post*, Shabaneh cited several specific cases of alleged corruption within Fatah and the PA.⁷⁰ Then, on 9/2/2010, Channel 10 television in Israel aired a program on corruption at the office of President ‘Abbas that was reportedly based on documents that Shabaneh had assembled over the previous six years. The officer provided documents and an embarrassing video from 2008, in which ‘Abbas Bureau Head Rafiq al-Husseini is seen in an intimate situation with his secretary and allegedly trying to coax a women who asked to work in the office into having intimate relations with him. Moreover, Shabaneh accused the PLO’s solicitor in Jordan ‘Allam al-Ahmad,

brother of the member of the Executive Committee of the PLO ‘Azzam al-Ahmad, of receiving a bribe of \$1.95 million* in lieu of fictitious deal to buy a piece of land in Jordan. Shabaneh also provided documents that proved the disappearance of \$700 million from the funds of the PA in corruption cases that the Palestinian attorney general had already ordered investigation in to.⁷¹

These alleged corruption cases provoked uproar and turmoil among Palestinians, which encouraged Shabaneh to announce a press conference to be held on 22/2/2010 in which he would reveal more information on additional corruption among some top leaders of the PA. But he retreated and cancelled the press conference, claiming that President ‘Abbas viewed the move as “harmful to the interests of the Palestinian people,” and would instead read these documents by himself and order an investigation to go ahead in all corruption cases.⁷²

‘Abbas also ordered the formation of a commission of inquiry to be led by Fatah Central Committee member Abu Mahir Ghunaym. Sitting on the committee will be other members of the Fatah Central Committee ‘Azzam al-Ahmad and Rafiq al-Natsheh. The Palestinian president instructed the commission of inquiry to submit its findings to him within three weeks.⁷³ On the completion of this investigation, ‘Abbas relieved the chief of his office Rafiq al-Husseini from his position.

In a letter that ‘Abbas addressed to al-Husseini, he said that the committee concluded that al-Husseini had made personal mistakes outside the remit of his job, which he should have avoided, but added that while relieving him from his position as chief of the president’s office in accordance with the recommendation of the investigation committee, ‘Abbas would like to assure al-Husseini that the former did not find in the committee’s report any indication that latter exploited his public position to acquire personal gains or extortions of any kind.⁷⁴

‘Abbas also ordered the destruction of all videos and CDs used in this case, particularly those that show leading personalities of the PA and Fatah engaged in embarrassing sexual behavior, and he formed a special committee to supervise the actual and total destruction of the footage. However, the PA’s General Intelligence Service and PSS possess many scandalous and immoral images for some politically important Fatah leaders.⁷⁵ The crisis was handled without holding to account many of those involved in corruption cases.

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



Fifth: The Factions and Palestinian Forces

Fatah fully endorsed and forcefully defended the political path of the PLO and the PA, and was, in fact, its principal advocate. Though he successfully managed to rally the 2009 Sixth Congress of Fatah behind him, ‘Abbas faced some formidable challenges from within Fatah. Alongside the difficulties with PM Fayyad, the most significant threat to ‘Abbas was the attempt of Muhammad Dahlan to distort the image of the president within the PLO in preparation for his eventual assumption of its leadership.

Besides the difference between Fatah and Fayyad over the ministerial posts, Fatah experienced a crisis between ‘Abbas and Dahlan, a powerful member of its Central Committee and its spokesperson, Dahlan’s membership of the Central Committee was frozen pending investigation of a number of charges against him; namely incitement against the leadership of the PA and the PLO, corruption and infringement of the functions of the security forces. The Fatah Central Committee also suspended Dahlan’s supervision of Fatah’s office for Information and Culture, and appointed Nabil Abu Rudaina, member of the same office and Mahmud ‘Abbas spokesperson, to be the spokesperson of Fatah, instead.

According to some Palestinian sources, the primary reason for this tussle between the President and Dahlan were some recorded documents that show the latter in a barrage of criticism against ‘Abbas. He described the President as a weak man whose focus is the economic interests of his children, with no option left except to relinquish his position, as well as other inappropriate personal comments about ‘Abbas.⁷⁶

The roots of these accusations go back to September 2010 when some of ‘Abbas’ aides accused Dahlan of inciting some Fatah leaders, particularly Nasir al-Qudwah, to maintain that they have better claim for assuming the leadership of the PA and to rule than ‘Abbas and the prime minister of his government Salam Fayyad. Besides, Dahlan was reportedly striving to consolidate his grip over the security forces and ministries, infuriating these aides, who held Dahlan directly responsible for the fall of GS in the hands of Hamas.⁷⁷

According to Palestinian sources, some of Fatah’s dignitaries and security personnel associated with Dahlan guided the police to a large, secret arms store in Balata refugee camp, north of the WB, belonging to Dahlan and his associates, and uncovered many Kalashnikov assault rifles.⁷⁸

This 'Abbas-Dahlan rivalry was also related to the peace process, which had reached an impasse. According to some observers, Israel wanted to weaken Fatah, which has been leading the negotiations, from within, compelling it to return to the negotiations table on the usual unfair conditions set by Israel.

In this vein, the FRC agreed in November 2010 to form a general council of 451 members to act on behalf of the general congress of the movement. With this move, 'Abbas aimed to consolidate his position within Fatah and outmaneuver Dahlan in the Central Committee. It was generally assumed within Fatah inner circles that the formation of this general council was an indication that no other congress of Fatah would be convened, meaning the Sixth Congress of August 2009 would be the last one, and that the recently constituted general council will be tantamount to the general congress on all matters.⁷⁹

The president of Fatah faced another challenge that was, however, less dangerous to his authority, but reveals the weakness of the party. This was masterminded by the second-in-command in the movement, Faruq Qaddumi. The latter tried to convene an alternative organizational congress of Fatah outside Palestine, which, he maintained, aimed at "salvaging the movement."⁸⁰ All indications suggest that this does not seem to have been a serious initiative, and was ultimately unsuccessful.

Although it was, by 2010, experienced in governance through ruling GS, Hamas insisted on a program of resistance. To this end, it undertook limited military operations against the Israeli occupation in the WB. Simultaneously, it tried to reconcile between resistance and the priorities required for ruling GS, which necessitated some security arrangements with Israel. Hence an undeclared, but a de facto truce with Israel had prevailed in the GS.

In response to Israeli attacks on the GS, other factions continued firing missiles at Israeli targets, though, on the whole, there was a favorable response to the request of the Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades to maintain a de facto truce with the occupation.

The leadership of Hamas made some diplomatic moves in the Arab and Muslim world to lift the blockade of GS. These moves played a role in encouraging some Muslim institutions in the West and Turkey to send a number of convoys which attempted to reduce the impact of the siege on the Gazans, and drew international attention to their plight. Thus, the siege issue transformed from a mere Palestinian and Arab concern into a Muslim and international public one.

Meanwhile, Hamas was unable to launch significant resistance operations against the Israel, except in Hebron and Ramallah. This was largely because of the close and sizeable security coordination between the PA's security forces, Israel and the US, coupled with lack of a strong Arab support for the resistance program and for the wish to loosen the security grip of the PA.

Meanwhile, the attempt to swap the captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit for hundreds of Palestinian detainees in the Israeli prisons remained stagnant, with Israel refusing to release Palestinians who undertook military operations against it.

No significant changes had taken place during the year on the positions of the Palestinian factions and forces towards the two movements, Fatah and Hamas. Thus, no major change can be identified with regard the impact and effectiveness of the two movements in the Palestinian arena.

The PIJ managed to keep a distance between itself and Hamas regarding its position on the government, and on military operations in the GS. Relations between the two movements improved and become stronger than before in 2010. However, like Hamas, the PIJ suffered considerably in the WB because of the tremendous security pressure on the resistance.

In the same vein, some prominent independent personalities managed to form The National Committee for the Defense of the Inalienable Rights for the Palestinian People. Amongst those were Munir Shafiq, Bilal al-Hassan, Muhammad al-Rifa'i, Hilmi al-Bilbisi, Mu'in al-Tahir, Mirvat abu Khalil, Nafith Abu Hasnah, Majid al-Zeer, Muhammad abu Maizar and Salah al-Dabbagh. 'Azmi Bishara declared his support for this movement, but did not join it. Though non-military in nature, this organization declared its support for the resistance, and was in turn supported by resistance and military factions. It also declared that it does not claim to be an alternative to the PLO, but strives seriously and persistently to rebuild the PLO and its institutions on a democratic basis, based on elections. This was one of the most important steps, if not the most important step, towards the goal initiated since the Oslo Accords in activating a leading role for independent personalities in the Palestinian arena. Ultimately, the effectiveness of such an organization will depend on its ability to rally Palestinian and Arab public opinion to campaign on key Palestinian national concerns.⁸¹

Sixth: Security Coordination

There are wide, ongoing political and intellectual differences between Fatah and Hamas on security coordination, with the main aggravation caused by security coordination between the PA and the Israel.

Security coordination with Israel had led to continuous arrests among the supporters of the resistance. This state of affairs raised important questions on the viability or futility of agreements that fail to gain political progress on the ground, especially when the PA continues its campaign of arrests of Palestinian freedom fighters or the PA security coordination facilitates Israeli to arrest or assassination of these fighters.

The patronage of President Mahmud ‘Abbas to Palestinian-Israeli security coordination had increased the level of danger caused by its consequences. This danger also increased when Fayyad’s government oversaw the stationing in Ramallah of the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) for Israel and the PA, first Lieutenant General Keith Dayton and later General Michael Muller. Their mission was to coordinate and follow up operations against the resistance. This sharply accelerated the efficiency and effectiveness of Palestinian security forces in pursuing members of the resistance, forcing the abortion of many operations targeting Israel.

On 11/8/2010, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* mentioned that for the first time since the outbreak of the second *Intifadah* (uprising) in 2000, there is not a single security suspect being sought by Israel in the northern WB. In the southern WB, there are only a few names on the security establishment’s wanted list. The newspaper added that the situation was a reflection of both the improved security situation in the WB and the increasing cooperation between Israeli and PA security forces.⁸² The director of the Israel Security Agency—ISA (*Shabak*), Yuval Diskin, commended that the PA security forces were perhaps at the strongest point it have been in 16 years, thanks primarily to assistance coming from the US and the international community. He added that these forces were demonstrating a great deal of “motivation” and “determination” in preventing attacks, including arresting hundreds of Hamas activists.⁸³

Concerning security coordination operations, Israel revealed in a report, to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLIC) in Brussels that Israeli security forces



undertook 2,968 instances of coordination in 2010 compared to 1,297 in 2009, a rise of 129%. In addition, 686 joint bilateral meetings were held between the PA and the Israeli security forces in 2010 compared to 544 in 2009, a rise of 26%. Palestinian security forces escorted 623 Israelis, who entered Area A of the WB by mistake. Even during the period of relative calm in 2010, 463 attacks by the Palestinian resistance occurred in or emanated from the WB.⁸⁴

Another report published by the Information and Decision Support Center in the Palestinian Ministry of Planning in GS, revealed that PA security agencies had arrested 200 WB Hamas supporters in January 2011, and cited some three thousand politically motivated arrests for 2010. Out of those arrested, 1,404 were ex-detainees, 49 imams in mosques, 23 university professors, 36 journalists, 32 local councilmen, 417 university students and nine teachers.⁸⁵

An earlier American report, prepared by journalist Nathan Thrall, titled “Our Man in Palestine” revealed that in 2009, Palestinian and Israeli forces took part in 1,297 coordinated activities, many of them against militant Palestinian groups, a 72% increase since 2008. Together they have largely disbanded the *al-Aqsa* Martyrs Brigades, a principal Fatah militia; attacked Islamic Jihad cells; and all but eliminated Hamas’s social institutions, financial arrangements, and military activities in the WB. According to the latest annual report of the Shabak, “continuous [counterterrorist] activity conducted by Israel and the Palestinian security apparatuses” reduced Palestinian attacks against Israelis in the WB and East Jerusalem to their lowest numbers since 2000.⁸⁶

Mike Herzog, former chief of staff to Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak said the current level of cooperation “is better than before the second intifada even—it’s excellent.” Muna Mansur, a Hamas legislator in the Palestinian Parliament and widow of an assassinated senior leader of the movement, told me: “The PA has succeeded more than the Israelis in crushing Hamas in the West Bank.”⁸⁷

The US was instrumental in promoting and consolidating this role through sizeable financial assistance to the PA, and by spending generously on its own security coordinators in the WB. Since 2007, the State Department allocated \$392 million to the Dayton mission, with another \$150 million requested for 2011. At its headquarters in a 19th century stone building at the US consulate in West Jerusalem, the USSC has a 45-person core staff composed primarily of American and Canadian but also British and Turkish military officers.⁸⁸

As a result of this coordination, Palestinian and Israeli security forces captured a number of prominent leaders of the resistance in the WB. However, some of the detainees released from the prisons of the PA were either rearrested by Israel or assassinated.

Security coordination was not limited to pursuing the resistance, but reached the extent of the PA continuing to turn a blind eye to the Israeli assault on the GS in 2008–2009. According to the 2010 Wikileaks release of diplomatic cables, the Israeli government of Ehud Olmert attempted to coordinate the war on GS with the PA.

According to *Haaretz* newspaper, a number of classified diplomatic cables released by WikiLeaks revealed that in a June 2009 a meeting took place between Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak and a US congressional delegation. In this meeting, Barak claimed that the Israeli government “had consulted with Egypt and Fatah prior to Operation Cast Lead, asking if they were willing to assume control of Gaza once Israel defeated Hamas.” He added, “Not surprisingly,” Israel “received negative answers from both.” In the revealed document, Barak also expressed his feeling that “the Palestinian Authority is weak and lacks self-confidence, and that Gen. Dayton’s training helps bolster confidence.”⁸⁹

Seventh: The Resistance.. Pursuit and Achievement

On 18/1/2009, when the Israeli aggression against GS ended, the Palestinian resistance resumed its attempts to smuggle weapons to the GS in preparation for an expected second Israeli attack. The resistance also tried to launch operations in the WB, some of which succeeded, but many failed because of the security coordination between the PA and Israel.

At the beginning of 2010, Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, revealed new missiles it used during Israel’s military operation in GS. On its website, Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades published pictures of the weapons it secretly smuggled to the Hamas-run GS despite an Israeli-led blockade on the coastal enclave. The photos showed the missiles were Tandem RPG-29 anti-armor missiles and 107mm rockets.⁹⁰



The first successful violent resistance operation was on 10/2/2010, when a Palestinian stabbed an Israeli soldier near the Zatarra crossing south of Nablus. The Israeli army announced that the perpetrator was a PA police officer. PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad denounced the attack and said it “conflicts with our national interests.” He pledged to take steps to prevent such incidents in the future, while endorsing “peaceful resistance” against settlements and the security barrier.⁹¹

In an operation that targeted a police patrol near Otniel settlement south of Hebron in the WB, the resistance killed on 14/6/2010 an Israeli soldier and wounded two others. On 22/6/2010, the Israeli army, ISA and Israel Police arrested those they claimed were “responsible” for the June 14th attack, some of whom had been held by Israeli security forces in the past for their involvement with Hamas. The Israeli army said that those arrested “had planned additional attacks, most notably to abduct a soldier or civilian in the Gush Etzion area. The operatives had already begun scouting the area, and had purchased skull caps and a wig that they planned to use in the attack.”⁹²

On 31/8/2010, four Israeli settlers were shot dead while driving on Route 60 when resistance fighters opened fire on their vehicle near Bnei Naim, east of Hebron.⁹³ Two other Israeli settlers were injured, on 1/8/2010, when resistance fighters opened fire on them while they were driving in the area of Rimoni Junction near the Kochav Hashachar village, east of Ramallah in the WB. Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades announced that they had carried out the Hebron and Ramallah operations.⁹⁴

In spite of the obstacles, it can be seen that resistance operations never stopped, reflecting the lack of options other than to continue the struggle. Security coordination is and will likely continue to be a major factor preventing violent expression of resistance. However, with no serious political solution forthcoming, security cooperation is doomed to eventually end as it is rejected by the majority of the Palestinian people and by resistance factions. Security coordination with Israel constitutes one of the PA’s most unpopular tactics, justified as it is by the notion of accelerating the peace process and establishing a Palestinian state. In the mean time, the Israeli occupation is exploiting all such developments, prolonging their duration, in order to make the peace process continue, and to transform the PA into a Quisling security apparatus that crushes other national forces, specifically the resistance.

Conclusion

During 2010, the Palestinian scene witnessed the continuation of political and geographical schism. The PA maintained security coordination with it to hunt down resistance movements in the WB. Israel, with no serious opposition from the PA, was able to continue its siege of the GS, and to exhibit more extremism and intransigence during negotiations. The American government chose not to oblige Israel to stop settlement building, which constituted the minimum Palestinian demand to restart negotiations.

Presidential and PLC elections may have reunited the Palestinians had not the reconciliation negotiations between the Palestinian factions stumbled in lieu of American-Israeli pressure. This pressure was also coupled with the opposition of some neighboring countries to the participation of Hamas in governance.

The government of PM Fayyad continued its efforts to build Palestinian institutions in preparation for the establishment of a state. Self-empowerment efforts focused on civil and peaceful aspects such as “peaceful resistance.” Inter-Palestinian reconciliation was neglected, and Fayyad’s government even fought against all other forms of resistance.

The schism also led to a tightening of the PA’s uncompromising approach to crushing Hamas under the pretext that it should not be allowed to repeat what it’s takeover in the GS. This reached the unprecedented level of the PA targeting all forms of religiosity, as well as Hamas’ civil and social institutions in the WB, which offered services to tens of thousands of Palestinians.

The conflicts within Fatah itself weakened the PA’s national project in the WB. Rather than focusing on the conflict with Israel, the political arena was preoccupied with the repercussions of internal conflicts. To increase the complexity of the problems, Israel involved itself in these conflicts, favor some figures at the expense of others. When the Palestinian president hoisted the card of resignation, differences developed with Muhammad Dahlan. He seemed willing and able to replace ‘Abbas, and to continue the negotiations with Israel, with an even lower level of Palestinian demands than those already offered.



There is a general consensus among Palestinians that the PLO constitutes the umbrella that unites them all; the ultimate reference for all key decisions on the path of the Palestinian issue. But its continuing dubious and defective legitimacy because of the expiry of the terms of office of its leadership and those of the PNC, and the conspicuous absence of representatives of popular resistance movements and the aborted Palestinian reconciliation deal had all contributed to crippling the Organization. Thus, it was not possible in 2010 to restructure the institutions of the PLO on new basis that equips it to resume its traditional role in leading the Palestinian struggle.

Palestinian steadfastness in the GS continues despite the suffocating siege and the inability of Gazans to rebuild what the Israelis destroyed during their 2008–2009 aggression. Gazans succeeded in rallying international popular, even official, support to their cause and against the siege, which is reflected in the convoys that visited GS from Europe and the Arab/ Muslim world. Meanwhile, the Palestinian government of Isma'il Haniyyah remained preoccupied with attempts at lifting the blockade and to provide the salaries of its civil and military personnel; while the Palestinian factions decided, urged by Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, to maintain a de facto truce with Israel.

Haniyyah's government launched a major campaign tackling enemy agents implanted by Israel during its invasion of the GS. On certain occasions, Hamas also responded to the arrest of some of its members in Ramallah by arresting Fatah leaders in GS and prohibiting them from engaging in political activities.

But activity was not limited to political wrangling, and a number of resistance operations were executed against Jewish settlers in Hebron and Ramallah. These events boosted the morale of the Palestinians, and demonstrated the enduring popularity of direct resistance, in spite of the best efforts to halt it by the PA in collaboration with Israel and the US.

Since the beginning of 2011, changes in the Arab world, have considerably affected the reconciliation agreement; Haniyyah inviting 'Abbas to meet and the latter's acceptance; Fatah's acceptance of Hamas' reservations and the resolving of the troublesome security issue. Consequently, 3/5/2011 was a turning point, as

both parties signed the reconciliation agreement. However, this agreement faces enormous challenges; mutual trust must be earned and those fomenting sedition and benefiting from schism must be firmly dealt with. Crucially, foreign interference particularly from Israel and the US, must be prevented.

Please note that the Palestinian Reconciliation agreement was signed during the finalizing and publishing of this report. Details of the agreement and its implications will be discussed and analyzed thoroughly in *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12*.



Endnotes

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Chapter Two

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene

Introduction

The Israeli scene of 2010 was not dissimilar to that of the previous year. The fragile governing coalition, led by the Likud, continued, and rightist tendencies ascended, while their leftist counterparts waned, and the Labor Party disintegrated. Though the Israeli economy improved and the resistance operations and security hazards decreased, Israel has become increasingly isolated because of its siege of GS, assault on the Freedom Flotilla and steadfast insistence on Jewish settlement building in the WB, even the cost of delaying the peace process.

It seems that the changes in the Arab world, and the signing of the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas, on 3/5/2011 will only increase the isolation and confusion of Israel in 2011.

This chapter discusses the internal Israeli political scene, and explores the economic and military aspects of Israel, as well as the interactions between the Israel, the peace process and the Palestinian resistance.

First: The Israeli Internal Political Scene

The internal Israeli scene for the year 2010 was characterized by a series of events that had their impact on the totality of the country's public life. The path of Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations remained almost entirely deadlocked, which had negative repercussions on Israeli internal political relations. The precariously weak governing coalition demonstrated that political instability is likely to gain momentum in Israel. Moreover, the increase in the cases of corruption, bribery, and sex abuse have troubled politicians and other public figures, while the rising discriminatory tendencies among politicians and within Israeli society at large, and the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla had all profoundly embarrassed Israel internally and externally. Additionally, the burning of the Carmel forests, the leaking of some sensitive military documents and the in-fighting among Israeli leaders, as well as the continuation of some pending issues from 2009, also reflected weakness within the Israeli internal front.



1. The Fragility of the Israeli Governing Coalition

The composition of the governing coalition under the premiership of Benjamin Netanyahu reflected the dominance of the extreme right and fundamentalist religious groups over the internal political decision making process, in particular in foreign policy. The heterogeneity of the cabinet had been instrumental in creating a number of internal conflicts within the government, and in projecting a negative image of Israel to the international arena. Admittedly, the government had a significant majority in the Knesset, but the fundamental differences between the coalition parties over several issues were bound to weaken it.

While Yisrael Beitenu, under the leadership of Avigdor Lieberman, adhered to secularism, its counterpart the fundamentalist Shas insisted on applying Jewish religious doctrine on the ground, which had serious impact on Netanyahu's ability to manage the administration of his government. Moreover, the Likud party itself suffered from schisms, as it had "two rights," so to speak; a so-called moderate right and an extreme right, whose contradictory positions were reflected within the party's institutions, in the cabinet and among the ministers in the Knesset. This governing coalition demonstrated an important transfer in Israeli internal politics; namely from a governing coalition of two major parties only into a coalition of several heterogeneous groups that are difficult to reconcile. Thus, the Likud, Yisrael Beitenu and Shas had no option but to work together despite the wide gulf between their approaches.¹ However, though politically waning and with a limited number of seats in the Knesset, the Labor Party did maintain a fragile peace within this heterogeneous coalition, which, according to declarations by its leaders, supported Netanyahu's attempts to promote the peace process with the Palestinians.²

Israel's governing coalition has evidently, and inevitably, continued in power until the present day, as its disintegration is not yet in the interest of any of the coalition parties; in fact, they would all lose out if the coalition collapsed. Put another way, the current governing coalition is based on differences and contradictions. If Yisrael Beitenu withdraws from the coalition, the party will lose all its bargaining power to influence the form and content of Israeli policies, as well as the financial resources that it gets in lieu of its participation in the coalition. Similarly, this is also the position of the rightist religious party Shas, as withdrawal from the coalition would mean loss of financial resources and privileges on which its societies and institutions largely depend. Hence, while not as important as the political agenda, the financial aspect has also played an important role in maintaining the coalition.

Our close study of the Labor Party throughout 2010 reveals heightening conflicts within its ranks, particularly on the leadership issue. All opinion polls conducted throughout the year suggest that the party will lose one third of its seats if the 19th Knesset elections were to be held immediately. There are increasing calls for the replacement of the party's current leader Ehud Barak by a more acceptable leader who is willing and able to rebuild the party, namely Amram Mitzna, who led the party during the 17th Knesset elections but later relinquished the leadership position as well as membership of the Knesset to serve as mayor of Yeroham in the Negev. Though Mitzna had accepted the proposed leadership role, wide ranging conflicts within the Labor Party demonstrated its inability to restore its leading role. In fact, there are increasing calls for its dissolution and incorporation in to the Kadima and Meretz parties; to contest the next parliamentary elections together as one party.³

Meanwhile, Labor's official registers recorded a great decline in its membership during the last two decades. This revelation, which infuriated a number of the party's leaders, was seen as a result of the party's almost total stagnation during this period.⁴

As for Barak himself, he did his utmost through extensive political manipulation to maintain his leadership of the Labor Party and defense portfolio in the governing coalition.⁵ Despite the opposition of some members of his party, including ministers and Members of the Knesset (MKs), Barak supported some racist laws initiated by Netanyahu, such as the loyalty oath law to Israel, which helped the prime minister to consolidate his grip on the government.

Meanwhile, the Labor Party never executed its threats to withdraw from the coalition if it is bypassed in certain central and key issues, particularly so if the negotiations with the Palestinians remained stagnant or suspended. This hesitation enabled Netanyahu to go ahead with his plan to stop negotiations, and to pursue settlement building in an undeclared, informal way, or through other means. Many of the Labor party's leaders turned a blind eye to these and other policies because they felt that the withdrawal from the coalition would be the final nail in the party's coffin. However, by the end of 2010, a new trend emerged within the Labor Party, advocating withdrawal from the coalition government if the leftist and centrist parties refused the formation of a national government that would arguably relieve Israel of the fiasco of the stagnation of the negotiations.⁶



Ehud Barak's Defection from the Labor Party and the Formation of the Atzmaut (Independence) Faction

On 17/1/2011, Ehud Barak and four other Knesset members announced their exit from the Labor Party, and the formation of a new party named the Atzmaut (Independence). With this step, Barak put an end to his long conflict with the Labor Party, which had worsened during the second half of 2010. Opponents of Barak in the Labor Party, led by the party's ministers in Netanyahu's government, resigned on the same day. As for the party's members who did not join the Atzmaut Faction, they formed two groups: one, under the leadership of Benyamin Ben-Eliezer, was inclined towards a split from the Labor Party and the formation of a completely new party, and the other was under the leadership of Isaac Herzog. However, the former group eventually accepted the position of the latter to maintain the framework of the Labor Party with just eight MKs. All reports and opinion polls conducted in 2010 suggested that if the 19th Knesset elections were to be held during 2011, the Labor Party would get no more than eight seats. In practical terms, Barak's defection left the once-powerful Labor Party with a mere eight seats in the Knesset.⁷

Barak's defection from the Labor Party triggered many questions and forecasts. Some attributed Barak's move to his collusion with Netanyahu to dispose of the opposition of the ministers of the Labor Party, who called for the rescue of the peace process from the stagnation that had been caused by the policies of Netanyahu's government. Others suggested that there had been an advance agreement between Netanyahu and Barak to get rid of the Labor Party and to form a homogeneous government that agrees on a common platform, particularly a stronger position towards the Palestinian and Iranian issues. Barak seems to have been primarily driven into this position by purely personal reasons, i.e., he could never tolerate being in opposition, outside government. Besides, Barak knew very well that the Labor Party was in decline, hence, his move was seemingly a calculated preparatory step to join the Likud Party in the next general elections, and consequently keeps the defense portfolio for himself.

Some political analysts felt that this development marked the de facto end of the Labor Party that had founded and led Israel for a long period. But others argue that the split of the party provides an opportunity for the reformulation of the Israeli left, which has almost disappeared from the country's political arena.

A third group of political observers consider the development an opportunity to reorganize the peace camp, composed of the Labor, Kadima and Meretz parties as well as the Arab parties, to advance the peace process with the Palestinians or with Syria and other Arab countries. Moreover, the new peace camp would hopefully hoist the banner of “social justice” that had no place on the agenda of the Likud and Netanyahu’s government, and save “Israeli democracy” from the imminent threat of the extreme right,⁸ particularly its leader Lieberman who, according to declarations of the opposition parties in the Knesset, had dragged Israel into deep maze.

However, there were seemingly no prospects, even at a low level, for the reorganization and reactivation of the Israeli left. The key players in the Israeli political scene will continue to be the centrist versus rightist trends, while the left will be marginalized with extremely limited or no representation in future Knessets.

It may yet be premature to write off the Labor Party, as Barak’s split appears to have saved the party from total demise, at least for a short period. Those who remain in the party will certainly try to urgently reform the party in an attempt to improve its prospects. Against this, some voices in the Labor, Meretz and Kadima parties call for a united front of the three parties to contest the next general elections in one list, considering it a move that will shift Israeli politics toward the center. Moreover, both the Labor and Meretz parties are extremely concerned that they would lose their current seats if early elections of the Knesset were to be conducted.

According to some polls, Yisrael Beitenu can be expected to do well in the next general elections, and to gain more seats in the Knesset. An opinion poll, conducted on 5–6/10/2010 by the Maagar Mochot institute for Channel 2 of Israel Radio, had 17% of the respondents recording their support for this party if elections were conducted by the end of 2010, translating to 21 seats in the Israeli Knesset.⁹ Consolidating the party’s popularity among the electorate is its success in implementing all its election promises, most significantly those related to the issue of citizenship and the loyalty oath law. The growing influence of Yisrael Beitenu reflects the increasing rightward tendency in Israeli society.

As for the relationship between Netanyahu and his foreign minister, Lieberman, it had been characterized by a sort of pre-planned tension, as the former had been personally, but informally, in charge of the foreign policy, or had delegated this



task to the Israeli president Shimon Peres. The question naturally arises as to what kind of role did Lieberman play. This exchange of roles did not guarantee success for Israeli foreign policy. In fact, analysts attributed the regression of Israel's acceptability in international forums, and the distortion of its image worldwide to Lieberman's extreme and uncompromising utterances and positions. They held him squarely responsible for many of the political crises that Israel experienced, and argue that Israel will need a long time to restore its reputation. Netanyahu was aware of his helplessness when up against Lieberman, for the latter threatened, on several occasions during 2010, that if Netanyahu refused to accede to his demands he would quit the government and drag the Knesset to a new election, in which he confidently anticipated being the major winner.¹⁰

Netanyahu usually allowed Lieberman to take the initiative on specific issues, but later corrected what was destroyed or damaged. Netanyahu was particularly concerned that Lieberman's withdrawal or behavior that would lead to the disintegration of the coalition would leave him with no option but to ally with the religious parties. This development would undermine his position within the inner circle of the Likud party, which preferred to keep Yisrael Beitenu within the coalition, and was reluctant to see their party form a government only with Shas and the religious parties. Moreover, the Likud was anxious not to have early elections, as this would lead to the loss of its credibility among the Israeli public. Thus, it chose to exhaust the duration of the parliament, or at least two thirds of it.

Shas was able to tighten its grip on governmental institutions that serve its own interests. Chief among those interests were securing financing of its religious and educational institutions, and to exempt the party's young members from compulsory military service, replacing it with religious courses offered by the party's own educational institutions. Shas insisted on the latter demand, though there were many calls for the transfer of all allocations of religious institutions to go to the welfare funds of university students, who were protesting against the increase in tuition fees.

Yisrael Beitenu and Shas led the opposition within the coalition government to the peace process, where they also strongly rejected a settlement freeze in the WB and East Jerusalem.

Thus Netanyahu was hamstrung by these two parties and by the right wing of his own party, the Likud, vis-à-vis any step that he may have wished to take to achieve progress in the peace process, however illusory and unrealistic the process is.

These formidable predicaments triggered Netanyahu to try to elicit the support of Kadima to the governing coalition, and thus mitigate internal opposition to his policies, and to expel the religious parties from the cabinet. But the leader of Kadima, Tzipi Livni, had brutally criticized Netanyahu and his policies, and accused him of destroying Israel through his total submission to Lieberman and the extreme rightist parties.¹¹ Despite this seemingly principled stance, she expressed her willingness to join the ruling coalition on condition of sharing a rotating premiership with Netanyahu, which he rejected. Nonetheless, to demonstrate her party's openness to the option of negotiations with the Palestinians through the peace process, Livni declared that she would support any step that Netanyahu's government might take towards achieving peace with the Palestinians, if his attempts at progress were confronted by opposition from his coalition partners.

In a real dilemma because of Livni's impossible conditions and the opposition that he confronted from within his own party and by some of the coalition parties, Netanyahu desperately needed to maintain the coalition government. Thus, he strove to divide Kadima party by enlisting the support of Livni's rival, Shaul Mofaz, to the ruling coalition by offering him several ministerial posts. But Mofaz, who had unsuccessfully tried several times to remove Livni from the leadership of Kadima, turned down the offer, and decided to remain in the party. Mofaz probably concluded that his leadership of a schism in Kadima at that time would practically mean the end of his political career during the forthcoming Knesset elections.

The political dilemma in which Netanyahu was cornered in during 2010 had also triggered him to request Shimon Peres, a founder of Kadima, to use his good offices to convince Tzipi Livni to join the governing coalition. But she refused to provide salvation for Netanyahu's government in its current form. Thus, in the light of the formidable internal and external problems that the governing coalition has been facing, the stalled negotiations with the Palestinians, pressure from within the Likud and the coalition parties and from the extreme right wing nationalist camp (which is formed mainly of the Israeli settlers), and the emerging challenges of the Arab revolts, the government of Netanyahu looked sure to have to confront a multitude of political predicaments and a difficult path during 2011.¹²



2. Corruption, Criminality and Sexual Harassment

The cases of corruption and bribes continued to be a hot issue during 2010. Some of them were still under investigation by the police, and awaiting probable formal charges to be filed by the attorney-general, others were closed down because of lack of evidence, while judicial verdicts had already been issued on a third group of cases.¹³

One of the pending corruption files is that of Ehud Barak, the Israeli defense minister. While occupying an official office, he was accused of continuing to administer a private company, and of receiving commissions on deals conducted through it or directly in his name, which contradicts the dictates of the Israeli law that prohibits all holders of public offices from engaging in any other position or business.¹⁴

Another file was that of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Lieberman, the leader of the Yisrael Beitenu, who had been accused of administering an illusory company that paid financial stipends to him personally and to his party. The police investigations on this case were revealed by the Israeli ambassador in Belarus. Additionally, he was accused of illegally acquiring funds, and of obstructing justice.¹⁵

There was also the case of the former Israeli PM Ehud Olmert, who had been charged by the public prosecutor with receiving bribes of hundreds of thousands of dollars while occupying, just before his premiership, the position of the mayor of Jerusalem. These bribes were allegedly extended to him through the manager of his office Shula Zaken, who received similar bribes, to change the status of a landed property, namely the Holyland Project, in such a manner that increased its market value, and, consequently, the rate of profit acquired from it.¹⁶

Another corruption case was of a prominent member of Kadima party, MK Tzachi Hanegbi. A three-judge panel ruled that Hanegbi's perjury conviction consists of moral turpitude and sentenced him to pay a fine. The ruling bars Hanegbi from continuing to serve in the 18th Knesset, yet will enable him to run for the next Knesset.¹⁷

While occupying the post of minister of tourism, the former Israeli President Moshe Katsav, was accused of raping and committing other scandalous acts with a female official. He allegedly sexually harassed two other government officials

in the official headquarter of the Israeli president and obstructed justice. Finally, on 30/12/2010, he was officially found guilty and imprisoned; the first Israeli president charged in a court.¹⁸

During 2010, the office of the attorney-general filed against several rabbis in cases of embezzlement of funds from large religious institutions, and forging documents of several youngsters to exempt them from compulsory military service, allowing them to instead join religious institutions. Moreover, other Jewish religious leaders were accused of sexual harassment and exploitation.¹⁹

Several opinion polls conducted in Israel demonstrated that the Israeli population considers their state to be suffering from the epidemic of corruption, criminality and sexual harassment, and their political parties to be the most corrupt of all institutions, particularly so after the scandalous court conviction of the Knesset member MK Hanegbi.²⁰

Israel has been listed amongst the top 10 countries involved in corruption and criminality in many fields, of which the most prominent are faked drugs and money laundering.²¹

3. The Impact of the Stalled Negotiations with the Palestinians on Israeli Politics

Netanyahu involved himself in the “peace process” with the Palestinians, which is supposed to achieve a permanent peace settlement and to end the conflict. The Israeli prime minister involved himself showed no flexibility on the issues of the occupied territories and Jerusalem. However, he reluctantly agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state, hoping to avoid the alternative of a one-state solution which would end once and for all the Zionist project of establishing a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine. The Israeli negotiating strategy continued to be based on conflict management and not conflict resolution.²² It is important to note that all Israeli governments, be them Likud or Labor, had since 1977 supported the establishment of a Palestinian state, but without specifying its form, content, orientation, location, or frontiers. This is exactly what Netanyahu continued in his government; knowing very well that the one-state solution would ultimately lead to Palestinian demographic dominance in Palestine, which would abort the “Jewish state.”²³ Another obstacle that Netanyahu’s government experienced was the issue of freezing the building of settlements in the WB,



as a condition for the continuation of negotiations with the Palestinians. He faced strong opposition to this proposed freezing from within his cabinet, the Knesset and the settlement building movement in the WB. Notwithstanding American and international pressure, the extreme right of the Likud party insisted on the continuation of settlement building and on the Judaization of extensive areas of the WB from which they were determined to cleanse all Palestinian inhabitants. To weaken Netanyahu's position in the Likud, his party's rightist camp launched a campaign against the continuation of a WB settlement building moratorium, and some Likud members added their names to a petition which called on Netanyahu not to renew the moratorium. With this development in place, Netanyahu was extremely worried that he could lose his leadership of the Likud in the elections to party rivals.²⁴

Another major constraint that Netanyahu faced was the adamant opposition of Yisrael Beiteinu and Shas to the settlement freeze, and their call instead for a settlement building intensification as part of their drive to Judaize Palestine. These two parties wanted the negotiations with the Palestinians to be confined to particular issues like security and the economy, but never on the refugees, borders and the future of Jerusalem.²⁵ Thus, Netanyahu kept silent on the settlement freeze issue in the WB, aware that its implementation would lead to the disintegration of his government. His courtship of Kadima failed, but what temporarily saved his neck was the abandonment by the American administration of the settlement freeze condition for the continuation of the peace negotiations.

By then, Netanyahu was facing another crisis, namely the refusal of the Arab states and the PA to continue negotiations as long as the building of Israeli settlements was ongoing. However, the building had never stopped or been frozen, as, according to official statistics, more than 15 thousand housing units were actually built during this short period of coalition government alone. Netanyahu evaded a conclusive peace settlement with the Palestinians that would probably lead to the fall of his government, and this ended any hope of achieving a peace settlement. Hence, through manipulation and delaying tactics that continued for a whole year, Netanyahu had exhibited himself as a man of peace, while all indications demonstrate that he was discreetly supporting settlement building.

During 2010, Israeli society appeared to have strongly moved towards the extremist right, with large numbers of the population supporting the continuation of settlement building. Those who opposed the building were so few that the Israeli peace movement (primarily the group Peace Now) had only hesitantly and without conviction expressed its position on this issue. As a result, the way was clear for right wing expansionist policies to prevail and rejection of any serious moves towards peace with the Palestinians to continue throughout the year.

The stagnation of the peace process had aggravated tension within and between the Israeli political parties and movements. In particular, it placed the Labor Party in a dilemma. Having joined the ruling coalition under pretext of achieving progress in the negotiations, the party had tried throughout the year 2010 to persuade Kadima Party to join the government, but it failed, and found itself increasingly isolated and marginalized.

4. The Israeli Assault on the Freedom Flotilla and Its Repercussions

The Israeli assault of 31/5/2010 on the Gaza-bound Freedom Flotilla in the high seas triggered extensive problems and grave repercussions for Israel at both international and domestic levels.²⁶ While many quarters within Israel demanded the formation of an investigation committee, others refused to allow any committee to summon the soldiers involved in the attack. In fact, the Israeli army, viewed as the “sacred cow” that should not be touched under any circumstances, won wide support among many civilian sectors of the Israeli society. Nonetheless, the repercussions of the incident had their tangible negative impact on Israel. Due to extensive pressure from the Turkish government and other world powers, the Israeli government was compelled to form a formal investigation committee, the Turkel Committee, composed of elderly retired judges, and guided by the principle of maintaining Israeli soldiers’ free hand and protecting the independence and credibility of the army’s operational probing body.²⁷

In retaliation to the Turkey’s firm stand, tens of thousands of Israeli tourists stopped visiting the country, particularly its southern resorts. Instead, on the urging of the Israeli government, they spent their holidays in Israeli resorts. Another domestic repercussion of the aggression was an exchange of barrage of accusations between the Israeli PM Netanyahu and the Defense Minister Barak on the Freedom Flotilla attack. While the former held the latter personally responsible for the failure, Barak placed the responsibility squarely on the army, reflecting



disharmony between Israeli military commanders and the politicians. None of the two sides accepted responsibility for the failure, and the incident passed without voluntary or mandatory resignations from office, aggravating further confusion within the Israeli public opinion. In spite of this aggression and the international condemnation it caused, Israel did not end or relax its GS blockade, and the Israeli left never dared publicly to demand its end, a further demonstration that Israeli society has been increasingly drifting towards the right. Meanwhile, during and after the aggression, Turkish-Israeli relations have progressively and bitterly deteriorated.²⁸

5. Discriminatory Manifestations in Israel

The year 2010 witnessed glaring and unprecedented discriminatory measures against the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who are also known as the 1948 Palestinians or the “Palestinians of the interior.” Many laws were enacted to dilute their citizenship and restrict their nationality, movement and property.²⁹ This discriminatory campaign, part and parcel of the policies of Netanyahu’s government and most of the coalition parties, was not limited to enactment of laws, but, as will be outlined below, extended to issues related to day to day life.

Amongst the laws and manifestations of discrimination against the Palestinians of the interior were the following:

- a. Refusal of the Israeli government to allocate lands to Arabs in Israel, which left them with no option but to pursue unlicensed buildings in their residential units. Evidently, this deliberate and consistent policy of acute restriction of land allocated to Palestinians aims at pushing them into informal migration from their country.
- b. Refusal of the Israeli authorities to absorb the Arabs and to allow them to live in Jewish towns, as this will obstruct the continuity and development of the Zionist project.
- c. The loyalty oath law was submitted to the Knesset by Avigdor Lieberman, the leader of Yisrael Beiteinu. It aimed at consolidating the “Jewishness of the state,” and prohibited family reunion of thousands of Palestinian families living on both sides of the green line, in cases where a spouse living in the 1967 occupied territories married a partner from amongst the 1948 Palestinians. This law obliges every Palestinian living in Israel to declare his loyalty to Israel as a “Jewish state” in lieu of gaining nationality. It also obliges all civil servants of

- the public sector to declare their loyalty too. Netanyahu asserted that this is a democratic law as it addresses all Israel citizens, but in reality it directly targets the 1948 Palestinians, and infringes on their distinctness and national identity.³⁰
- d. The *Nakbah* law, submitted by Yisrael Beitenu MK Alex Miller, prohibits state funds from being used to commemorate the *Nakbah*. This is also in line with the directives of the Israeli minister of education, Gideon Sa'ar, that prohibit the commemoration of the the *Nakbah*, or even mentioning the word, in any of the educational or learning institutions, which should instead focus on celebrating the independence day of Israel.
 - e. The amendment of Citizenship Law which enables courts to revoke citizenship, in addition to issuing prison sentences, against people who are convicted of treason, serious treason, aiding the enemy in a time of war or having committed an act of “terror” against the state. The law was enacted after the participation of the Knesset member Hanin Zoabi in the Freedom Flotilla. It aimed at penalizing and giving a lesson to the Palestinians of the interior and the Knesset easily passed the bill.
 - f. The approval of the ‘Azmi Bishara Law which withholds salary and pensions from MKs suspected or convicted of “terror.” The bill is named after MK ‘Azmi Bishara who was under investigation, suspected of aiding the enemies of Israel. However, this law was not enacted for the public interest, but was a vindictive legislation that targeted Bishara in person.
 - g. By the end of 2010, a bill was proposed by Knesset member Moshe Matalon to require that every citizen granted an exemption from military service be required to do community service.³¹ This draft law was part and parcel of the series of discriminatory laws that aimed at squeezing, alienating and neutralizing the Palestinians, and to constantly place them under the supervision of the security forces. By this move, the Israeli government wanted to appear to be indiscriminately applying the law to all citizens, including the Arabs in Israel. But, at the same time, it was reluctant to recruit the latter en masse in the Israeli army. Thus, to facilitate their “Israeliness” and to subject them to the Israeli equation, the Israel government enacted the alternative of the civil service, another form of institutionalization.
 - h. The decision of the Israeli government to consider both the Ibrahimi Mosque (Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron) and the historic Rachel’s Tomb (Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque in Bethlehem) within Israel’s heritage sites list.

- i. Some Rabbis issued advisory opinions that prohibited selling real estate, houses or flats to Arabs, or leasing flats to them. Moreover, the mixing of Arab men with Jewish women and the entrance of Arabs to Jewish towns was also prohibited. These decrees also ordered, inter alia, the removal of all Arabic sign boards and the prohibition of speaking in Arabic in public places.
- j. The expulsion of illegal workers infiltrating from Africa into Israel via the Egyptian border under different pretexts, such as their contamination with dangerous diseases and epidemics, or that they undermine the Jewish and democratic character of the state of Israel.
- k. Entertaining the idea of prohibiting Arab students in Jewish or mixed schools to speak in Arabic,³² though this has not yet been officially executed. However, some institutions and companies, even in the private sector, prohibited their Arab staff from speaking in their mother tongue.

These examples of discriminatory laws indicate that the Israeli government has been striving to implement the policy of Judaizing Palestine and obliterating its Arab and Islamic symbols. Besides, this was part of the continuous and persistent campaign against the Palestinians of the interior, which aimed at restricting their land, civil and political rights, and obliged them to recognize Israel as a “Jewish state.” Moreover, the Israeli government called upon the PA to endorse this policy, but the latter disavowed from this by saying that it is an internal matter; which, repudiating its relationship with a sizable sector of the Palestinian people.

These laws explicitly and unequivocally show that Israeli society has been accelerating towards more extremism and xenophobia.³³ To add insult to injury, it is even driving towards the imposition of more discriminatory laws and regulations that would further uproot the Palestinians and expel them from their own land, or besiege them in ghettos under the strict observation and control of Israel. It is abundantly clear that Israeli society is inclined towards fascism, and manifestations similar to those imposed upon Jews in Europe in the 1930s.

Most of these explicitly and implicitly racist laws and regulations were officially approved without inciting noticeable opposition from the Israeli public. However, some Israeli intellectuals and human rights activists categorically rejected the subsequent injunctions issued by the Rabbis of Safed and a 100 Israeli settlements and towns that urged Jews to refrain from renting or selling apartments to non-Jews.

Nonetheless, opinion polls reflected a negative perception in Israel towards Arabs. A high percentage of the respondents expressed their rejection of the existence of the Arabs amongst them, opposing their living or staying with them in the same neighborhoods.³⁴

Practically, however, Netanyahu's government had increasingly pursued its policy of destroying houses in the Arab villages and towns on the pretext that their building was not licensed or altogether illegal. The Arab village al-Araqib in Negev had been demolished eight times during 2010, as its residents and their supporters, be they individuals or legal and societal institutions, insisted on rebuilding it in defiance of the policies of the Israeli government. Moreover, Israel had demolished houses of entire families in the city of Lod, whose members became homeless refugees. Besides, houses in the Arab quarter of Jerusalem were consistently demolished and in their space Jewish settlers or investors from within or outside Israel built houses and established settlements.

Consequently, confrontations between the Palestinians of the interior and the Israeli security forces will inevitably increase. The battle will shift and be concerned with residence, since Israel had already confiscated almost all the lands of the Palestinians of the interior, whose ownership was transferred to the state and for the benefit of Jewish society.

Professor Galia Golan, the academic director of the Government Program at the Raphael Recanati International School at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, summarized the racist manifestations in the Knesset and the Israeli public where she said, "I'm not sure that all elements associated with fascism are present here, but one element that is emerging—and should perhaps concern us more than anything else—is racism." She explained:

I'm talking about ethnic or national intolerance entrenched through racist legislation. The definition of 'loyalty' is being linked to ethnicity, religion, or creed. None of it is supposed to be valid within a democracy, yet it is certainly vital for the various versions of fascism, and above all to Nazi fascism, of course.

After that she added, "The second element is radical nationalism, which started to grow in 1967, mostly within the religious-Zionist camp. Today, the forces of this radical nationalism are at the helm, and the combination of racism and nationalism is present in our political culture."³⁵



6. The Rampant Carmel Blaze and Its Repercussions

The rampant Carmel forest blaze of December 2010 revealed the weakness and fragility of Israel's governing institution as well as its internal front. Notwithstanding its militarization to the teeth, Israel utterly failed to control the Carmel blaze, and was compelled to appeal for logistic support from several countries. Moreover, the blaze reminded the Israelis of the shocks of the 2006 war, including the missiles of the Lebanese resistance that fell on Israeli cities and towns, and the consequential mandatory migration of tens of thousands of Israelis towards the south. The blaze had, furthermore, revealed the failure of the Israeli government in general and the Ministry of Interior in particular to equip the stations of the civil defense and the fire brigade with the necessary equipments and personnel. Despite this, to score media and political gains and to exhibit his presumed leadership skills, Netanyahu had personally taken up the leadership of the fire brigade. Throughout the days of the blaze, he availed himself in the emergency room that was established near to the blaze location in Haifa. Nonetheless, some Israeli politicians accused the prime minister and his Minister of Interior Eliyahu "Eli" Yishai of Shas Party of being preoccupied with promoting their partisan and personal interests at the expense of those of the "state of Israel" and its citizens. The weakness of the internal front and the inability to extinguish the blaze had practically—or at least symbolically—reflected the unpreparedness of Israel to confront dangers or external attacks.

In the wake of the blaze, increasing calls were voiced within Israel for an urgent and quick peace deal with the Arabs, as Israel was not ready for war and confrontation. Indeed, the very existence of Israel has become a hostage of foreign aid extended by some big powers that had originally supported its creation in 1948.³⁶ These voices were essentially from the remnants of the left, as well as some individuals who belong to the center of Israeli politics, who realized that the Israeli inability to quickly overcome this internal catastrophe demonstrates lack of readiness to deal with one that may come from outside. However, as appears from the sequence of events, the Carmel wildfire did not give the Israelis in general such a wake up call.

7. Boycott of the Settlements

In protest against settlement building activity, some Israeli artists and intellectuals, particularly in Tel Aviv, boycotted the performances in an Israeli theatre in the Ariel settlement in the WB. Through this move, they also wanted

to express their discontent at the holding of such cultural and social activities at a time when the Palestinians remain subjected to occupation, oppression, misery and forced migration. To counter this, settler leaders and their supporters in the government warned that government aid and funds would be withheld from all artists and their institutions who refrained from participation in these activities. This incident triggered heated controversy between the Israeli leftist elite and the governing institution on the current situation and direction and future relations between Israeli society and the settlers, who have defied world opinion and international law, yet were supported by the Israeli government. In another vein, this incident exposed a reserved opposition among the Israeli intellectual elite to the stagnation of the peace process. However, this limited elitist opposition did not provoke a storm of protest against the illegal activities of the settlers. Nonetheless, there were occasional calls for the condemnation of all kinds of cooperation and participation between mainstream Israeli cultural institutions and those in the settlements, though they remained limited to petitions, messages and media interviews.

8. Leakage of Confidential Military Documents

The confidentiality of Israeli military institutions suffered a serious blow during 2010. Israeli journalist Anat Kam³⁷ leaked hundreds of confidential military documents to another Israeli journalist based outside Israel. This huge scandal provoked violent controversy and a barrage of accusations exchanged between Israeli politicians. There were many calls for the formation of a domestic investigative committee to scrutinize the background of these leaks, and identify those responsible. But the Israeli military felt it more appropriate to contain the controversy, quietly attempting to restore the leaked documents, and trying to return to the traditional policy of confidentiality and reservation. However, in the light of these leaks and Wikileaks' publication of hundreds of thousands of documents, Israeli sources assume, perhaps rightly, underground cooperation between some Israelis on one side and the director and officials of Wikileaks on the other. Nonetheless, the Israeli government downplayed the importance of these leaks in an attempt to divert attention away from their content. Israeli security forces did however arrest the journalist behind these leaks, but remained tight lipped on the course of their investigations.



Second: The Most Prominent Demographic, Economic and Military Indicators

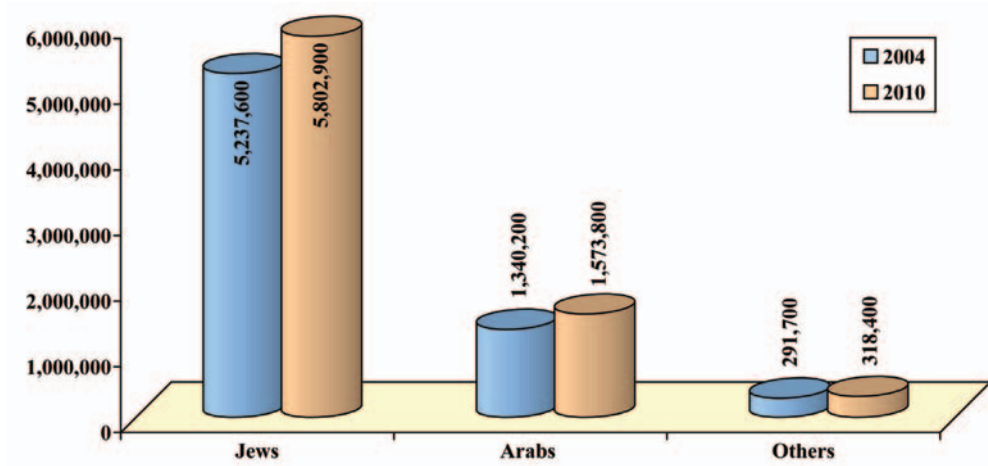
1. Demographic Indicators

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) stated that the total population of Israel by the end of 2010 was 7.695 million, of whom about 5.803 million or 75.4% are Jews. While about 318 thousand, i.e., 4.1%, are tabled by the CBS as “others,” mostly immigrants from Russia, countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern 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 1.574 millions, i.e., 20.5% of the total population (see table 1/2). If we subtract the inhabitants of East Jerusalem (about 270 thousand) and the Golan Heights (approximately 25 thousand), then the number of those identified as 1948 Palestinian is 1.279 million, approximately 16.6% of the total population. Israeli civil administration estimated the number of Jewish settlers in the WB at 313 thousand persons, excluding those in East Jerusalem,³⁸ who were estimated at 200 thousand.³⁹

Table 1/2: Population of Israel 2004–2010⁴⁰

Year	Total population number	Jews	Arabs (including the population of East Jerusalem and in the Golan Heights)	Others
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	7,412,200	5,603,000	1,498,600	310,600
2009	7,552,000	5,703,700	1,535,600	312,700
2010	7,695,100	5,802,900	1,573,800	318,400

Population of Israel 2004 & 2010



By 2010, the average rate of population growth in Israel was 1.9%, almost the same rate of growth experienced each year since 2003. Israeli population growth is 88% natural, as during 2009 there were 165 thousand births, while 40 thousand died.⁴¹

According to the CBS, 16,633 immigrants came to Israel in 2010, compared to 14,572 in 2009 (see table 2/2). But these statistics were different from those given by the Jewish Agency for Israel, which estimated the numbers of the immigrants in 2010 as 19,130.⁴² This discrepancy in the statistics on immigration may be due to the caliber of those registered, i.e., one source may register the actual migrants, another the probable ones, and a third may add the tourists who had at one time opted to be immigrants. However, an overall analysis shows the 2010 figures confirming the decreasing level of Jewish immigration to Israel that began in 2000 and is a reflection of the exhaustion of traditional sources of immigrants. It further reflects that many Diaspora Jews are no longer tempted to move to Israel because they are able to prosper in the United States and Europe. It is interesting to note that this steady decline of immigration to Israel coincides with a rising tendency of counter immigration from it, on average 10 thousand persons annually, and a stagnation in the growth of Jewish population worldwide, with the exception of Israel. The latter development is not associated with immigration to Israel, as may be assumed, but is primarily due to a natural decline in Jewish population growth and increasing desertion of the Jewish religion.⁴³



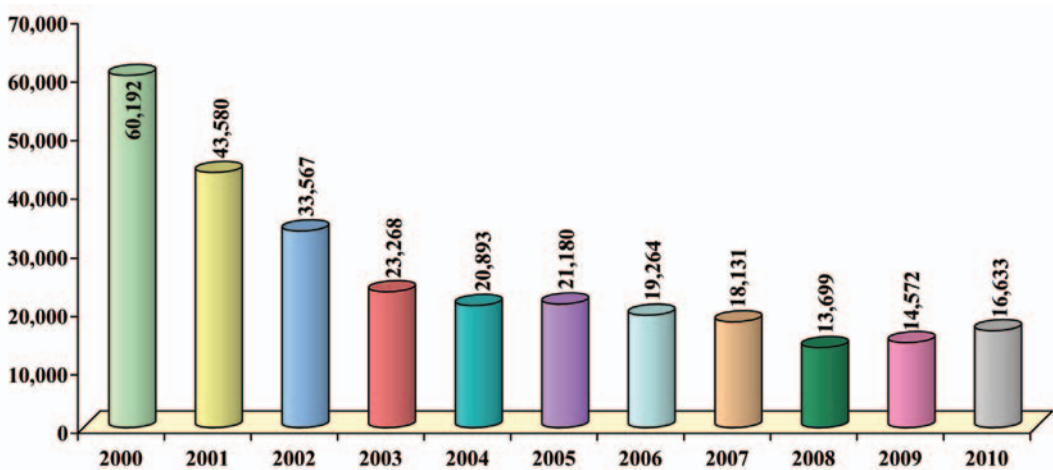
The Jewish Agency report Tentative Final Immigration Figures for 2010 demonstrated that 40% of the total 2010 immigrants to Israel came from the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Germany, while the rest arrived mainly from North America, Latin America, France, the United Kingdom (UK), Belgium, Australia, New Zealand, Ethiopia, and India. The report added that the statistics of the Absorption Ministry and the Jewish Agency show that 52.3% of new immigrants are male and 47.7% female, Jerusalem is the leading city of absorption, and the average age of the immigrants stands at 29.75.⁴⁴

Table 2/2: Numbers of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2010⁴⁵

Year	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
No. of immigrants	609,322	346,997	60,192	43,580	33,567	23,268	20,893

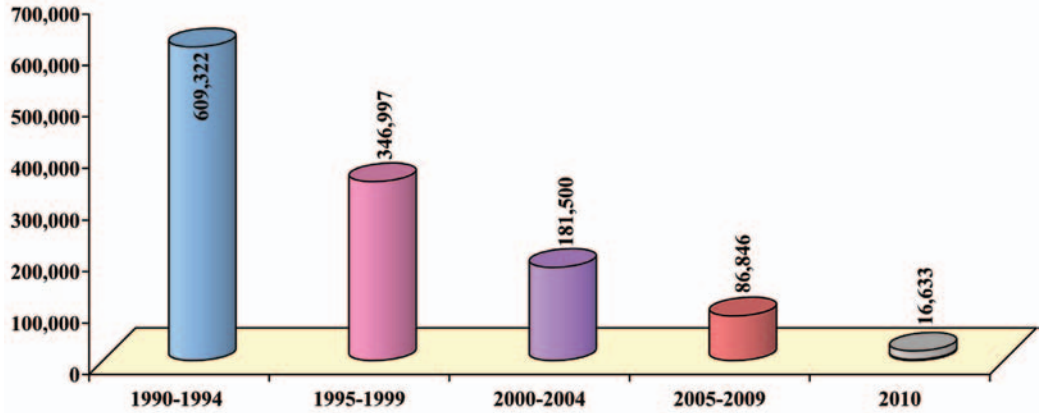
Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
No. of immigrants	21,180	19,264	18,131	13,699	14,572	16,633	1,241,298

Numbers of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 2000–2010



The following graph reveals the decline in the number of Jewish immigrants in the period 1990–2010. The graph is divided into five years periods and it shows that Jewish immigration declined during the last five years to 14% of the levels reached during the first five years.

Numbers of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2010



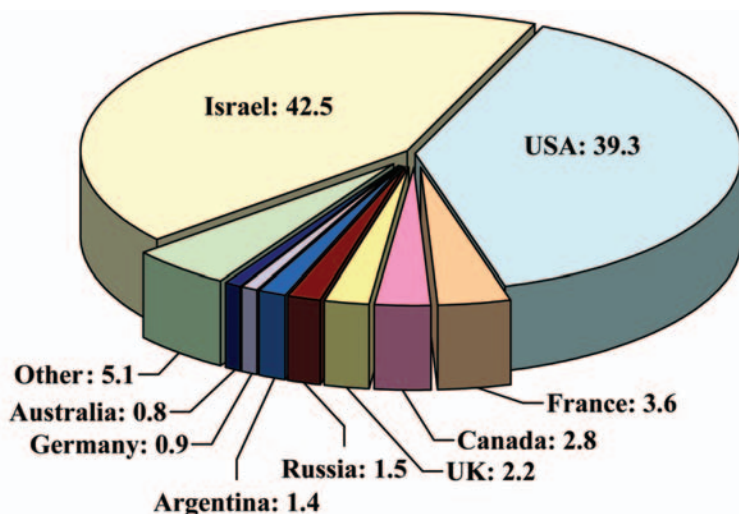
Sergio Della Pergola, a specialist on the demography of world Jewry and an activist in the Jewish Agency, estimated the number of Jews in the world by early 2010 as 13.43 million persons, an increase of 80,300 (0.6%) from the 2009 revised estimate. The core Jewish population in the United States was assessed at 5.28 million, about 1.12 million in the countries of the EU, 375 thousand in Canada, 335 thousands in Latin America, 330 thousand in the republics of the former Soviet Union, 115 thousand in Oceania, 76 thousand in Africa, approximately 55 thousand in Central America and about 21 thousand in the Balkan countries. As for the Arab world, there are 4,100 Jews, residing in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Syria (see table 3/2). In the same vein, Pergola warned against “Jewish population erosion” which is far less significant in Israel than elsewhere and in which intermarriage plays a major factor. The increasing rates of intermarriage reached 75% in the former Soviet Union, 55% in the US, more than 40% in the UK and France, 35% in Canada and 25% in Australia.⁴⁶

Table 3/2: World Jewish Population by Country at the Beginning of 2010

Country	Israel	USA	France	Canada	UK	Russia	Argentina	Germany	Australia	Other	Total
Estimate (thousands)	5,703.7	5,275	483.5	375	292	205	182.3	119	107.5	685.3	13,428.3
Percentage (%)	42.5	39.3	3.6	2.8	2.2	1.5	1.4	0.9	0.8	5.1	100



World Jewish Population by Country at the Beginning of 2010 (%)



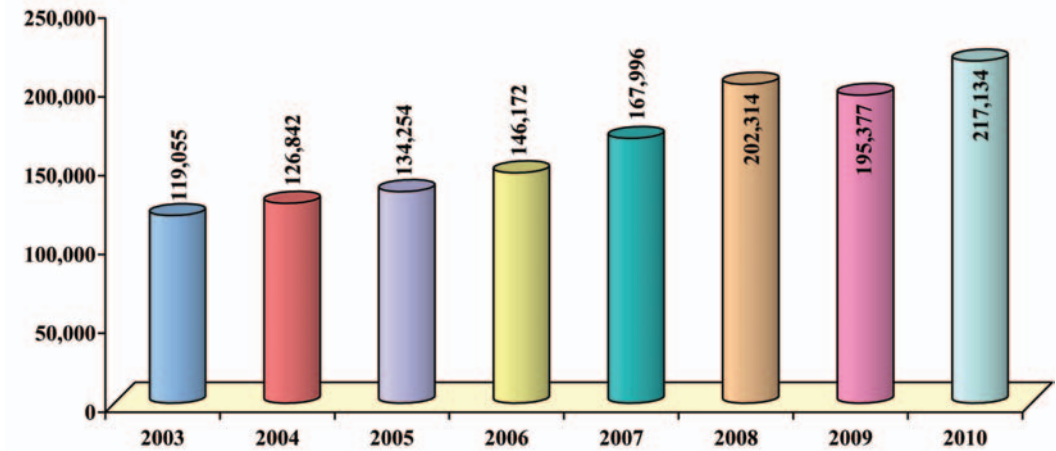
2. Economic Indicators

Israeli Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for 2010 totaled \$217.13 billion, compared to \$195.38 billion in 2009 (see table 4/2), which, according to the figures of the Bank of Israel, constitutes a growth of 4.6%.⁴⁷ (5.5% if counted in shekels). Note that most of the statistics in this study are derived from official sources that regularly update and revise their records.

Table 4/2: Israeli Gross Domestic Product 2003–2010⁴⁸

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	602,507	134,254	4.4878
2006	651,416	146,172	4.4565
2007	690,144	167,996	4.1081
2008	725,861	202,314	3.5878
2009	768,339	195,377	3.9326
2010	810,561	217,134	3.733

Israeli Gross Domestic Product 2003–2010 (\$ million)

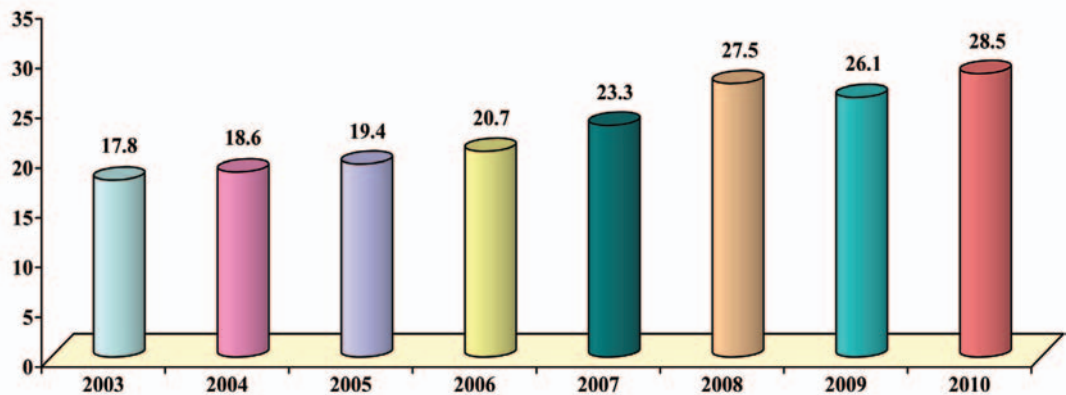


According to the official statistics, per capita income in Israel increased from 102,671 shekels (\$26,108) in 2009 to 106,369 shekels (\$28,494) in 2010 (see table 5/2).

Table 5/2: Israeli GDP per Capita 2003–2010 at Current Prices
(\$ thousand)⁴⁹

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
GDP per capita	17.8	18.6	19.4	20.7	23.3	27.5	26.1	28.5

Israeli GDP per Capita 2003–2010 (\$ thousand)



The 2010 Israeli economy had not been greatly influenced by the global economic crisis largely because of its strong infrastructure and diversity, and the government austerity policy that maintained minimum deficit and large surplus of foreign currencies. This economic development, coupled with the increase of per capita income and the reduction in the unemployment rate, made 2010 a time of political calm for the rightist government of Netanyahu. It was also demonstrated that the incorporation of Israel into the global economy was no longer associated with the peace process, a reality that was reflected in sizeable foreign investments and Israeli exports, as well the admission of Israel in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).⁵⁰

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported in January 2010 that “Israel was mildly affected by the global recession: following a slowdown in 2009,” and that unemployment rate had decreased from 7.7% in 2009 to 6.6% in 2010. The IMF had, furthermore, expected the Israeli GDP to grow by 3.5% in 2011 and unemployment rate to decrease by 5.5%.⁵¹

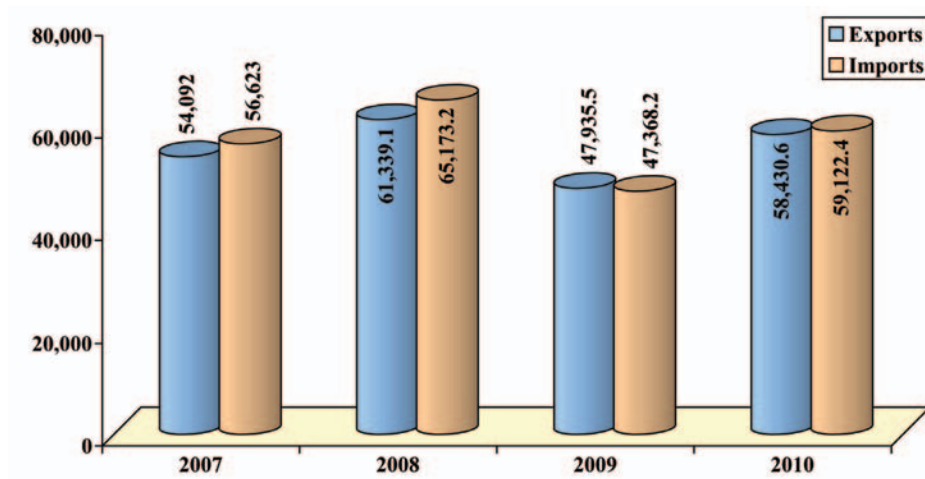
Expenditure for 2010 totaled around 256.037 billion shekels (\$68.587 billion), while revenue for the same year was about 217.241 billion shekels (\$58.195 billion), a budgetary deficit of 17.9%, i.e., 4.8% of the domestic product.⁵² Meanwhile the budget approved by the Knesset for 2011 totaled 348.1 billion shekels (around \$97 billion).⁵³

The value of Israeli exports for 2010 totaled \$58.43 billion, compared to a total of \$47.94 billion in 2009, i.e., an increase of 21.9%. Imports totaled \$59.12 billion in 2010, compared to \$47.37 billion in 2009, an increase of 24.8%. These figures show that the Israeli economy had to a large extent recovered from the repercussions of the global economic crisis (see table 6/2).

Table 6/2: Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2007–2010 at Current Prices (\$ million)⁵⁴

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010
Exports	54,092	61,339.1	47,935.5	58,430.6
Imports	56,623	65,173.2	47,368.2	59,122.4

Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2007–2010 (\$ million)



In 2010, manufacturing exports (excluding diamonds) constituted 79.8% of all export of goods, lower than that of 2009 (82.8% in 2009, 79% in 2008, and 74.1% in 2007). Export of diamonds constituted 17.5%, and 2.7% was agricultural. Distribution of manufacturing exports by technological intensity indicates that high technology industries constituted 49.6% in 2010 compared to 51.2% in 2009. A breakdown of the data of import by use indicates that in 2010, 38.7% of total imports were of raw materials (excluding diamonds and fuels); 14.7% consumer goods; 14.5% machinery, equipment and land vehicles for investment; and the remainder diamonds, fuels and ships and aircraft.⁵⁵

Table 7/2: Israeli Exports by Commodity Group 2009–2010 (\$ million)⁵⁶

Year	Agricultural	Manufacturing	Diamonds		Others	Total
			Polished	Rough		
2009	1,229.9	34,838.7	3,948.9	1,909.1	138.8	42,065.4
2010	1,359.5	40,593.1	5,867.9	3,063.8	9	50,893.3

Table 8/2: Israeli Imports by Commodity Group 2009–2010 (\$ million)⁵⁷

Year	Consumer goods	Raw materials	Investment goods	Fuels	Diamond rough and polished	Others	Total
2009	7,600.8	18,383.5	7,555.2	8,072.7	5,024.6	291.6	46,928.4
2010	8,624.6	22,682.1	8,523.3	10,445.5	7,997.5	354.5	58,627.5

The US continued to be Israel's primary trade partner, as Israeli exports to the US totaled \$18.53 billion in 2010 and constituted 31.7% of the total Israeli exports, while Israeli imports from the US totaled in the same year about \$6.7 billion, i.e., almost 11.3% of total Israeli imports. Israel compensates its trade deficit with most of its trading partners with the trade surplus with the US, which amounts to about \$12 billion. Indeed, this is a massive support to the Israeli economy (see table 9/2).

China grew to be Israel's second largest trade partner in 2010, with Israeli exports and imports to and from the country totaling \$2.05 and \$4.74 billion respectively. Interestingly, compared to 2009, both Israeli exports to China and the Chinese exports to Israel increased in 2010, by 96.4% and 34.5% respectively.

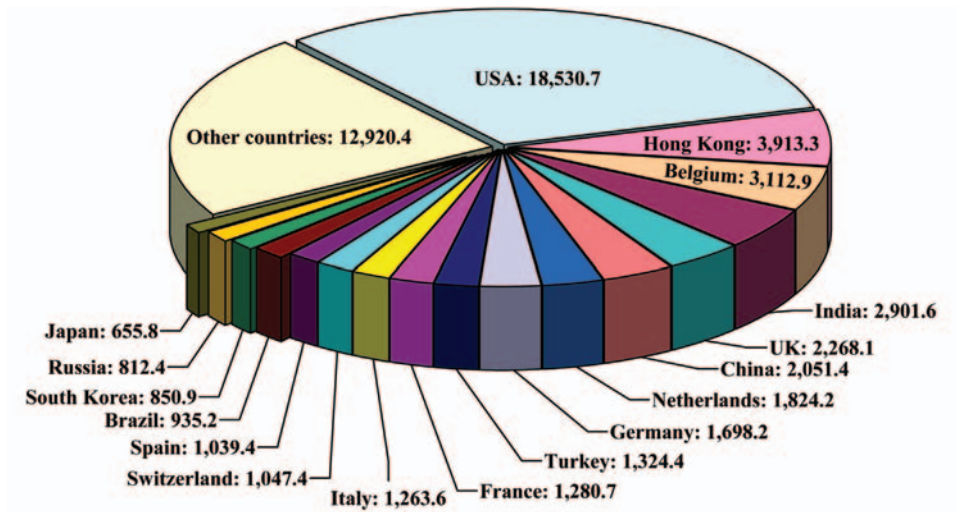
Meanwhile, Belgium was third largest trade partner, though with a smaller change than China. Israeli exports to Belgium and imports from it totaled around \$3.11 and \$3.58 billion respectively, due to the trade in diamond and other expensive minerals, which usually gives Belgium this edge. Next came Germany, where Israeli exports and imports to and from the country were \$1.7 and \$3.68 billion respectively. Hong Kong declined to fifth position, as Israeli exports and imports to and from the city-state totaled \$3.91 and \$1.4 billion respectively. The rise of Israeli exports to Hong Kong can be attributed to it constituting a center for re-exporting Israeli goods to different parts of the world. However, official Israeli statistics recording Hong Kong as the destination of Israeli goods does not mean that they always go there to be re-exported later, and many go to Cyprus or other transit points.

Besides the US, Hong Kong and Belgium, there were other prominent destinations for Israeli exports: India (\$2.9 billion), the UK (\$2.27 billion), China (\$2.05 billion) and Netherlands (\$1.82 billion), in addition to Germany, Turkey, France and Italy. The noticeable rise in Israeli exports to India appears to be associated with trade in armament. Besides the US and China, the most prominent importing countries to Israel in 2010 were Germany (\$3.68 billion), Belgium (\$3.58), Switzerland (\$3.22 billion), Italy (\$2.43 billion), and UK (\$2.24 billion), in addition to Netherlands, India, Turkey and Japan (see table 9/2).

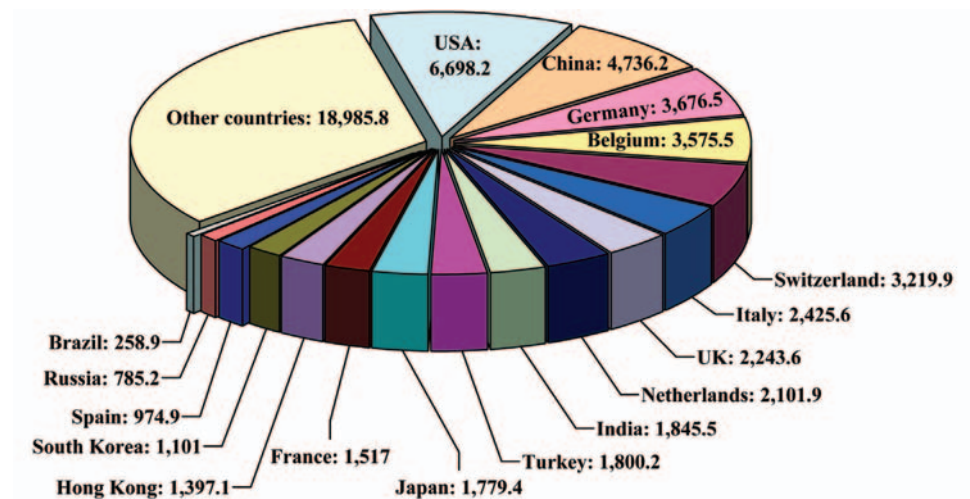
Table 9/2: Israeli Exports and Imports with Selected Countries 2007–2010
(\$ million)⁵⁸

Countries	Israeli exports to:				Israeli imports from:			
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2010	2009	2008	2007
USA	18,530.7	16,774.1	19,972.5	18,906.8	6,698.2	5,849.1	8,034.4	7,848.9
Hong Kong	3,913.3	2,874.2	4,140.8	3,118.4	1,397.1	1,111.5	1,813.7	1,747.5
Belgium	3,112.9	2,371.8	4,618.7	4,070.8	3,575.5	2,567.8	4,250.3	4,454.9
India	2,901.6	1,810.9	2,361.3	1,613.7	1,845.5	1,157.4	1,648.8	1,689.6
UK	2,268.1	1,423.5	1,892.7	1,938.1	2,243.6	1,907.2	2,519.9	2,681.4
China	2,051.4	1,044.6	1,293.5	1,040.6	4,736.2	3,521.1	4,244	3,476.9
Netherlands	1,824.2	1,550.8	2,035	1,609.3	2,101.9	1,885.4	2,465.3	2,090.3
Germany	1,698.2	1,440.3	1,950.6	1,913	3,676.5	3,361.8	3,940.5	3,484.3
Turkey	1,324.4	1,086	1,609.9	1,195.8	1,800.2	1,387.7	1,825.3	1,606.9
France	1,280.7	1,110.6	1,298	1,313.2	1,517	1,428.7	1,889.2	1,480.9
Italy	1,263.6	1,103	1,668.8	1,284.4	2,425.6	2,126	2,553.7	2,302.1
Switzerland	1,047.4	942.3	1,210.4	1,036.1	3,219.9	3,290	3,973.6	2,882.3
Spain	1,039.4	940.5	1,108	1,106	974.9	880.1	959.1	811.9
Brazil	935.2	716.5	1,172	671.6	258.9	207.8	297.2	270.7
South Korea	850.9	841	818.5	746.1	1,101	871.1	1,103.2	945.4
Russia	812.4	656.1	777	611.5	785.2	488.6	1,047.1	1,398.8
Japan	655.8	527.6	883	769.6	1,779.4	1,523.7	2,226.7	1,882.1
Other countries	12,920.4	10,721.7	12,528.4	11,147	18,985.8	13,803.2	20,381.2	15,568.1
Total	58,430.6	47,935.5	61,339.1	54,092	59,122.4	47,368.2	65,173.2	56,623

Israeli Exports to Selected Countries 2010 (\$ million)



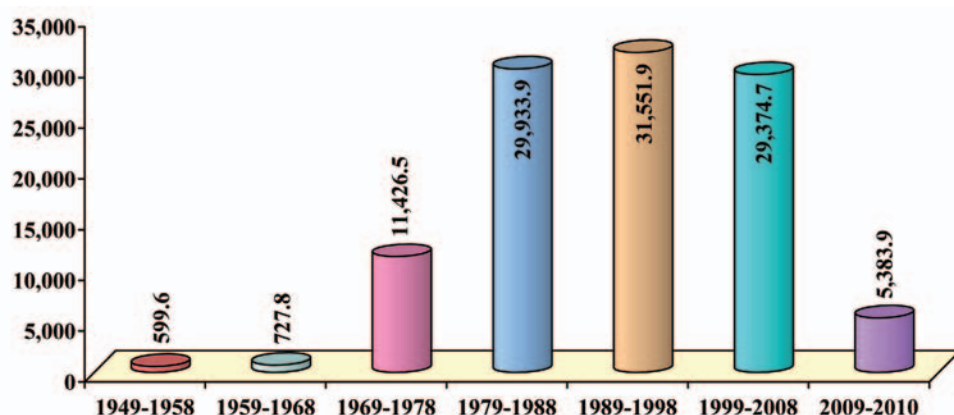
Israeli Imports from Selected Countries 2010 (\$ million)



Though Israel is considered a rich and developed country, it still receives huge annual assistance in the form of military assistance from the US. This amounted in 2010 to \$2.775 billion, compared to \$2.55 billion in 2009. Hence, the aid that America extended to Israel during the period 1949–2010 reached, according to the report of Congressional Research Service (CRS), \$108.998 billion (see table 10/2).

Table 10/2: American Aid to Israel 1949–2010 (\$ million)⁵⁹

Period	1949–1958	1959–1968	1969–1978	1979–1988	1989–1998	1999–2008	2009–2010
Total	599.6	727.8	11,426.5	29,933.9	31,551.9	29,374.7	5,383.9

American Aid to Israel 1949–2010 (\$ million)

Israel received 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 the Camp David Accords with Egypt in 1979 and up to the Oslo Accords of 1993, American aid to Israel totaled \$45.93 billion, which increased to \$50.31 billion during the period 1994–2010.⁶⁰

However, with the significant improvement of the performance of the Israeli economy in the mid 1990s, the American financial aid to Israel has become less convincing to many sectors of American society and to the world at large. Hence, in 1998, Israeli, and US congressional, and Administration officials agreed to reduce the \$1.2 billion in Economic Support Fund (ESF) to zero over 10 years, by an annual rate of \$120 million, while increasing Foreign Military Financing (FMF) from \$1.8 billion to \$2.4 billion, starting the year 2000 and by an annual rate of \$60 million.⁶¹ 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 annual increases in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to Israel, reaching \$3 billion a year by [Fiscal Year] FY 2018.⁶²

3. Military Indicators

During 2010, the Israeli military establishment experienced “obsessions” similar to those of the preceding year. It focused on the Palestinian situation in general, Iran and its nuclear program, and the armament of what it called radical forces in the region, in reference to Syria, Hamas and Hizbullah; in addition to stability in neighboring Arab states. Israel’s northern front with Lebanon was on the whole calm, though Israel continued its violation of the Lebanese airspace, and recruitment of agents and spy rings inside Lebanon. Similar calm prevailed along Israel’s southern front with GS, while Israel continued its siege and occasional air strikes on the Gazans. However, the peoples revolutions and democratic transformations that erupted in the Arab world towards the end of 2010 constitute a source of extreme worry and apprehension to Israel. Particularly so is the spectacular development along its southern frontiers, namely the Egyptian revolution which toppled President Husni Mubarak and which could have profound impacts on the overall situation in the region.

The Israeli military and security establishment experienced during 2010 several changes in its top brass personnel. Major-General Yoav Galant was scheduled to succeed Lieutenant-General Gabi Ashkenazi as the Chief of the General Staff of the Israeli army. But the former was sidelined because he seized public lands near his Moshav Amikam home in northern Israel. Instead, the Deputy Chief of Staff Major-General Benny Gantz was promoted to the position in February 2011; while the retired Major-General Yair Naveh was appointed to replace Gantz, to be the first religious officer to be appointed to such a position.⁶³ Other prominent appointees in the military and security establishments were Major-General Tal Russo, who succeeded Major-General Yoav Galant as the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Southern Command. Moreover, Major-General Aviv Kochavi succeeded Major-General Amos Yadlin as the head of Directorate of Military Intelligence (Aman). The government also appointed Tamir Pardo as the head of the Mossad in succession to Meir Dagan who retired from this post in early 2011 after eight years service in this position.⁶⁴

In a matter related to the structure of the Israeli army and the ideological orientations of its employees, the monthly Israeli army journal *Ma’arachot*, published a study on 13/9/2010 which identified a steep rise in the number of religious officers in the army, particularly in combat units. This indicates that the

army is increasingly dominated by religious extremism. The research shows the proportion of religious infantry officers jumping from 2.5% in 1990 to 31.4% in 2007. Only 26% of those who graduated infantry officer courses in 2008 were religious. But throughout the last decade, the proportion of religious officers graduating from such courses has ranged from 22.5% to 31.4%. Thus, the rise in the number of religious officers remains clearly visible.⁶⁵ In the same vein, an analysis conducted by the Israeli military magazine *Bamahane* reported that 13% of all combat company commanders on active service in the Israeli army come from WB settlements, a five-fold over-representation based on their proportion of the general population of Israel. The record-holder among settlements for numbers of commanders is settlement of Eli, in Nablus.⁶⁶

Meanwhile the Israeli military establishment continued during 2010 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.⁶⁷

Within its drive to draw lessons from the wars on Lebanon and GS, Israel conducted during 2010 a military drill to test the readiness of the internal front to confront what it called “Total War” that Israel might be exposed to. Like drills conducted under the same name and for the same purpose during the last three years, “Turning Point 4” took place during the period 23–27/5/2010 to test the country’s responses to a scenario of hundreds of rockets being fired on Israel.⁶⁸ Moreover, on 13–14/1/2010, an exercise, code named Orange Flame 4, simulating a response to a biological warfare attack was carried out in the Dan region. The exercise was carried out in Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan, and Holon and aimed to evaluate the ability of the Home Front, medical services, rescue teams and the municipal authorities to respond in the conditions created by a biological catastrophe caused either by attacks or by accident.⁶⁹

To further strengthen the Israeli missile deterrence power versus the “Iranian threat,” Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd. (IAI), in a joint project with the United States developed advanced interceptor systems Arrow 3. This system, also known as “Super Arrow,” is an upper tier interceptor in Israel’s multilayer defense concept is designed to intercept ballistic missiles carrying unconventional warheads in the



exoatmosphere. The technological idea at the core of the new interceptor is the two-stage engine: the first engine lifts the missile into the exoatmosphere, separates, and the missile remains with the second engine, the maneuvering missile. The interceptor's uniqueness lies in its light weight and absence of dynamite. Instead, it employs a sophisticated, electro-optical homing warhead that "sees" a wide spectrum while in flight, and allows for very high maneuverability that gives the missile a high degree of freedom for defensive purposes. Thus, the time needed for interception is also shortened. On 27/7/2011, Israel has field-tested the Arrow 3 interceptor, which shot down a mock enemy ballistic missile in a trial flight.⁷⁰ It is noteworthy that the US House appropriators have pushed funding for Israeli missile defense programs to its highest level ever, with \$422.7 million slated for 2011. The lion's share—\$108.8 million—will go to the Arrow 3 system.⁷¹

In a related development, on 19/7/2010, the final testing of the Iron Dome missile defense system proved its success in encountering and intercepting a number of missiles fired simultaneously from different directions.⁷² According to Ynetnews, each Iron Dome battery, including the accompanying radar systems and interception rocket stockpiles, is estimated to cost \$15.5–20 million, while the cost of one intercepting missile for the Iron Dome system stands at some \$50 thousand, compared to Qassam and Grad rockets that range from \$100 to \$1,000.⁷³ In May 2010, the US House of Representatives approved \$205 million in new funding for Israel's Iron Dome missile defense project.⁷⁴

The Israeli military deployed the first mobile battery of a new antirocket missile defense system on 27/3/2011 on the outskirts of Beersheba city. PM Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel said that he did not want to "foster the illusion" that Iron Dome would "provide a complete or comprehensive answer" to the rocket threat. "Iron Dome is still in the experimental stage, and we do not have the possibility of deploying batteries to protect every home, school, base and installation," he said. Moreover, Israeli officials warned that the system was still experimental and could not provide the country with full protection from approaching rockets.⁷⁵

The effectiveness of the Iron Dome system in protecting the inhabitants of the Israeli towns that surround GS provoked a heated debate in Israel. In this respect, at a lecture at Haifa University on 30/11/2010, Major-General Gadi Eizenkot, GOC Northern Command, said that the Iron Dome and Arrow missile defense systems are meant to protect Israeli army bases and the army's ability to attack, not

necessarily to protect citizens. He added, “The systems are meant to protect Air Force bases, Navy bases and enlistment bases.”⁷⁶ Conversely, Major-General Yair Golan, GOC Homefront Command, said that the Iron Dome system constituted an essential element in defending the internal front, and that their deterrent capability are good and beyond the expectations of their architects. Similarly, Eshkol Regional Council head Haim Yalin, expressed his resentment to the remarks of Major-General Gadi Eizenkot, saying that he would like to remind everybody of the decision of the government to develop the Iron Dome system through investing a billion shekels (around \$267.88 million) of the public’s resources to protect the settlements around GS, and that since they are in a democratic government, the army is obliged to work in accordance with the government decisions.⁷⁷

The Israeli army also tested the Trophy (ASPRO-A) anti-tank missile defense system, also known as the “Windbreaker” ahead of the planned deployment of Merkava Mk 4 tanks along the GS border. The Trophy system creates a hemispheric protected-zone around armored vehicles such as the Merkava tank and by using advanced radar. The system is designed to detect and track a threat and counters it with a projectile that intercepts the anti-tank missile. The Israeli army decided to deploy Battalion 9 of the 401st Armored Brigade (the “Tracks of Iron” Brigade) along the Gaza border since its tanks are equipped with the Trophy active protection anti-tank-missile defense system. According to sources in the Israeli army, this experiment was successful.⁷⁸ It is worth mentioning that the military had developed this defensive system after The Second Lebanon War in 2006 during which many Israeli Merkava tanks were destroyed.

A joint Greek-Israeli Air Exercise, Minoas 2010, in late May and on 11–14/10/2010, was held above the Aegean Sea. The exercises included training for aerial combat, attacks on terrestrial targets, long-range missions and mid-air refueling. The exercise also included search and rescue missions.⁷⁹ Following the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla, Greece stopped these maneuvers, but the relations between the two countries soon improved after an official visit that Netanyahu paid to Athens in August 2010; the first of its kind for an Israeli prime minister. Interestingly, these joint maneuvers took place after the stoppage of the ones that the Israeli air force used to undertake over Turkey, and which were terminated by the Turkish government in protest at the Israeli war on GS in 2008, and the Israeli aggression of 31/5/2010 on the Turkish ship the Mavi Marmara of the Freedom Flotilla.



On 26/7/2010, during joint training in Romania, an Israeli military helicopter, Yas'ur, crashed in mountainous terrain near Brasov, in central Romania. The Israelis on board all died and they included four pilots and two airborne mechanics.⁸⁰ Due to the physical similarity between the area in which these maneuvers took place and mountainous Iran, it is possible that Israeli preparations are ongoing to launch a probable military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities. Moreover, on 24/10/2010, *The Jerusalem Post* revealed that the Israeli and American armies had just concluded a four-day-long simulation exercise called Juniper Falcon which tested the level of coordination between the two countries in the event of future conflicts.⁸¹

Within the Israeli military armament program, the Knesset Finance Committee and the Committee for the Defense Budget approved on 20/9/2010 a deal to acquire 20 American F-35 fighter planes at a cost of \$2.75 billion,⁸² which was officially signed in New York on 17/10/2010. According to the terms of this agreement, Israel should have these planes during the period 2015–2017.⁸³ The cost of this deal will be deducted from American aid to Israel.

On 17/11/2010, *The Jerusalem Post* reported that the Israel Air Force has significantly boosted its precision strike capabilities with the recent arrival of the first batch of GBU-39 Small Diameter Bombs (SDB) from the United States, and added that Israel is the first country outside of the US to receive the weapon.⁸⁴ Moreover, American documents provided by Wikileaks in December 2010 revealed that the American administration had agreed to supply Israel with GBU-28 bombs that could be used in an attack on the Iranian nuclear facilities. In the same vein, *Haaretz* newspaper reported on 8/6/2010 that Israel requested to increase the amount of gear held by the American army in their emergency stores in Israel by 50%, from \$800 million to \$1.2 billion.⁸⁵

On 22/6/2010 Israel launched a spy satellite, Ofek 9, which has the same characteristics as previous ones of the same family (Ofek 5 and Ofek 7) that were placed in space.⁸⁶

Israeli military consumption in 2010 totaled 50.92 billion shekels (\$13.64 billion),⁸⁷ while the expected consumption for 2011 is 54.2 billion shekels (\$15.12 billion). However, *Haaretz* newspaper reported that the 2010 budget actually provided for 53.2 billion shekels in defense outlays, as the discrepancy between official budget figures and the real budgets are the product of a special privilege accorded the Defense Ministry.⁸⁸

In 2011, the Defense Ministry was allocated \$16 billion for its annual budget. The government has also agreed to provide the ministry with another \$1.45 billion to complete classified programs, and thus, bring the budget up to about \$18 billion. Undoubtedly, advocates of increased Israeli military spending have been given the boost of the uprisings in the Arab world.⁸⁹

In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*, Defense Minister Ehud Barak stated that Israel will need to boost military spending and may seek an additional \$20 billion in US security assistance to help it manage potential threats stemming from popular upheavals in the Arab world.⁹⁰ As demonstrated in tables 4/2 and 11/2 the military budget (in Shekels) for 2003 constituted 8.6% of domestic product while that for 2010 was 6.3%. However, if the figures reported by *Haaretz* newspaper are confirmed, the 2010 percentage will increase to 6.6%. The point to be emphasized here is that the military burden on resources is decreasing, though the figures of the military budget are increasing. The same conclusion stands if we calculate the percentage in dollars.

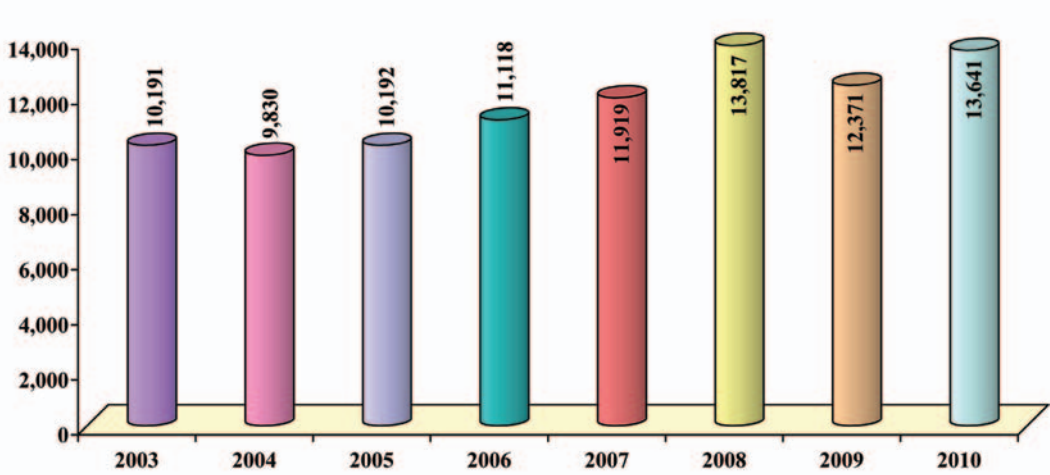
Table 11/2: Israeli Military Consumption 2003–2010⁹¹

Year	Military consumption (million shekels)	Military consumption at current prices (\$ million)	GDP* (million shekels)	% 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	602,507	7.6
2006	49,546	11,118	651,416	7.6
2007	48,965	11,919	690,144	7.1
2008	49,574	13,817	725,861	6.8
2009	48,649	12,371	768,339	6.3
2010	50,922	13,641	810,561	6.3

* Review table 4/2.



Israeli Military Consumption 2003–2010 (\$ million)



Though enjoying a central position in Israeli state and society, the Israeli army experienced in 2010, as in previous years, problems recruiting suitable soldiers.⁹² *The Jerusalem Post* newspaper reported that Major-General Avi Zamir, head of the army's Manpower Division, told reporters that 50% of Israeli men between the ages of 18 and 40 already do not serve in the Israeli army, either in their mandatory service or in the reserves corps, and that 60% of 18-year-olds will dodge the draft by 2020. The main cause for the increase in draft-dodging numbers, Zamir said, was the increasing number of haredi men who received an exemption from military service due to their ultra-Orthodox beliefs.⁹³

Israel continued to be, during the year 2010, the one of the world's top four exporters of arms. The Israeli Defense Ministry announced that Israeli industries noted a record in 2010 in defense exports, reaching an unprecedented \$7.2 billion in comparison to \$6.9 billion in 2009.⁹⁴ Israel seems to be planning to diversify its markets, increasing arms sales to countries which have not significantly curbed their defense spending, including in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Russia.⁹⁵

Third: Aggression and Resistance

Though Israel had in one way or another continued during 2010 its aggression on the Palestinian people, the year had on the whole witnessed what is best described as an undeclared ceasefire. While the Palestinian missiles fired from GS towards the Israeli towns and cities had substantially decreased, Israel had correspondingly refrained from launching major military operations against GS. Similar calm prevailed in the WB, particularly so because of the increasing security cooperation between the security forces of the PA and the Israeli army. However, Israel continued the closure of GS, intensified its blockade, and maintained the campaigns of incursions and arrests in the WB.

According to the statistics of the Shabak, 2010 has displayed a decline in the number of rocket launches from GS towards Israel: 150 launches as opposed to 569 in 2009. Moreover, the number of mortar shell attacks dropped from 289 in 2009 to 215 launches in 2010. As for the WB and Jerusalem, 455 attacks were executed in 2010, as opposed to 636 attacks in 2009. It should be noted that 402 of the 455 attacks, were in the form of firebomb throwing.⁹⁶

1. The Killed and Wounded

During 2010, 107 Palestinians were killed in GS and the WB, including Jerusalem, amongst whom were 10 children, four women, two political detainees in Israeli jails, and 9 Turkish nationals. On the other hand, 967 Palestinians and international supporters were wounded by Israeli gunfire.⁹⁷

Throughout 2010, 9 Israelis were killed, as opposed to 15 in 2009. One attack, carried out in August near Kiryat Arba, resulted in the deaths of 4 Israelis driving through the area. Throughout 2010, 28 people were injured.⁹⁸

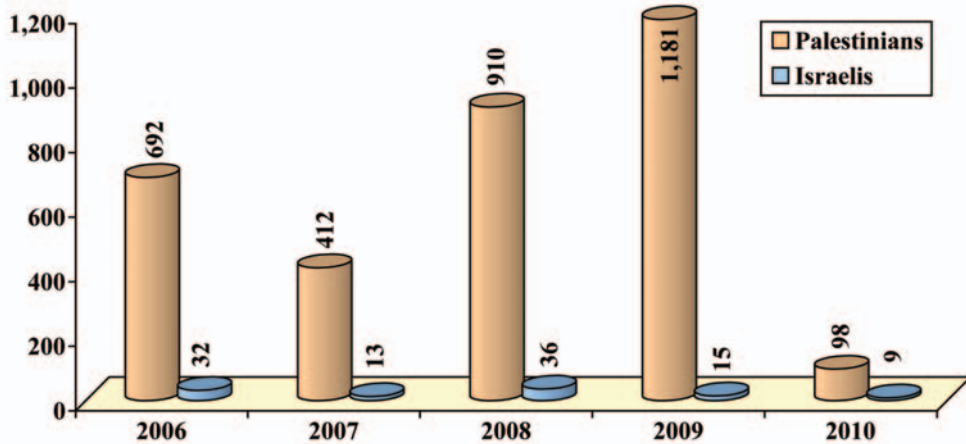
**Table 12/2: The Killed and Wounded Among Palestinians and Israelis
2006–2010⁹⁹**

Year	Killed		Wounded	
	Palestinians	Israelis	Palestinians	Israelis
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
2010	98	9	967*	28

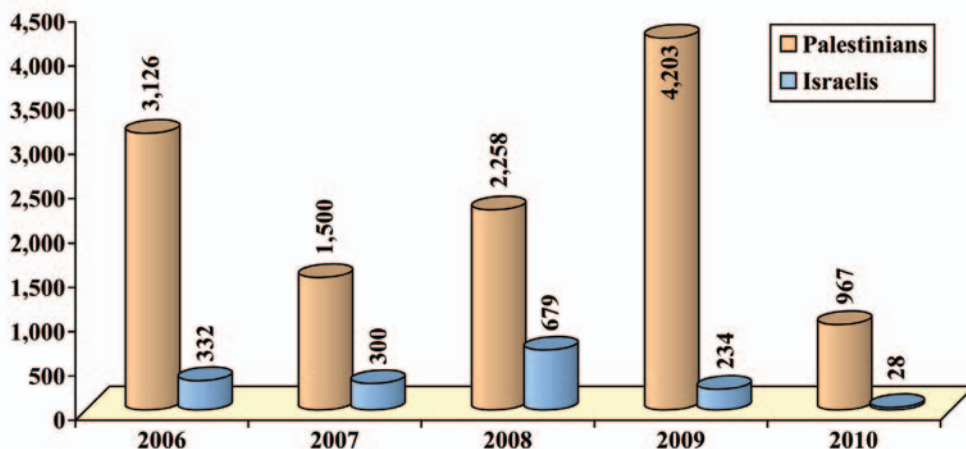
*Including international supporters.



Palestinians and Israelis Killed 2006–2010



Palestinians and Israelis Wounded 2006–2010



2. Prisoners and Detainees

Like 2009, 2010 was catastrophic for the Palestinians detained in Israeli prisons. A report by the Head of the Statistics Department in the PA's Ministry of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs Abdul Nasser Farawaneh said that in June 2011 the number of prisoners totaled approximately six thousand, amongst whom were 37 women, 245 children and 18 MPs.¹⁰⁰ In 2010 prisoners from the WB totaled 5,840¹⁰¹ (excluding East Jerusalem), 714 from GS, and

approximately 390 from East Jerusalem and from the Arab population inside Israel. Additionally, many were from different Arab nationalities.¹⁰² Among the detainees were 200 awaiting trial, those classified as administrative detainees, and others presumed by Israel to be “unlawful combatants.”¹⁰³

During 2010, Israel arrested 4,168 Palestinians, an average of 11 per day, down from 14 in 2009. Most of those arrested during 2010 were in the WB, including Jerusalem, while a significant number were in GS, including fishermen arrested in the high seas. As articulated in a report by Abdul Nasser Farawaneh, the overall numbers of the detainees has gradually decreased during the last four years (2007–2011), but the real danger is that detention has become daily practice, and an established tradition and culture of whoever works in the Israel’s security establishment. No day passes without an arrest of some kind, and, contrary to the claim of the Israelis, most of these arrests are not necessarily for security reasons, or justified by the Israeli law itself, but had been undertaken arbitrarily or in revenge. The arrests of 2010 included all sectors of Palestinian society: children, women, mothers, wives, the disabled and the sick, in addition to tens of MPs, political leaders and former ministers.¹⁰⁴

According to a report by the Ministry of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, Israel arrested during 2010 about one thousand children aged 15–17, and that the highest number of detainees was in the Jerusalem area (500 cases), followed by Hebron. Most of these children were accused of throwing stones at the settlers. The report also indicated that the number of children arrested in 2010 was more than in all previous years, totaling about 700 cases, and that most of the arrested children were imprisoned for a duration of 2–6 months, with heavy fines imposed on their families.¹⁰⁵

Table 13/2: Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails 2010–2011¹⁰⁶

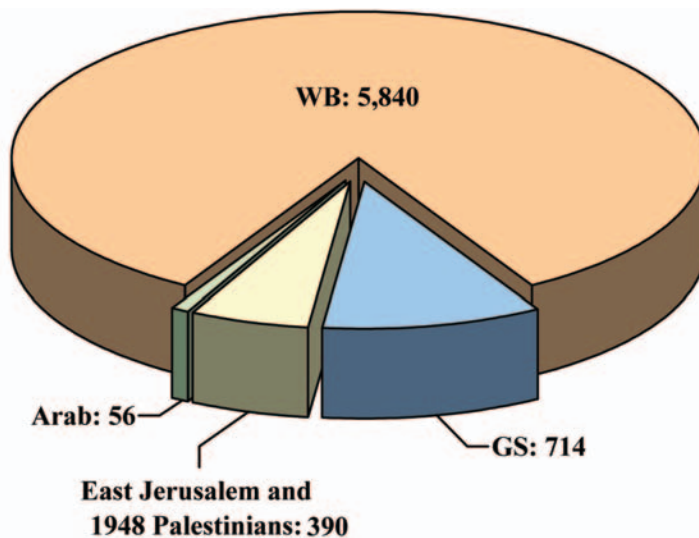
No. of detainees on 1/1/2010	No. of detainees on 28/6/2011	Detainees during 2010		No. of women by 28/6/2011	No. of children by 28/6/2011
		WB	GS		
7,500	6,000	4,068	100*	37	245

*Estimates of detainees in GS were based on a report issued by the Ministry of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs.

Table 14/2: Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails According to Geographic Locations by the End of 2010¹⁰⁷

WB (excluding East Jerusalem)	GS	East Jerusalem and 1948 Palestinians	Arab	Total
5,840	714	390	56	7,000

Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails According to Geographic Locations by the End of 2010



During 2010, Hamas continued to detain the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in GS. Since his detention in June 2006, Hamas conditioned his release on a deal by which approximately one thousand Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails should be freed. Though the German mediation had activated this issue during 2010, the year, like its predecessors, passed without a deal on the issue.

2010 did not witness improvements in the treatment of the Palestinian detainees; on the contrary their conditions deteriorated. Medical negligence, torture, denial of visits, either individually under the pretext of “security prohibition,” or collectively as was the case with Gazans, in addition to poor food, insufficient blankets and clothes, and confiscation of the detainees’ money had all continued. A report by Abdul Nasser Farawaneh on the conditions of the detainees during the 2010

emphasized that they were indiscriminately exposed to psychological or physical torture as well as to insults in public or in front of their own families. Moreover, torture has become a permanent policy, and most of the detainees experienced more than one form of it.¹⁰⁸

Many racist bills were also issued during 2010, legalizing the policies of oppression and violation of the rights of Palestinian prisoners. The first reading of “Shalit Law” was endorsed, which deprives a detainee of family visits, watching television, reading books and newspapers and the option to pursue academic studies, along with increasing the duration of solitary confinement.¹⁰⁹ The Knesset passed a new law that prohibited Palestinian prisoners from seeing their solicitors for six months instead of the previous practice of three weeks, while the Israel Prison Service abrogated the principle of subtraction from the imprisonment duration, thus depriving the prisoners from their right to reduce their jail prison according to the years they stay in prison: 21 days for a one year stay, 35 days for two, 45 for more than two and 75 days for five years stay in prison.¹¹⁰ In 2010 two prisoners died inside Israeli jails because of deliberate medical negligence, namely Ra'id Mahmud Ahmed Abu Hammad (31 years) of al-'Eizariya in Jerusalem, and Muhammad 'Abd al-Salam Musa 'Abidin (39 years) from Jerusalem.¹¹¹

Fourth: The Israeli Position Towards the Domestic Palestinian Situation

During the year 2010, Israel maintained the same strategy that it had pursued towards the domestic Palestinian situation since the political and geographical schism and the stumbling of the reconciliation efforts in 2007. Some Israeli studies maintain that Israel had adopted a dual policy that distinguished between the WB and GS. Certainly, the core of the Israeli strategy works within some fixed objectives, of which three objectives are particularly prominent. First, to maintain the occupation by keeping the Israeli settlements and confiscating land, as is the case in the WB; or through the control of land, sea and air exits, as is the case in GS. Secondly, to restructure the social fabric of Palestinian society in a way that ensures the continuation of the occupation. Thirdly, to abort economic development in WB and GS.



In dealing with the PA in Ramallah, Israel continued its occupation of lands in the WB. Notwithstanding the temporary and partial 10-month moratorium during 2010, Israel had, on the other hand, continued its settlement drive and confiscation of land in WB, with particular focus on Jerusalem being the presumed “permanent and united capital” of Israel. With regards developmental issues, Human Rights Watch (HRW) released at the end of 2010, a report entitled *Separate and Unequal*, explaining how Israeli policies in the WB discriminate against Palestinian residents, depriving them of basic necessities while providing lavish amenities for Jewish settlements. Moreover, lands were unlawfully confiscated from Palestinians without compensation for the benefit of settlers.¹¹² Ultimately, the unavoidable fact is that the Palestinians of the WB live in ghettos that are subjected to constant Israeli maneuvers to disintegrate, impoverish, and obstruct their development. Simultaneously, security coordination in the WB between the security forces of the PA and the Israeli army continued at a sizable scale during 2010.

Though Israeli propaganda asserts that the Israel relaxed its siege of GS and allowed the import of many products previously prohibited after the attack on the freedom flotilla on 31/5/2010, Israel had, in fact, effectively maintained throughout 2010 its blockade of GS, which was based on the policy slogan “no prosperity, no development, no humanitarian crisis.” An American diplomatic cable leaked by Wikileaks reported that Israel told US officials in 2008 it would keep Gaza’s economy “on the brink of collapse” while avoiding a humanitarian crisis, according to the cable published by the Norwegian daily *Aftenposten* newspaper on 5/1/2011.¹¹³

In the military arena, 2010 witnessed noticeable calm on the frontiers of GS. While only 150 missiles were fired from GS towards the surrounding Israeli towns, Israel had correspondingly waged limited military strikes in different parts of the Strip, particularly on the tunnels’ region along the Egyptian frontiers.

Despite the Israeli blockade and the comprehensive military strike, codenamed “Cast Lead,” on GS towards the end of 2008, Israel failed to dislodge Hamas from ruling GS. Nevertheless, the deteriorating economic conditions resulting from the blockade have deprived Hamas of the opportunity to freely govern GS. Moreover, the security conditions that followed operation “Cast Lead” crippled Hamas’ capability to fight or effectively resist the occupation.

Towards the end of 2010 there was a rumor of an imminent large scale Israeli military strike on GS. The military option, though, places Israel in a predicament, as it would need to remain in GS for several months in order to destroy Hamas' infrastructure. This will come at a high price for Israel on multiple levels. Crucially, President Mahmud 'Abbas would be the big political loser in this eventuality as he will appear, or be exhibited, to be supporting military confrontation with Hamas. Moreover, Israel has always been keen to exploit the Palestinian political schism to evade their responsibilities under peace agreements, and to exert more pressure and blackmail on the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah.

Responding to news that rival Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas reached a reconciliation agreement in Cairo, PM Benjamin Netanyahu said, "The PA must choose either peace with Israel or peace with Hamas. There is no possibility for peace with both." Despite such statements, the agreement was signed on 3/5/2011, in a ceremony that included Khalid Mish'al and Mahmud 'Abbas.¹¹⁴ This reconciliation agreement, if implemented, is a major challenge for the Israelis, and it can be presumed that the latter will try to abort efforts at reconciliation and other attempts to put the Palestinian house in order.

Fifth: The Path of the Political Settlement

2010 was extremely disappointing to the advocates of the peace process. Though the efforts to resume the negotiations had initially achieved some success by an agreement on indirect, and subsequently direct, negotiations, these negotiations collapsed by the end of the year, and the Americans declared the failure of their efforts to revive them.¹¹⁵

Barack Obama's administration failed to convince Netanyahu's government to accept even a partial and temporary freeze on settlement construction in WB in return for strategic, political, security and military gains to Israel. Subsequently, the American administration declared its commitment to reviving the "peace process," and determination to reach to a peace settlement through parallel negotiations in which the American envoy will shuttle between Palestinian and Israeli sides in an attempt to bridge the deep gulf between their positions on the core issues under discussion, particularly borders and security.



The failure of the negotiations had placed the Palestinian leadership in a difficult position, triggering them to suggest some isolated and contradictory alternatives,¹¹⁶ an attempt to marry the option of negotiations, their major and most preferable course, and other available options. These options include either betting on American recognition of the Palestinian state, or asking the UN Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to do likewise, or alternatively to ask the UNGA to place the Palestinian state under an international mandate (contradicting any request for recognition). This last option would open the door for the “resignation for the sake of peace,” whereby the PA and the PLO halt their commitments to Israel, the President resigns and the PA is dissolved.

Indeed, the peace process remains, in its essence, hollow and void of substance: all process, no peace. Amongst its objectives is to regularly imply that a peace deal is in the making, in order to neutralize world opinion and buy time. Furthermore, negotiations are exploited and used as a cover to impose facts on the ground, liquidate the Palestinian issue, and to make the Israeli version of a peace settlement appear the only possible and pragmatic solution. A further objective of the peace process is to avoid a stalemate and political vacuum that may lead to the emergence of other Palestinian, Arab or international options or projects that are not favored by Israel.

For negotiations to be successful, they must be based on clear and fundamental terms of reference that are binding to both parties. Moreover, they must be backed by willing and able powers to impose a solution if necessary. Hence, the current “peace process” lacked the ingredients of success, and, instead, it has become a facade glossing over the gradual, long term plan, implemented in phases, of liquidating the Palestinian issue. A succinct description would be of a five star occupation, whereby Israel receives rewards, privileges and prestige but offers practically nothing in return.

Since at least 1988, Palestinian policy has been based on the illusion that peace is imminent and the formation of the state is around the corner. The Palestinian leadership appeared to be so convinced by this presumption that when Israel did not adhere to its obligations during the transitional post-Oslo period, the Palestinian leadership called for bypassing this phase on the basis that “what we cannot get retail during the transitional period, we will get wholesale in the final agreement.”

The fallacy that a peace settlement is imminent had been, and still is, the fundamental defect of Palestinian policy. When 'Arafat was finally convinced that he had been deceived, it was too late to retreat, revise or amend the policy. Several developments took place after 'Arafat's assassination. The most prominent among them was the assumption by some individuals among the Palestinian leadership that faulty Palestinian performance was the key factor in Oslo's failure, and that the armed *Intifadah* had destroyed everything.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, they criticized the Palestinian policy of not prioritizing the implementation of the Palestinians' obligations in the Road Map. In their view, these steps would achieve Palestinian interests, and demonstrate to the whole world, particularly the US, that the Palestinians are firmly committed to peace and to the obligations that they undertook. Thus, after the demise of 'Arafat, the Palestinian leadership implemented their obligations in the first phase of the Road Map, though Israel did not. To prove their merit, they established state institutions over which the PA exercised total control, excluding Jerusalem, GS and Area C, which constitutes 60% of the WB. This action served to reduce the whole conflict to the issues of merit and institutions, rather than a struggle for justice and truth, and a conflict between an oppressed people and a brutal occupier.

The above Palestinian policy failed to realize that Israel experienced its most difficult period during the second *Intifadah*, which, irrespective of its mistakes and shortcomings, had projected to the world the true nature of the Palestinian issue, namely a movement of national liberation. However, Israel viewed it as, in the words of Ariel Sharon, "a continuation of our War of Independence." Admittedly, both the US and Israel declared their recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to establish their own state, but emphasized Israeli conditions and dictates. Resolving the demographic issue, obstructing the way towards a one state solution and establishing an Authority that cooperates with Israel were made priorities at the expense of the real issues that underpin the conflict.

Official Palestinian policy did not encourage the American administration to exercise pressure on Israel. It even relieved the US and the international community of their responsibilities as everything was viewed to be in order whether negotiations took place or not. Negotiations resumed after Annapolis Summit of 2008, although the parties can be seen to have been negotiating for the sake of negotiations, with no terms of reference and not conditioned on the halting of settlement building. There have been significant periods when there were no negotiations at all,



as was the case in 2009 and in most of 2010.¹¹⁸ As long as Israeli-Palestinian security and economic cooperation is in place, the political path could be delayed. This was bluntly reiterated by Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, who said that peace is not possible, not now, nor in the coming decades. He recommended that “we should focus on coming up with a long-term intermediate agreement, something that could take a few decades.”¹¹⁹

The Documents Published by Al Jazeera¹²⁰

On Sunday 23/1/2011, Al Jazeera television took the world by surprise by airing a program called The Palestine Papers. Al Jazeera had been given unhindered access to the largest-ever leak of confidential documents related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The trove of documents constitutes 1,700 files, thousands of pages of diplomatic correspondence detailing the inner workings of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. These documents date from 1999 to 2010. Internal investigations by the PA showed that 1,120 out of 43 thousand documents were leaked.¹²¹

The leaked files contained information about the known and documented Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, particularly The Middle East Peace Summit at Camp David 2000 and Taba negotiations of 2001. It also presented new information which showed that previous concessions, which were given before the collapse of the peace process and the bypassing of Oslo Accords, were not enough for the Palestinian negotiator. He went far beyond this. In effect, the Palestinian negotiator had once more placed the Palestinian issue within the framework of a political process that will eliminate it, not resolve it. PLO leaders privately suggested swapping part of the Jerusalem’s Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood for land elsewhere, in addition to concessions made on refugees and holy sites.¹²² Within this framework, we should note the following:

First: It is the right and duty of Al Jazeera to air whatever documents it acquires, provided that it establishes their credibility, and not to support one Palestinian partner at the expense of another. We should note that the documents were released at a time when the negotiations were at a halt, and that the concessions mentioned in the documents were not formalized in a signed deal. Thus, they are not binding, though this does not negate the danger inherent in them. We should distinguish between a signed agreement that cannot be reversed, and concessions offered in a personal manner by some negotiators, which could be withdrawn. Those who chose to offer such concessions should be held accountable.

Second: The originality and authenticity of these documents has been established. Moreover, they had been in the main leaked from the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department (NAD) that is headed by Sa'ib 'Uraiqat, a member of the Executive Committee of the PLO. What further testifies their authenticity is that the reputed British newspaper *The Guardian* agreed to publish them simultaneously with Al Jazeera certain of their credibility. The confused and spasmodic response of Sa'ib 'Uraiqat and other Palestinian leaders to the leak only strengthens the claim of their authenticity.

Before exploring the content of the Al Jazeera documents, it is important to again state that the option of negotiations, with the conditions they bring, evidently cannot lead to a solution that attains the minimum national Palestinian rights as embodied in the legitimate resolutions of the international community. Thus, negotiations led and will lead to further concessions.

With regard to Jerusalem and the settlements, the documents maintained that the Palestinian negotiator proposed a geographical division of Jerusalem's Old City, with control of the Jewish Quarter and "part of the Armenian Quarter" going to the Israelis.¹²³ Moreover, 'Uraiqat suggested "creative ways" to control the Haram al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary), and was willing to concede control over it, to the oversight of an international committee.¹²⁴

Ahmad Qurei' and other Palestinian negotiators agreed to concede some settlements inside and outside Jerusalem, though Qurei' had rejected to cede others to the Israelis. He demanded that those "remain under Palestinian sovereignty, and...could be a model for cooperation and coexistence."¹²⁵ But this is another instance of a cost-free concession to the Israelis that may open the door to the retention of other settlements within the Palestinian state.

It is worth mentioning that the Geneva Document, signed in 2003 by PLO Executive Committee Secretary Yasir 'Abed Rabbo along with other leaders of the PA and Fatah, contains the annexation of Ma'ale Adumim settlement to Israel in return for the evacuation of Ariel settlement.¹²⁶ The Palestinian negotiators emphasized Hillary Clinton's criteria, and submitted proposals for the return of fewer of the diaspora Palestinians than they had asked for at Camp David and Taba.

What is new in the Al Jazeera documents on the return issue is that the proposed return to the Palestinian state had been restricted to a fixed, symbolic number of returnees that would not be revised or changed except with the agreement of both

sides. The Palestinians asked for the annual return of 10 thousand refugees for a period of 10 years, while the Israelis offered at one stage of the negotiations the return of one thousand refugees for 10 years and in another stage the same number but for five years only.¹²⁷

The documents also revealed that security coordination between the PA's security forces and the Israeli army had become much more extensive than previously publicly known, to the extent of having joint military operations.

After the publication of Al Jazeera's documents, Ami Ayalon, the former head of the ISA, said that: "without such coordination we couldn't have thwarted major terrorist operations." And he explained also, "We have gone beyond security coordination with the Palestinian side; in some cases the stage of intelligence cooperation has reached bilateral collaboration in the field operations."¹²⁸

The Palestinian side denied the accuracy of many of the Al Jazeera documents, though it admitted the authenticity of some. However, it protested that they were distorted, presented out of context and had confused the Palestinian and Israeli positions. For example, on the issue of the assassination of Hassan al-Madhoun by Israel shortly after a meeting between Palestinian Interior Minister Nasr Yusuf and Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, the relevant leaked document records that the latter demanded during this meeting that al-Madhoun should be "killed." But Yusuf maintained in an interview with Al Jazeera that "Mofaz's request to have al-Madhoun killed has been taken out of context. Israel did not ask to kill him but only to arrest him,"¹²⁹ and that al-Madhoun was hidden in the President's office in GS to save his life, and was killed only after he left this building. Thus, Yusuf confirmed the incident, but the difference between the two versions was concerned with the language used, i.e., to "kill" or "arrest."

Utter Failure

The year 2010 started with optimism that negotiations would be re-launched and that the miracle of a peace settlement would be finally feasible. The American administration was presumably determined to avail new conditions for the resumption of the negotiations based on a genuine settlement building moratorium, and to work for achieving a peace settlement within two years, as assumed at the beginning, and subsequently within one year only as decided by the Quartet (the US, the EU, Russia and the UN). The Palestinians were urged not to hesitate and

not to insist on any conditions for the resumption of the negotiations, to avoid incitement, and to ask the Arabs to take practical steps towards normalization with Israel, which would in turn encourage the Israelis to cooperate. After strenuous efforts and several rounds of meetings, particularly on 2/3/2010 and 1/5/2010, the Arab ministers of foreign affairs agreed to participation with the Palestinians in indirect negotiations “proximity talks” for a specific period—four months—after which they could be promoted to direct negotiations if progress were achieved in the initial period.

On 8/5/2010, the PLO Executive Committee agreed to participate in indirect negotiations, and the first session convened the next day only to be faced with a stubborn Israeli refusal to engage in meaningful negotiations that would address the fundamental issues, “Peace cannot be made from a distance or by remote control, ... it is inconceivable that we will make decisions and agreements on critical issues such as security and our national interests, and theirs as well, without sitting together in the same room.” Netanyahu explained.¹³⁰ However, the glaring fact remains that Israel wants direct one-to-one talks with the Palestinians in which the Americans would perform a dual role as facilitator and a guardian. With this determination in the background, the government of Israel accepted the indirect negotiations as a phase and a precursor to direct negotiations, while refusing any Palestinian conditions and demands.

Indirect negotiations revolved in a vicious circle. After a meeting with Netanyahu on 6/7/2010, US President Barack Obama pointedly did not push Netanyahu to extend the existing moratorium, which ended on 26/9/2010. Instead, he said that moving from American-brokered “proximity talks” to direct talks would give Netanyahu the incentive and domestic political leeway to act on his own. “My hope is, that once direct talks have begun, well before the moratorium has expired, that that will create a climate in which everybody feels a greater investment in success,” Obama said, adding, “There ends up being more room created by more trust.”¹³¹

The last round of the indirect negotiations was held on 17/7/2010, and, after a short lull, direct negotiations were launched in Washington in early September 2010, but without a reference binding to either parties, or an Israeli commitment to stop settlement building. However, the opening session was attended by the leaders of Egypt and Jordan, while representatives from Europe and international bodies were conspicuously absent.¹³²



It is worth mentioning that the PLO Executive Committee held a meeting on 20/8/2010 and accepted to re-launch the direct negotiations to solve all the final status issues. Since only nine members out of eighteen attended this meeting, some questioned its legality as the bylaw requires at least two thirds of the membership for a meeting to be quorum. Nonetheless, the meeting went ahead and accepted the American invitation to attend the meeting in Washington at the beginning of September without any conditions—in effect accepting Israeli conditions. The Executive Committee explained that the acceptance is based on the Middle East Quartet statement that called for re-launching the direct talks.¹³³

The sequence of events in 2010, particularly after the resumption of the negotiations, conclusively proved once again that Israeli agreement to the negotiations—be them direct or indirect—was based on its conviction that no final agreement could possibly be concluded in a year or two. All that may be achieved in an interim deal could be applied over tens of years by which time the desperate Palestinians were expected to agree to a peace settlement based on Israeli conditions and dictates. According to this projection, the transitional agreement will be a final agreement that entails the elimination of all aspects and dimensions of the Palestinian issue.

Foreign Minister Lieberman declared that he had submitted to Netanyahu just before the formation of the current Israeli government his understanding of the interim agreement.¹³⁴ By then Netanyahu had not spelt out his position towards the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but he later did, saying that he would try to reach to a framework agreement that addresses the fundamental issues in a general way, but if this proved impossible then he would work for a provisional agreement.

A thorough look at mainstream Israeli trends, within and outside government, shows that it is of the opinion that a final peace settlement is not feasible. Even if the Israeli government and public preferred to reach such a settlement, they know it is impossible. This is because the most that they are willing to offer is less than the minimum that the current Palestinian leadership, or any other leadership, can possibly accept, particularly so during the disunity among Palestinian factions that prevailed in 2010.

However, Israel gives a number of alternative excuses for its evasive attitude and policy. Among them, that the Palestinian leadership does not represent all

the Palestinians, and that conflicts prevail within Fatah and between Fatah and PA's Prime Minister Fayyad. Additionally, historical changes in the Middle East, especially the failure of Israel's Second Lebanon War in 2006, and its inability to achieve all its objectives in the war on GS 2008–2009. There is also the rise of Iran and Turkey, the implications and repercussions of the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla, and the increasing international campaign to boycott Israel and impose sanctions on it. Further complicating the Israeli position, there were the Arab awakenings represented by the success of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, as well as events in Lebanon and elsewhere. These factors demonstrate that the period of apathy and indifference in the Arab world is ending and a new era has already begun.

Whenever Israel has accepted the need to negotiate, it has also insisted that the focus should be first and foremost on security. When the Palestinian side agrees to all the security measures that Israel asks for and shows sufficient power to maintain security in cooperation with Israel, only then will Israel progress talks on the borders.

To highlight the complexity that the negotiations face, we should note that Netanyahu's government demands that the Jordan Rift Valley, the frontiers of the Separation Wall and 10–15 km of settlements on the frontiers between Israel and the WB must all be under Israel's control. Added to this, the Palestinian state should be disarmed and have no military alliances with other parties. Moreover, Israel should keep certain bypass roads and streets as well as security stations in some strategic positions even after the establishment of the Palestinian state. Over and above all this Israel reserves the right to penetrate the territories of the Palestinian state whenever it considers its security is in danger, and to retain its control of the borders, sea ports and air space.

Such conditions do not allow establishing a proper Palestinian state, but at best a mini entity that is effectively an Israeli protectorate installed on 50% of the territories of the WB according to Lieberman's plan, or 66% according to the plan of Shaul Mofaz, the deputy leader of the opposition party Kadima. Or in the result of the failure of the political process, it could be unilaterally imposed as Yuval Diskin, the head of the ISA, asserted that "Israel needs to create a situation in which there is a border, border crossings and Border Police between us and the Palestinians, even if it is a temporary and unrecognized border." He warned



that “if we do not take care to do so, we will find ourselves in a situation that will not allow us to make that separation.”¹³⁵ Other Israeli projects are those of Giora Eiland and former Minister of Defense Moshe Arens, a close associate of Netanyahu. The latter’s project is based on the option of all Israel, by which the WB will be annexed to Israel, and its people given Israeli nationality.¹³⁶

Other Israelis advocate the resolution of the Palestinian issue at the expense of Jordan, the presumed state of the Palestinians, to which all Palestinians should be expelled.

The American Role: Resolving or Administering the Crisis?

On Barak Obama’s assumption of the American presidency, illusions of an imminent peace were revived, particularly after his early focus to the Middle East crisis, specifically his Cairo speech in which he said, “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.”¹³⁷ Moreover, his administration pledged to achieve a peace treaty within two years, which he further reduced to one year in his 23/9/2010 speech to the UNGA when he said, “When we come back here next year, we can have an agreement that will lead to a new member of the United Nations -- an independent, sovereign state of Palestine, living in peace with Israel.”¹³⁸

However, it was soon clear to the world community that a huge gap existed between Obama’s wishful thinking of having peace and his willingness or ability to achieve it. The record of Obama’s administration has so far been dominated by failure, hesitation and contradiction, despite its seemingly genuine willingness for change in the Palestinian-Israeli relations, which is probably triggered by an increasing feeling in the US that it is in the country’s strategic interest to have a peace settlement.

Like its predecessors, Obama’s administration is perplexed between focusing on the administration of the conflict, and striving to conclude an agreement that would either settle the major issues first, or start with a preliminary agreement on the minor issues. The Obama administration had been, and still is, unclear on its exact role in the negotiations, a facilitator and a patron, or an effective broker who submits suggestions and applies pressure to see them through.

It can be said that the Obama administration did not conclusively decide which direction to pursue. However, when it seemingly started to provide the appropriate conditions for the resumption of the negotiations, i.e., to freeze settlement building, it soon and on more than one occasion, backtracked, further encouraging Israel to continue its obstinacy and extremism.

Rather than continuing its initial demand of a real freeze of settlement building, as stipulated in George Mitchell's report of 2001 and in the Road Map, it hailed the temporary and partial 10-month freeze that was announced unilaterally by Netanyahu's government and that excluded East Jerusalem. After that, the Obama administration exerted strenuous effort to convince Israel to accept a 90-day settlement moratorium extension in exchange for a package of incentives from Washington. But it failed because of the extensive blackmailing practiced by Netanyahu's government, which wanted to secure major gains without offering anything in return, considering these and others as rights of Israel that should not be yielded.¹³⁹ This synchronizes with the nature of the strategic and common interests that associates the United States with Israel. Put another way, Israel did not feel the need to engage in a strategy that would create a precedent that makes American support to Israel conditional. Some warned against this very development; American Ambassador Dan Kurtzer said, "For the first time in memory, the United States is poised to reward Israel for its bad behavior." And then he added, "This bargaining exercise has been unseemly all along. If it proceeds, both sides will probably regret it."¹⁴⁰

By late 2010 the American administration announced that it was "ending the contacts to try to achieve another moratorium" after months of heavy negotiations to offer Israel a series of US guarantees in exchange for the freeze. Then, it declared its intention to call for parallel negotiations, whereby Mitchell and other American envoys will shuttle between the two sides. On knowing their positions towards the major issues, particularly on security and borders, they will, without informing either of the two parties of the suggestions of the other side, crystallize a text that will bridge the huge gap between the Palestinian and Israeli sides.¹⁴¹ Through this course Obama's administration hoped to conclude a framework agreement by December 2010, and requested a grace period until this date.

It was always highly unlikely that the Americans would succeed in concluding a framework agreement that settles the major issues. Since the US had failed to



convince Israel to renew a freeze on settlement construction, one must question how it could possibly convince Netanyahu's government to accept an agreement that provides for withdrawal from the 1967 occupied territories as demanded by the Palestinians, or from most of the territories, as suggested by the Americans. The American position on the withdrawal had been reiterated more than once. On 14/4/2004, Former George W. Bush explained the issue in a letter to Ariel Sharon, "In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli populations centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949," then he added, "It is realistic to expect that any final status agreement will only be achieved on the basis of mutually agreed changes that reflect these realities," he continued.¹⁴² Then, during Obama's Administration, United States Middle East Envoy George Mitchell assured the Israelis of the continuing US commitment to the 2004 Bush letter.¹⁴³

How could it be that the present Israeli government, which has consistently insisted that united Jerusalem is the permanent capital of Israel, will agree to withdraw from Jerusalem? Equally, how could it agree to withdraw from the WB at a time when it continues to build settlements there, and while it insists that any future Palestinian state should not include the Jordan Rift Valley and the eastern and western borders up to 15 km, as well as the sources of water and other vital security, military and strategic areas, where the stationing of Israeli forces, in its view, is not negotiable even after the establishment of the Palestinian state?

Interestingly, Netanyahu had previously claimed that the development of a system of long-range missiles and control of extensive parts of the WB was not enough to protect its borders. When that claim proved unconvincing, he developed and repeated new arguments to justify the necessity of the stationing of Israeli forces in the WB. Amongst those were protection of the Jordanian and Egyptian regimes against internal dangers and the Iranian threat, and the grave instability in the entire region that may lead to extensive changes that could jeopardize the chances of reaching a peace settlement, or, if concluded, its application and continuity.

To understand the extent of the illusion of a viable and concluded peace settlement in the foreseeable future, and to further highlight that what has been submitted is actually an elimination, and not a peace settlement, of the Palestinian

issue, a record of some of what the Israeli press and some Palestinian leaders, who participated in the early September 2010 Washington negotiations, said may be useful. A senior Israeli analyst, Ben Caspit, wrote in *Maariv* newspaper that Netanyahu and his assistants refused to accept Palestinian documents that explain the Palestinian view on the major issues lest the Israeli government collapses. Caspit mentioned two incidents that support his claim.¹⁴⁴

The first incident took place when a meeting between Yitzhak Molcho, an advisor of Netanyahu and Sa'ib 'Uraiqat took place in Washington, in the presence of American mediators. 'Uraiqat took an official booklet out of his briefcase bearing the logo of the PA and tried to hand it to Molcho. When the Israeli inquired as to the content of the booklet, 'Uraiqat said that this was, in effect, the detailed, updated Palestinian peace plan, covering all the core issues. Molcho refused to take the booklet or examine it. According to sources who are informed about what took place there, he said to 'Uraiqat, and to the Americans, that he could not touch the Palestinian booklet, read it or take it, because as soon as he would do so, "the government will fall."

The second case took place in a meeting that was held between PM Benjamin Netanyahu and Abu Mazin, in the prime minister's official residence in Jerusalem. It has now become apparent that in this meeting, Abu Mazin brought an official Palestinian document for Netanyahu, consisting of two printed pages, with the proposed Palestinian solution on the two issues that the sides were supposed to discuss at the first stage: Security arrangements and borders. Netanyahu refused to read or discuss the document. Abu Mazin is said to have left the document at the Prime Minister's Residence.

If Netanyahu emphatically refused to merely take Palestinian documents lest his government falls, how credible is his claim that he and his government are ready to negotiate the fundamental issues?

What is submitted to the Palestinians is not a peace settlement or a negotiated deal, but in essence they are required to verbatim submit to the Israeli vision which aims to liquidate the Palestinian issue once and for all. Contrary to assumption in some quarters, what had been offered to the Palestinians—now and before—is not a state in return for their surrender of the rights of the refugees, but to relinquish all their rights and the de facto elimination of every aspect of the Palestinian issue. The maximum that they may receive would be a long term and multi-phased



transitional solution that may or may not lead to a framework agreement that speaks of a final peace settlement to would be implemented at a later date.

Within its present set up and circumstances, likely to continue during 2011 and in subsequent years, Israel will at most accept a Palestinian state on a part of the occupied territories, including parts of East Jerusalem. Such a state will be a de facto Israeli protectorate that has nothing of the credentials aside from in name. Thus, Israel will avoid the dangers of the demographic time bomb, the difficult options of creating one single united state and resumption of direct occupation.

We have suggested that the “maximum” that Israel may accept in the present circumstances is a Palestinian state tailored to Israeli conditions and interests, though the establishment of such a state is not yet unanimously accepted and conclusively settled in Israel. There are some Israelis who adamantly insist that Israel should not yield such a concession.

Within this context, the Israeli options and alternatives, of which one will certainly be imposed upon the Palestinians, are:

First: To maintain the status quo for as long as possible, allowing Israel to complete its expansionist plans. However, this option may be time-limited as negotiations have been dragging on for over 20 years since the Madrid conference, and there are increasing American and international calls to resolve the conflict. Moreover, there are increasing indications that the Palestinians and the Arabs will drop the option of negotiations, which would lead to the collapse of the PA and the withdrawal of the Arab Peace Initiative.

Second: Return to the option of Israeli unilateralism, because Israel will not indefinitely await Palestinian acceptance of what it offers them, which will, anyhow, be less than the minimum expectation of the Palestinian leadership, however flexible and moderate it may be. Israel is even considering the redeployment of the occupation forces to the lines of the 28/9/2000, or to swap people and territories as it may see fit. Moreover, it is also may remove some small settlements and settlement outposts, thus imposing on the ground a state composed of pieces, a “Mickey Mouse” state. In this case, the Palestinians would be obliged to accept and live with this reality as is the case in GS and, in a disguised form, in the WB.

The likelihood of this second option has increased since the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. These sweeping regional changes could end what remains of

the probability to conclude a framework agreement or any signed deal. Moreover, the publication of the Al Jazeera documents will ensure that any Palestinian negotiator will be extremely hesitant to engage in a negotiations, and if negotiations do resume, a negotiator will always have to consider that whatever they propose could be leaked to the population sooner or later. Attention will increasingly focus on developments in Egypt, and developments there will significantly impact the Palestinian issue.

Third: Reviving the regional solution, in cooperation with Jordan and Egypt. This may appear in different forms, of which the most important is the “Jordanian option” along with its different forms, such as to annex the territories that Israel does not occupy in the WB to Jordan in the context of a federation or a confederation. The same scenario may be applied to GS, or alternatively it could be pushed once more to an Egyptian mandate.

Fourth: The option of a state with temporary borders via a Palestinian-Israeli agreement under American and international patronage. Apparently, this is the best option for Israel, as it makes the Palestinians alone responsible for the elimination of their cause. But this option is far fetched, particularly so if it is not associated with a framework agreement that deals with the fundamental issues. Israel may also unilaterally impose a phased solution under the title of a state with temporary borders, which would block Palestinian efforts to secure international recognition of their state in September 2011.

The imminent danger for the Palestinians would be brought about by declaring the functionality of the state’s institutions, and to secure its recognition by most countries of the world as well as the UNGA. The proposed state would be established on part of the occupied territories—more or less 50% of the lands of the WB—and without Jerusalem and GS. Moreover, this option is compatible with the phased solution that Israel is trying to impose. However, if no real alternative is crystallized, this option, which is practically ongoing, will appear to be tacitly agreed upon, although lacking a formal signed agreement.

Obama’s administration is currently performing like a “lame duck” when it comes to the Middle East, displaying more bias to Israel than it had been in the beginning of its term, particularly so since the mid-term elections to Congress in which the Republican Party won a majority. Obama is striving to appease the Israelis by advocating a long term and multi-phase transitional agreement of a



state with temporary borders that ignores the issues of borders, Jerusalem and the refugees under the guise that they will be addressed in a subsequent phase. Obama arrival at this juncture was demonstrated by the stoppage of his administration's attempt to freeze settlement building, and its declaration of parallel negotiations to conclude a framework agreement, which poses a great challenge to the Palestinians that they have to be ready to confront and defeat.

This probability of a framework agreement that acts as a cover for a new transitional solution was feasible before the ongoing Arab awakening. For the Arabs had then been in such weak and miserable conditions that they could not possibly transform to a position of strength in a year's time. Arab states had not developed, after the deadlocked negotiations, any new options and the sum total of the Arab League Follow-up Committee's impact in 2010 was to give the American administration one grace period after the other in the illusionary hope that it will convince the Israelis to freeze settlement building or accept a reference that makes the resumption of the negotiations possible.

Initially, the committee gave the American administration a four-month grace period during which indirect negotiations were allowed on condition that they develop into direct negotiations. Then they agreed that the Palestinians should participate in direct negotiations though no progress was achieved in the indirect negotiations. Though the direct negotiations had also failed after less than a month, the Arab summit convened in Sirte gave another one month grace period which was eventually unofficially renewed. Subsequently, the Arab League Follow-up Committee gave the American administration another grace period till September 2011 in the hope that the Americans will meanwhile come with a serious offer to resume negotiations.

Palestinian leaders had increasingly looked to the Arabs, specifically the Arab League Follow-up Committee, to endorse and sell their decisions to the Palestinians, and, sometimes, to the Palestinian establishment itself. For example, a decision on the negotiations had been submitted to the Arab committee well before its presentation to the PLO Executive Committee, which had found itself more than once facing a *fait accompli*. The Palestinians' options were scattered and contradictory, and they were apparently inclined to await the success of the American efforts, or to strive to press for their success, but not to look for a real other option.

The Arab awakening, particularly in Egypt, seems to suggest positive elements to reactivate the pan Arab pro-Palestinian movement that helps to strengthen the Palestinian position, and would exert more pressure on Israel and the US administration. In the future, it can be reasonably hoped that revolutionary changes within Arab states will restructure the balance of power in the region and create the space for strategic opportunities that support the Palestinian struggle, facilitating the participation other factions in the leadership of the PLO. This will certainly influence the form of future Palestinian strategy.

Of the options available to the PA; awaiting for a change in the American-Israeli position, awaiting condemnation of settlement building by the UN Security Council, gaining recognition of a Palestinian state at the UN or calling upon the international community to submit a new road map, none would present a credible alternative that would trigger a breakthrough in the deadlock. Therefore a logical step would be for the Palestinians to crystallize a new national charter that explains their objectives, rights and fundamental needs, as well as the “red lines” that should not be bypassed. Further, based on this new charter, they would also be able to formulate a new strategy that focuses on uniting Palestinian-Arab elements of strength and pressure, concentrating on strengthening Palestinian steadfastness in their country and building the necessary institutions for this. Moreover, the charter would need to spell out that the exclusive function of the PA is to serve the national program, and give priority to the end of the schism and promote national unity. Palestinian efforts and assets should re-focus on one primary objective, namely resistance of the occupation by all available means in order to uproot it, achieve freedom and independence and the return of the Palestinian diaspora.

This strategy requires that the national program be restored to center stage, with its goals to establish the state, achieve self-determination, ensure the return of the refugees, and the restructuring of the PLO in a national and democratic manner that achieves sound partnership and accommodates all factions of the resistance. Moreover, it should guarantee the revival of the Arab and international dimension of the Palestinian issue, and initiate a multi-dimensional political drive to end the American monopoly of the political process, and demand an effective international role and guarantees. In addition, it should do all that is needed to hold Israel accountable for its occupation and the crimes that it committed in Palestine. Inevitably this would mean imposing on Israel isolation, sanctions and punishments that makes it realize that the occupation of Palestine will not succeed. Only by then



could a peace settlement be achieved on the basis of the minimum conditions fixed by the PLO. However, though modest against the aspirations of the Palestinian people, this goal is difficult and requires serious concerted efforts, not a symbolic resistance. Admittedly, international support and recognition of the Palestinian state is essential, but these elements alone constitute a viable strategy capable of ending the occupation and establishing a truly independent Palestinian state.

Conclusion

The domestic Israeli scene during 2010 had been characterized by the ascendancy of the right and dwindling of leftist groups. This was reflected in the ruling coalition led by the Likud, and in which the extremist party Yisrael Beitenu, led by Lieberman, and fundamentalist religious parties played an important role. Other manifestations of this phenomenon were expressed through the continuation of settlement projects, the Judaization of Jerusalem and the stumbling of the peace process that reached deadlock. Furthermore, 2010 saw increasing manifestation of racism in Israeli society against the 1948 Palestinians. Laws were enacted to emphasize the “Jewishness of the state,” and to make loyalty to Israel as a “Jewish state” a condition for citizenship, in addition to other laws and practices that restricted the civil rights of the Palestinians and their rights to residence, free movement, possession of property and access to services.

The real crisis that the Israeli left experienced was the rapid decline and disintegration of the Labor Party, which reached its climax with the resignation of its President Ehud Barak and four Knesset members, who formed a new party called Atzmaut. With this move Barak managed to keep for himself the defense portfolio in the governing coalition, and henceforth increasingly pursued rightist policies, while the other representatives of the Labor Party in the government resigned.

By the end of 2010, the population of Israel totaled 7.695 million persons, of whom about 5.803 million were Jews. Security and political stability improved, and the economy prospered, achieving in 2010 a 4.6% rate of growth. Despite the global economic crisis, Israel increased its industrial output, particularly in advanced technology, where the prevailing relative calm in WB and GS played an important role. Nevertheless, Israel continued to suffer from decreasing members of Jewish immigrants, and a rising counter migration.

Several developments during 2010 strengthened the strategic position of Israel. Amongst them were security cooperation with the PA in Ramallah, relative calm in the southern borders with GS, the Palestinian schism, weakness and inability in the Arab world and international community, and the American unwillingness to apply any effective form of pressure on Israel to yield the requirements of peace. Thus Israel opted to continue the settlement building rather than to engage in meaningful negotiations, which ultimately led to the collapse of a futile peace process.

Though the dragging on of the status quo is seemingly beneficial to Israel in the short run, the opposite is probably the case in the long run. Palestinian disillusionment and increasing despair with the peace process, as well as the likelihood of a change in the domestic Palestinian equation, may entail a troubled future for Israel.

The historic changes in the Arab world since the beginning of 2011, which call for new political regimes in Egypt, Tunisia and elsewhere, may ultimately lead to dramatic changes in the position and orientation of the Arab countries surrounding Israel. Democratic transformations could lead to the emergence of new political regimes that uproot oppressive and corrupt leaders and their cronies. This may dramatically alter down the rules of the game on which Israel had depended to prolong its occupation and oppression of the Palestinian people, and to secure its prosperity, strength and the continuity of its very existence.

The immediate problem for Israel lies in its accelerating shift towards right wing extremist parties, which distances it from seizing the window of opportunity provided by the current excessive weakness of the Palestinian-Arab camp to achieve a peace settlement. It is quite likely that it may have in the future a serious shock when a stronger Palestinian-Arab-Islamic front emerges that refuses to accept the status quo. One can even envisage a day when such a united Arab world may even dictate and impose its conditions on Israel.

History may not repeat itself, but it certainly feeds itself, and sometimes provides quieting answers for complex problems. Within this context, the Palestinian people may be advised to reflect on and learn lessons from the not too distant (1994) triumph of the South African people against Pretoria's "Grand apartheid," racist, oppressive regime, which, ironically, was established in the same year (1948) in which Israel was founded in the land of Palestine.



Endnotes

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and *Globes*, 3/3/2010, <http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000543668&fid=829>
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- ¹¹⁵ See Remarks by Hillary Clinton at the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy Seventh Annual Forum, Washington, DC, site of U.S. Department of State, 10/12/2010, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/12/152664.htm>
- ¹¹⁶ The PA started discussing the options in December 2009, as reported in the document prepared by the office of chief negotiator Saeb 'Uraiqat under the name "The Political Situation in Light of Developments with the US Administration and Israeli Government and Hamas' Continued Coup d'état." After that President 'Abbas suggested the PA options in Sirte Summit in October 2010, where these options were repeated with some difference in content. Some of these options are the dissolution of PA, resignation, halting the PA's commitments to Israel.
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Chapter Three

The Palestinian Issue and the Arab World

The Palestinian Issue and the Arab World

Introduction

The implications of the developments on the Arab scene and their impact on the Palestinian issue were very important in 2011. It is necessary to apply caution and care when analyzing the components of this scene in order to gain a full understanding of its dimensions. Late 2010 and early 2011 have augured a new phase for the Arabs that has yet to crystallize. Undoubtedly, the new phase carries changes that certainly influence the Palestinian issue. This inevitable influence is due to the strong and reciprocal relationship between the Arab regimes and the Palestinian issue, to the extent that it would be difficult to tell which depends on the other or is affected by it. Indeed, the Arab regimes and the Palestinian issue are interrelated to the extent that the history and development of one cannot be understood apart from those of the other.

2010 was critical for the Palestinian issue. On one hand, the “moderate” Arab countries continued to deal with the peace process in line with the American will. The US wants to sponsor negotiations for a final solution, which might not satisfy the minimal demands the Palestinians have agreed on.

On another hand, it seemed that the Arab sides used Palestinian reconciliation, at least in part, to boost the peace process rather than to achieve national agreement and end the schism.

These patterns of Arab policies were likely to continue but were interrupted by the revolutions of early 2011. The Arab uprisings promised new horizons and a different approach towards the Palestinian issue. This new approach could put an end to the period of total identification with American policies which lean more and more towards adopting the plans of the Israeli right, as well as the period of normalization with Israel. In addition, the Arab public will have substantial influence on official government policies after the Arab street found its voice, as should be explained later in the chapter. However, this chapter covers the events of 2011 till March 2011. Only minor additions were added for the rest of 2011, as it will be discussed thoroughly in *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12*.

This chapter discusses prominent Arab stances vis-à-vis the different aspects of the Palestinian issue.



First: The Stances of the League of Arab States and the Arab Summit

1. The Stance on the Peace Settlement

The year 2010 witnessed intensive official Arab efforts aimed at the resumption of negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The Palestinian side seemed keen, perhaps for the first time since the Oslo Agreement, to secure Arab support for the negotiations. This prompted some observers to say that such attempts might be an indicator of an increasing Arab role in the Palestinian equation.

The PA realized the need for the Arab regimes' support for negotiations which were completely rejected at the popular Palestinian level, at least at that time. This internal rejection prompted the PA to seek the largest possible Arab cover for its strategy of reliance on the American support and promises of guarantees.

At the same time, the Arab regimes faced a predicament as the US had reneged on its promises, and then tried to shirk responsibility, stressing that the decision to enter negotiations was an internal Palestinian issue. On the other hand, the US tried to provide various limited means of support for the PA, on the grounds of regional developments.

On top of that, it seemed that there was an Arab consensus regarding the futility of resuming negotiations with Netanyahu's radical right-wing government and its policy of continued settlement building in the WB, including Jerusalem. Nonetheless, the Arab Peace Initiative Follow-up Committee issued its decisions with the consent of 12 members representing the majority of the Arab states. Syria announced that it would not be a party to the decision. Put plainly, these decisions can primarily be seen as a response to the American will to break the stalemate in the peace process and resume negotiations under any conditions. This inclination was further clear in the statements of prominent Arab officials who were involved in the making of these decisions. Qatari PM and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani, in a joint press conference with the Secretary-General of the Arab League 'Amr Musa, said, "Although we had doubts about Israel's seriousness towards the peace process, the Arab Ministerial Committee had agreed to re-launch the peace initiative so as to give the American mediator a chance after it had found that he was keen to have peace in the region," then he added, "We want the American mediator to reach the same conclusion which we

reached 20 years ago since the Madrid talks” adding that the Israeli move to build the illegal housing units in Jerusalem is a hint to Arabs not to pin high hopes on peace talks as the Israeli leaders declared.¹

The Arab regimes failed throughout 2010 to break the vicious circle of negotiations being the “only game in town.” This was evident in the series of Arab concessions regarding the conditions for starting negotiations and the switch from indirect to the direct negotiations. To begin with, and based on Obama’s pledge to unofficially stop settlement building in East Jerusalem, the Follow-up Committee conceded their demand for a complete halt to settlement building in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, as a condition for indirect peace talks. This condition was originally confirmed in the final communiqué of the Sirte Summit “Supporting the Steadfastness of Jerusalem,” in March 2010.² The committee decided to allow four months of indirect negotiations which would be followed by direct negotiations pending an assessment of progress in the negotiations of borders.

The Follow-up Committee conceded again and authorized President Mahmud ‘Abbas to enter direct negotiations with Israel on 29/7/2010, i.e., two months before the end of the period decided for indirect negotiations and without revealing their outcome. The committee left it for the Palestinian president to decide when to begin the negotiations. It was then said that the Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Ghait and the Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas have asked Sheikh Hamad and ‘Amr Musa to support ‘Abbas in the resumption of direct negotiations even if he only got verbal promise from Israel or the US that Israel would recognize the borders of 1967.³ However, as the American administration announced its failure to urge Netanyahu to stop settlement building for three months only, it was impossible for the Follow-up Committee to retreat or wait any longer. Accordingly, the committee agreed—in order to break the stalemate on the negotiations track—to condition the resumption of negotiations on a serious negotiations offer from the US.⁴ The US was never likely to present such an offer in the light of its unwillingness to exercise pressure on the Israeli government on one hand, and the easing of Arab conditions on the other.

Washington would not allow matters to reach a complete deadlock and it is expected to push for support of Salam Fayyad’s plan to establish a temporary Palestinian state. This plan was expected to garner the support of America’s Arab



allies; however, the changes in the Arab landscape in early 2011 altered the official Arab approach to the peace settlement. Concern about the Arab uprisings on the Egyptian, regional and international levels might lead to a decreased interest in the Palestinian issue. However, the Palestinian issue can be expected to again be the center of interest when the Arab regimes better express the will of their peoples.

As for the PA, it will not receive the previous high level of Arab support for the peace process while it does not receive international guarantees for its strategy and as long as Israel continues with its intransigence. Some Arab regimes might prefer to leave the decision for the Palestinians themselves and open the way for Hamas and the Palestinian opposition to express their inclinations. This means that the peace settlement course would be decided in the remaining months of 2011 in light of developments in the internal Palestinian arena or changes around the Arab world. In this sense, the slogan which has echoed in different Arab regions, “The people want an end of the schism,” might change to “The people want to change the track” in the Palestinian context.

Arab governments, however, are not expected to withdraw the Arab Peace Initiative. Taking into consideration their relationship with Washington, a radical change should not be expected, at least during the remainder of 2011, and the rules of the game will not return to 1960s-style policies. However, the Arab regimes, even those untouched by change, might be able to practice some acceptable level of “political troublemaking” under the pressure of the Arab street that considers the support of the Palestinian issue one of the constants which no one can tamper with. This troublemaking might be represented in different steps, including for example:

- The escalation of the rhetoric opposing Israeli practices.
- Ending full cooperation with the American policies and refraining from giving consent to American peace plans.

2. The Stance on the Inter-Palestinian Reconciliation

The Arab regimes, represented in the Arab League, did not play an effective role in 2010 regarding Palestinian reconciliation, where the Arab League was satisfied with the support and blessing of the Egyptian sponsorship of the file.

Prior to the Sirte Summit held in March 2010, there were expectations regarding a probable Arab role to be led by Libya, Qatar and the KSA in order to push the

reconciliation process forward. In addition, the Arabs offered Hamas to attach its reservations to the original reconciliation paper and sign it, along with Fatah, other factions and prominent Palestinian figures, as a solution for the reconciliation dilemma. In this context, there was news that Khalid Mish'al, the head of Hamas political bureau, would probably be invited to the Sirte Summit to discuss the reconciliation issue in the presence of the PA President Mahmud 'Abbas. The Arab League completely denied any will to invite Mish'al to the Sirte Summit stressing that the summit is limited to the states member to the Arab League and not open to factions.⁵

Arab endeavors, which worked partially on inter-Palestinian reconciliation, did not produce tangible results, lacking the momentum to overcome the inter-Arab conflicts.

The comments of the Arab League Secretary-General 'Amr Musa about reconciliation and its importance on many occasions throughout 2010, without presenting any plan to be executed, could be interpreted in the context of the diplomacy of dissipating Arab embarrassment. As a matter of fact, it was not possible in the previous phase, which lasted until late 2010 to present more on this level. In addition, it was not realistic to expect an official Arab role in an inter-Palestinian reconciliation when the Arabs themselves were in dire need of inter-Arab reconciliations and internal settlements.

The Arab regimes will probably not play an effective role in Palestinian reconciliation during 2011 as a result of their preoccupation with internal events. Consequently, not much can be expected from the Arab League, yet this does not mean a total absence of a positive role by some Arab countries such as Qatar, as shall be explained later.

3. The Stance on Jerusalem

The official Arab approach to the issue of Jerusalem during 2010 was not sufficient to meet the challenges faced by the city. The expanding Israeli settlement building within East Jerusalem during 2009, in addition to the settlers' continued storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque demanded Arab willingness to face up to Israel's plans to occupy the city. In this context, the 22nd Arab Summit that convened in Sirte approved the allocation of \$500 million for *al-Quds* and *al-Aqsa* Funds which were established in 2000 following the second Palestinian *Intifadah*.

Moreover, the Arab leaders announced an Arab plan to save Jerusalem calling the international community and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to take responsibility for the protection of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. They also decided to assign the Arab Group at the UN to request the convening of a special session of the UNGA aimed at halting Israeli measures in Jerusalem.⁶ The Arab League decided to form a legal committee tasked with following up the documenting of Judaization measures and the confiscation of Arab property as well as filing cases before competent national and international courts to sue Israel and dedicated a week to explaining the Arab plan to save Jerusalem.⁷

So far this chapter has described how reactions from the Arab states appeared insufficient to face the challenges posed by Israel, which has continuously established new facts on the ground. Indeed, Israel has allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to activate its plans while the Arab regimes were satisfied with announcing the plan for saving Jerusalem without any Arab leader talking about the progress achieved in this context or the measures that have been taken so far. At the same time, Ambassador Hisham Yusuf, the Arab League spokesman, confirmed in a statement issued in July 2010 that the Arab League has not received the \$500 million approved at the Sirte Summit, while the secretary-general has addressed Arab foreign ministers in this respect to the missing funding.⁸

In September 2010, the Arab League Assistant Secretary-General for Palestine and the Occupied Arab Lands Affairs Mohammad Sabih revealed that a number of Arab countries have not paid their allocation to support the PA as agreed in the Arab summits.⁹ This failure to pay their dues raises questions about the seriousness of the Arab parties in tackling Palestinian problems.

4. The Stance on Easing the GS Siege

The first half of 2010 did not witness any positive Arab declarations regarding breaking the siege of GS. Quite to the contrary, the year started with 'Amr Musa's justification for the Egyptian plan to build the Steel Wall on its borders with GS as a requirement of sovereignty.¹⁰ In addition, the final communiqué of the Sirte Summit included a minor reference to the need to lift the siege as if the Arabs preferred to wait the outcome of the negotiations while postponing all other key issues and rights.

However, on 1/6/2010, the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla stirred the Arab world's quiet waters and the Arab League held an urgent session for the Arab

Foreign Ministers on 2/6/2010. At the end of their meeting, the foreign ministers recommended the withdrawal of the Arab Peace Initiative, consistent with the statement of the Saudi King ‘Abdullah Bin ‘Abd al-‘Aziz Al Sa‘ud; he hinted, in the 2009 Economic Summit held in Kuwait, that the initiative would not be on the table for a long time. However, this recommendation was met with wide Arab reluctance which led to its abortion. The opposing Arab parties justified their position on the basis that the relations with Israel can be used to push the peace process forward or be invested in times of crises; such as the Egyptian-Jordanian intervention to urge Israel to release the Arab detainees, who were seized in the attack on Freedom Flotilla!¹¹

Talking about the withdrawal of the Arab Peace Initiative seems to have become a trend for Arab officials facing the Israeli recurrent violations. The communiqué of the Arab Foreign Ministers meeting reflected a stand which fell short of the measures taken by non-Arab countries, such as Nicaragua that severed its diplomatic relations with Israel, based on the latter’s attack on the aid convoy.

In a press conference following the meeting of the Arab Foreign Ministers, ‘Amr Musa said that the Council has decided to break the siege. Musa further added that the Council has decided to assign Lebanon and the Arab Group at the UN to urge the Security Council, in collaboration with Turkey and other friendly states, to issue a resolution which condemns the Israeli siege on the GS and urges Israel to lift it. He described the Egyptian decision to open the Rafah crossing without a timeframe as “a breaking of the siege.”¹²

Then came ‘Amr Musa’s visit to the GS which lasted around 10 hours in an attempt to contain popular Arab outrage triggered by the Israeli crime and to dissipate Arab embarrassment for lack of reaction. The League Secretariat considered the visit, which came four years after the imposition of the siege and produced no tangible outcome, as tantamount to breaking the blockade! On the other hand, the Libyan aid ship Hope headed to al-‘Arish Port rather than staying on course to the GS, despite previous boasts of its determination to reach Gaza Port.¹³

Some Arab countries have witnessed regime transformations, and it is expected that the domino effect will reach other Arab countries, as well. Thus, it is likely that a positive change will be seen in the official Arab approach towards lifting the GS siege. The Arab regimes might encourage sending relief convoys to the GS to contain and distract the outraged Arab masses away from issues of internal reform



towards another just cause. The Arab street has always considered supporting the Palestinians as a fundamental and sacred issue not to be tampered with.

5. The Stance on the Assassination of al-Mabhuh

Arab reactions following the assassination of Mahmud al-Mabhuh, the leader of the Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, in Dubai on 20/1/2010, did not fit with the gravity of the crime committed. On an Arab security level, the assassination amounted to a breach of the security of a moderate Arab country, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE had hosted, 10 days before the assassination, and for the first time in its history, the Israeli Minister of Infrastructure Uzi Landau, in a conference of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

Most dangerous is the continuous Israeli infiltration of the UAE's national security. The military analyst Alon Ben-David outlined this in a televised report on the Israeli Channel 10, which he has filmed in the hotel where the assassination took place. In the report, Ben-David bragged about Israel's infiltration of the UAE's security apparatuses, by the assassination of al-Mabhuh and securing the offenders' exit from the country. The video also showed the hotel corridors reaching to the room where the assassination took place!

Following the crime, the Dubai Police announced their plans to file charges against Netanyahu and demanded the International Criminal Police Organization—INTERPOL issue an arrest warrant against the chief of the Mossad who had celebrated the crime in an extremely provocative manner. The measures pursued by the UAE required a strong Arab reaction, but did not exceed condemnation of the crime. In an extremely late statement issued on 21/2/2010, 'Amr Musa said that the Arab League was following the issue of assassination with sincere concern, deeming the assassination a criminal act and a violation of the sovereignty of an Arab state. He added that the Arab League was in constant contact with the UAE.¹⁴ Additionally, in the 133rd regular session of the Arab League Council at the ministerial level, the Council expressed its condemnation of the abuse of the consular privileges granted to the citizens of the countries whose passports were used in the assassination.¹⁵ A similar condemnation appeared in the final communiqué of the Sirte Summit held on 28/3/2010.

In the same context, there was no Arab coordination with the UAE to support its efforts to prosecute the perpetrators who entered and departed Dubai with

European passports. In addition, the Arab officials did not utilise their relations with European countries and many perpetrators managed to escape prosecution. For example, the German security authorities released the Mossad agent and the charges against him were dropped, allowing him to leave Germany and return to Israel.¹⁶

Second: The Stances and Roles of Some Key Countries

1. Egypt

a. The Stance on the Peace Settlement

During 2010, the Egyptian regime continued in its stance on the Palestinian-Israeli peace settlement, and maintained its adherence with the American policy formulas.

Essentially, Cairo had an interest in active intervention on this issue for reasons concerned with Egypt's sovereignty and its internal security, as well as its status in the region. Nonetheless, the Egyptian role was governed by the need to maintain the status quo in relations with the US, the official international sponsor of peace and the strategic ally guaranteeing support for passing power to Mubarak's son. This led to a confused Egyptian position, oscillating between supporting the Palestinian steadfastness and urging the Palestinian negotiator to pursue flexibility once the US pressured Egypt to change its position.

However, during 2010, the Egyptian balance seemed to show more inclination towards urging the Palestinian negotiator to show further flexibility and tolerance as the crises which struck the ruling regime, on the internal and external levels, increased the sensitivity of the Egyptian position regarding any pressure the US might exercise. Thus, the ruling regime attempted to maintain the status quo and secure regime inheritance while suppressing the increased internal tension, which was based on the rejection of this project and eventually led to the outburst of the revolution of January 25th.

In light of such internal and external instability, the Egyptian regime was not able in 2010 to exercise a more effective role in dealing with the principal parties of the peace settlement. The Egyptians continued to wait for an American

move which might save the stalled peace process and started to talk about a new Israeli position presented by the Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu to the Egyptian leadership during his talks with the Egyptian President in early 2010.

Following these developments, Cairo presented a plan to revive the Palestinian Israeli peace talks. Despite what has been said about the independence of the Egyptian plan from any American pressure, what has been leaked in this respect shows that it remains close to the American plan.

The plan presented by the Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Ghait and Intelligence Minister 'Omar Suleiman to the American administration during their visit to Washington on 7/1/2010 included the following points:

- The American administration issues a presidential letter of guarantee for the Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas.
- The letter should guarantee the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict based on pre-1967 borders with adjustments called for by demographic changes in the interim years.
- Obama will also be called upon to limit territorial swaps between Israel and the Palestinians to a minimum.
- Showing willingness to support East Jerusalem's status as capital of a future Palestinian state.¹⁷

It seems that Cairo continued its pressure on the Palestinian leadership to resume negotiations. After rounds of calls and meetings between the moderate countries and the PA, the Palestinian leadership declared that there was an Arab pressure to resume talks and to proceed after that to direct negotiations. On 18/7/2010, a meeting between the Egyptian President Mubarak and Netanyahu was also held after the latter had met with Obama in Washington earlier in July. This meeting stressed the identification of the Egyptian position with the American stance of proceeding with the negotiations to a stalemate and how this would not help achieve the American goals in the region. These goals include creating an Arab alignment to face the Iranian project. However, the Egyptian position was based on attempts to avoid angering the American side and aimed to win its contentment in order to guarantee its positive or neutral position regarding internal Egyptian issues.

The Egyptian position which was supportive of the resumption of negotiations depended on American assurances regarding Washington's commitment to the

establishment of the Palestinian state according to the two-state solution and the personal commitment from President Obama to continue his efforts to launch peace negotiations within a specific timeframe.¹⁸ In addition, Egypt wanted to give Washington the chance to fulfill its promises and convince Israel to freeze settlement building for an extended period of time.

Washington's retreat and its official announcement that it have failed in convincing Israel to freeze settlement building for a three month period did not lead to any change in the Egyptian regime's position. On the contrary, the then Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Ghait attested on the eve of the meeting of the Arab Follow-up Committee that no side had any interest in thwarting the American efforts. Abu al-Ghait attested that there was a need for more international support, in particular from the Quartet, to enhance the American role. He added that the US must reassure the world that the borders of 1967 will be the future borders of the new Palestinian state and that East Jerusalem will be for the Palestinians.¹⁹ However, these principles were not accompanied by any Arab pressure on the American administration.

The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed that Egypt's backing for alternative options for the peace process would not be accomplished by collision with the US or the great powers, but by coordinating with them. These options that include seeking UN Security Council recognition of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.²⁰ This means that this option, regardless of the doubts regarding its seriousness, would not be used to mount international pressure on the US.

Ironically, as the Arab Group was presenting a draft resolution in the Security Council condemning Israeli settlement building, the Mubarak regime was in its last throes under the impact of the revolution which started on 25/1/2011. Thus, Egypt did not participate in the Arab measure which failed after the US vetoed the resolution. This time, however, the non-participation of the Egyptian regime was governed by internal factors rather than the coordination with Washington.

The future prospects of the Palestinian issue in 2011 had much to do with the outbreak of the revolution of January 25th. Many questions were raised regarding the positive and negative influence of the Egyptian uprising on the Palestinian issue and Egyptian-Israeli relations, even before Mubarak stepped down on 11/2/2011. The course of the Palestinian issue has been, and always will be, dependent on

the situation in Egypt, a focal point in the region with cultural and geographic proximity. In addition, there are geo-political factors, for Palestine is the eastern gate to the national security of Egypt. Consequently, any changes on the sides of the borders will inevitably affect the other side.

Given the fact that the Egyptian regime is currently undergoing an interim phase, it is too early to outline the contours of its foreign policy in the long or medium run. It should be noted here that the transformation in Egypt is extremely critical and should not be underestimated, as neither the old regime has completely collapsed nor has a new regime been established yet. Thus, it is impossible to tell how the new regime would look, only to predict the general features of an Egyptian foreign policy in the interim period, which will last until the end of 2011 and perhaps in to 2012. In this context, it is possible to note the following:

Egypt will not pursue Mubarak's policies regarding direct and indirect negotiations with Israel and regarding the entire peace process followed since the Oslo Accords. In other words, it is very unlikely that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces will exercise any pressure on the PA to change its stances concerning freezing settlement building and return to negotiations.

In the same vein, Egypt in the interim period would be stricter (as compared to Egypt under Mubarak) in supporting the Palestinian rights and less willing to comply with the demands of Israel and its allies in the US.

Even if the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has announced its commitment to the Camp David Accords, this does not necessarily mean proceeding with the same old practices. Yet, between annulling Mubarak's policies and proceeding with them, Egypt would choose some other alternatives. These would put Israel in defensive position and bring to an end the intimate relation which Israel has enjoyed with Egypt under Mubarak.

It is also unlikely that Egypt would withdraw from the Arab Peace Initiative. However, it will be less tolerant of the lack of the desire for peace on the part of Israel and more critical of its policies.

If Israel pursues a new assault on the GS, this would probably lead to unprecedented tension with Egypt.

b. The Stance on the Palestinian Reconciliation

In 2010, there was a renewed mobility on the level of inter-Palestinian reconciliation, in parallel with a renewed activity on the level of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. These negotiations witnessed interventions from some Arab parties, in addition to Cairo, which presided over this key file. At their peak, these efforts showed that there was keenness on securing a calm climate for the negotiations and the negotiators.

In early 2010, Cairo persistently refused to re-discuss or amend the Egyptian paper for reconciliation. This position led to frustration after the optimism over the extensive Arab tours of Khalid Mish'al and Mahmud 'Abbas early 2010. There were also estimations about an expected Saudi role in the inter-Palestinian reconciliation file which reminded the region of Saudi endeavors to conclude the Mecca Agreement in 2007.²¹

However, this stance changed on the eve of *'Eid-ul-Fitr* (the Festival of Fast-Breaking) after the meeting held in Mecca between former Minister 'Omar Suleiman and Khalid Mish'al. The two agreed that Suleiman would convince Abu Mazin to send a delegation to meet a Hamas delegation in Damascus in order to agree on inter-Palestinian reconciliation, even before Hamas would sign the Egyptian paper.²² Indeed, a meeting was held and a joint statement was released stressing the need for holding another meeting and commitment to the points agreed on once the Egyptian paper is signed.²³

This change in the Egyptian position was meant to support Abu Mazin in the negotiations with Israel which faced wide Palestinian opposition, even within Fatah and the PLO, due to the intransigence of Netanyahu's government.

The revival of this file was also based on Saudi endeavors to bridge the gap between Cairo and Damascus and the realization that resolving the reconciliation file is not feasible while the Syrians are marginalized. This was particularly evident after the failure of Cairo Declaration in March 2005, the failure of Mecca Agreement in February 2007 and the failure of Sana'a Declaration in 2008 in addition to the failure of the Palestinian dialogue rounds in Cairo in 2009.

Cairo and Riyadh considered the revival of the reconciliation file at this time an important step toward avoiding any failure in the negotiations. Reconciliation could also be used as leverage in support of Abu Mazin, to show that he has many

options and is capable of achieving reconciliation. Thus, it would help in refuting the Israeli claims that the Palestinian president is too weak, as he does not represent all the Palestinian people or control the GS.

The purpose of these efforts was confirmed with the postponement of the session, which was scheduled for 20/10/2010 in Damascus, until further notice. The political and security officials in Ramallah got a clear message from the US and Israel that “opening the file of security forces in the WB is a red line.” The message hinted that Hamas in the WB should always be the target of the security forces and security coordination rather than being a part of the PA, its apparatuses and supervising bodies. Moreover, the PA’s divergence from this course would make it and its forces an enemy of Israel. Eventually, this file was closed before the end of the year with the failure of Arab efforts to resolve it.

With the outbreak of the Egyptian revolution, there was no more room for the Egyptian paper. The regime, which has maintained the paper and used it to pressure Hamas, has collapsed.

It is very likely that during the interim period in Egypt there will be less Egyptian focus on this file until internal matters are taken care of. Nonetheless, if the developments in the Palestinian arena imposed their logic on all sides and demanded more efforts to achieve reconciliation; it would be possible to assume that the Egyptians would show relative openness towards Hamas. This openness was particularly manifested through the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt and the Foreign Minister Nabil al-‘Arabi with Hamas delegation headed by Mahmud al-Zahhar in March 2011. This was in contrast to the approach pursued by the former regime. The communication with Hamas then was restricted to Egyptian General Intelligence, without any political contact.

c. The Stance on the GS Siege

In early 2010, Egypt seemed to have lost its tolerance of aid convoys channeled into GS through the Rafah crossing, the only Arab exit for GS. 2010 started with the crisis of the Lifeline 3 relief convoy after the Egyptian authorities allowed 139 vehicles to enter GS through the Rafah crossing, about 45 km from the port in al-‘Arish, but requiring a remaining 59 vehicles to pass via Israel. The incident escalated into an exchange of fire leading to the killing of an Egyptian soldier and the injury of dozens of convoy members.²⁴

The Egyptian authorities decided to prevent relief convoys from passing to GS via its territories regardless of their origin or organizers. The Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Ghait referred the ban to the need to thwart those intentions aiming at hurting Egypt or questioning its support for the Palestinians and their cause. He explained in a statement he issued that the Egyptian authorities were willing to develop a new procedure which allows those willing to send aid consignments to the Palestinians to hand them to the Egyptian Red Crescent and the Egyptian authorities in al-‘Arish Port. The Egyptian authorities would take all the necessary measures then to hand them to the Palestinian Red Crescent in Gaza.²⁵

Through its management of this crisis, Egypt appeared to be mostly opposed to providing the Palestinian people with humanitarian assistance although of course it was not responsible for imposing the siege in the first place. While the aid convoy received popular and official welcome in Turkey, Syria and Jordan, the conduct of Egypt at the official level in impeding the convoy was unjustified. The Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs seemed unreasonably stubborn, and thus failed to convince public opinion with its justifications. Indeed, there was no logic in demanding that convoys go to al-‘Arish Port, which has limited capacity, instead of Nuweiba Port where the ships were supposed to dock from the outset. The repeated talk about sovereignty and respect for the laws of countries generated wide ridicule as no one was intending or trying to infringe on them.

Intercepting the aid meant for a besieged people triggered wide criticism against Egypt rather than against Israel, which is violating the rights of the Palestinians and causing their starvation. However, in the aftermath of the attack on Freedom Flotilla, Egypt announced the opening of Rafah crossing in both directions for an indefinite time and allowed the passage of aid consignments through its territory to the GS.²⁶ This step was an attempt to contain public rage prompted by the assault on the flotilla, and to prevent the recurrence of the scenario of massive popular gatherings at the Rafah crossing that occurred when GS faced total economic paralysis in January 2008.

At the same time, Egypt continued to uncover and destroy GS border tunnels in 2010. According to a press report, Egypt destroyed around 400 border tunnels in the first half of 2010.²⁷ The destruction of the tunnels increased the tension between Egypt and the Hamas government in the GS, where both sides exchanged accusations over the issue of the tunnels. Egypt continuously accused Hamas of

using the tunnels to smuggle weapons to the GS and penetrate the security of Sinai. For example, a report issued by the ruling National Democratic Party mentioned that smuggling weapons into GS has led to the creation of an indirect weapons market in Egypt, where most of these weapons fall back to Egypt and are sold at home. Further, the report added that the “terrorist” attacks in Cairo and Sinai were directly related to these tunnels, naming the al-Hussein bombings of 2009. The Egyptian authorities had evidence, according to the report, that two of the planners “took advantage of GS as a secure haven under Hamas’s control, while a Belgian of Tunisian origin used the tunnels to sneak from GS to Egypt and participate in the bombings after receiving directions from Hamas leaders in GS.”²⁸

The tension between the two sides increased with the incoming media and legal reports. These talked about the Egyptian security forces pumping toxic gases into the tunnels before detonating bombs there in order to kill those who might be there. For example, a report by the Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) in the UK mentioned that the Egyptian authorities used lethal force in the war on the tunnels between GS and Egypt, where it pursued deliberate killings, away from the scrutiny of public or media.

The AOHR revealed in its report that 54 cases of death by suffocation were documented. Most of them died after inhaling lethal doses of toxic gas pumped by the Egyptian forces into the tunnels causing suffocation and quick death.²⁹

On 29/4/2010, the Ministry of Interior in the GS accused the Egyptian security forces of pumping poisonous gas into smuggling tunnels, killing four Palestinians and suffocating seven. For its part, Egypt denied the charges, saying that explosions set off by security forces trying to seal the entrances to some of the hundreds of tunnels still operating may have sparked fires that sucked the oxygen out of a tunnel, causing suffocation.³⁰

After the Egyptian uprising, the borders with GS are expected to witness a breakthrough. In this sense, the then interim Foreign Minister of Egypt Nabil al-‘Arabi, declared that during the coming stage, Egypt would ensure the end of the siege on the GS. He also described the policies of the former regime regarding the Rafah crossing and its approach to the GS as improvised and a gross breach of international humanitarian law which prohibits besieging civilians even in time of war.³¹ These declarations show that the new Egyptian vision and its approach to the Rafah crossing would be more flexible. The indicators of such a change started

to appear with the decisions of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces to open the Rafah crossing permanently to allow the passage of those trapped on both sides of the borders, humanitarian cases and those who have stay permits. The Council has also allowed some Hamas leaders, including Mahmud al-Zahhar and Khalil al-Hayyah, to pass via the crossing. Moreover, these decisions reflect the change in the Egyptian perception of the siege. It held Israel and the international community fully responsible for the siege, while acknowledging its partial responsibility for this problem and promising to try to resolve it.

2. Jordan

a. The Stance on the Peace Settlement

2010 did not bring any change in the Jordanian approach to the peace process. Jordan is considered the Arab state most concerned about the non-establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and about the return of the refugees. It is a matter that transcends geography and demography and threatens Jordan's security and even its own existence. However, there is little evidence that these concerns are having any impact on Jordan's political conduct.

In 2010, there were many risk indicators which required Jordan to interfere effectively to settle the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The first of these indicators was the American-Israeli endeavors to revive a solution for the refugees file before starting negotiations, an approach that would likely be at the expense of Arab states, primarily Jordan. Such a solution, as some media reports said, included sending American delegations to a number of Arab countries to convince them about the naturalization of the Palestinians. These countries would receive huge financial aid to cover the needs of the naturalized refugees.³²

Facing such dangerous signals, Jordan's official position was limited to denunciations, verbal accusations and confirmations refusing naturalization. On other occasions, the Israeli ambassador in Amman was called and handed over a protest note from the Jordanian government complaining about the decision of the Israeli government to transfer Palestinians from the WB.³³

At the same time, Jordanian officials continued to issue statements regarding the preparations for resuming direct negotiations. Simultaneously, these statements again stressed that Jordan does not negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians or take part in the negotiations and would veto any agreement that does not meet Jordanian

interests. In fact, Jordan has expressed its willingness to participate in direct negotiations parallel to reports attesting that it was opening its archives on the WB and providing the Palestinian negotiations team under Mahmud ‘Abbas with detailed maps and aerial photos of the WB including East Jerusalem, which was under Jordanian sovereignty prior to its occupation in 1967.³⁴ However, Jordanian attempts were completely rejected by the Israeli and American sides which insisted on bilateral negotiations even with regard to the files that have direct impact on Jordanian national security, such as the issue of the Palestinian refugees.

In the light of the American and Israeli persistence with rhetoric around bilateral negotiations, Jordan did not have any useful tactics which would enable it to participate in the negotiations in a way that would serve its interests. In early May 2010, a statement was issued by the National Committee of Retired Military Personnel rejecting the American-backed Israeli plans to naturalize the refugees in a way that affects the Jordanian identity.³⁵ However, questions were raised about the validity of attributing the said statement to Retired Military Personnel, especially after a group of the retirees denied publicly before the Jordanian King that they had issued the statement.³⁶ The same thing applies to the Jordanian decision to form follow-up committees tasked with tracking the file of direct negotiations yet remaining without an effective role on the actual course of events.

Eventually, Jordan was left with one choice: waiting for the results of bilateral negotiations, no matter the outcome.

Although the turmoil in the Arab countries makes it more likely that Arab interest in the peace process file will decline, at least during 2011, the unique status of Jordan makes it unable to disregard this file. Despite the unrest in the country at the beginning of 2011, Jordan will continue to fear the creation of a de facto solution in accordance with the Israeli agenda.

b. The Relations with the Palestinians in Jordan

The issue of the Palestinian refugees in Jordan was the main area of concern within Jordan when it came to the Palestinians. Throughout the year, there was continued escalation regarding this file.

In early 2010, HRW published a report entitled *Stateless Again: Palestinian-Origin Jordanians Deprived of their Nationality*. The report mentioned that between 2004 and 2008, Jordan has “arbitrarily” withdrawn citizenship from 2,732 Jordanians of

Palestinian origin. It added, “Hundreds of thousands of Jordanians of Palestinian origin appear liable to have their national number revoked, including some 200,000 Palestinian-origin Jordanians who returned to Jordan from Kuwait in 1990-91.” HRW demanded that:

Jordan should halt the arbitrary withdrawal of nationality from Jordanians of Palestinian origin. The government should appoint a commission to investigate and publicly report on the legal status of Jordanians of Palestinian origin who lived outside of the West Bank at the time of Jordan’s 1988 severing of ties with the West Bank. Jordan should reinstate Jordanian nationality to those arbitrarily deprived thereof, and provide them with fair compensation.³⁷

The Jordanian government stressed that the withdrawal of citizenship was intended to correct the situation of the Palestinians after the disengagement from the WB. It added that struggle is a part of the Palestinian identity and a source of pride for everybody.³⁸ Thus in this sense, the Jordanian government’s position appears to be based on its keenness to disengage from the WB and to respect the Palestinian refugees right of return to their homeland, as well as a reflection of its decision not to get involved in settling the refugee issue. Jordan is completely opposed to naturalization projects that Israel and some international parties stir up every now and then and which trigger Jordan’s fears of a solution that might come at its expense.

Tension between Jordan and Israel peaked after the announcement on 13/4/2010 that Israel had imposed a military order which could see tens of thousands of Palestinians deported from the occupied WB. These Palestinians will be considered as “infiltrators,” for they either “entered the Area unlawfully following the effective date,” or they were “present in the Area” and did not “lawfully hold a permit.”³⁹ This measure raised fears of mass deportation of Palestinians into Jordan. Consequently, the Jordanian Foreign Ministry summoned the Israeli ambassador in Amman and handed him a strongly worded protest note from the government regarding the Israeli decision. The note mentioned that the decision was a blunt breach of humanitarian and international covenants and laws and a violation of Israel’s obligations as the occupying power of the Palestinian territories. In addition, the note stated that any Israeli measure in this context would be considered legally void and invalid.⁴⁰



Several closed meetings were held that involved prominent figures from the ruling regime and the government. Leaks from these meetings attest that Jordan perceived any unilateral measures which would lead to the mass transfer of Palestinians from the WB as a hostile act against it, and could lead to military confrontation with the Israeli occupation.⁴¹

At the same time, The Higher Committee for the Coordination of National Opposition Parties (HCCNOP) in Jordan stressed the need for practical measures to face Israel's apartheid policy against the Palestinians in the WB. These measures would include closing the borders to prevent the Israeli transfer policy, the abolition of Wadi 'Arabah's Treaty of Peace between the state of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the expulsion of the Israeli ambassadors from the Arab capitals hosting them, closing Israeli embassies in addition to the complete activation of boycott laws and a halting of all forms of normalization with the Israeli enemy.

HCCNOP further demanded that the Arab governments withdraw the Arab Peace Initiative and work together with the international community to exercise more pressure on Israel. They wanted both parties to thwart the aggressive settlement building projects and expose the ambitions of the Israeli government.⁴²

On another hand, a group of the National Committee of Retired Military Personnel issued a statement stressing that Jordanians of Palestinian origin have no political rights in Jordan. The statement attested that Jordanians of Palestinian origins enjoy the same rights as other Jordanians "except for political rights, there shall be 'no political allocations,' no naturalization, and no political positions, in an effort to preserve the precious Palestinian land and to confront the Israeli agenda, and those who adopt it."⁴³ The Retired Military Personnel issued another statement in September 2010 reiterating the same point and warning that the naturalization of Jordanians of Palestinian origin was becoming a threat to the Jordanian national identity.⁴⁴

Although the mother institution of the retired officers denied any relation with the statement, this does not eliminate the fact that such a declaration represents the stance of a segment of the political elite in Jordan. It is also consistent with the project adopted by the Jordanian ex-Foreign Minister Samir Habashnah, who has called for withdrawing the national number (which gives full Jordanian citizenship rights including the right to elect and be elected) from all holders of green and

yellow cards under the pretext of preserving the Jordanian national identity and supporting the Palestinian steadfastness.⁴⁵

In an attempt to explain the withdrawal of citizenship, a report quoting a well-informed source in the Jordanian Interior Ministry asserted that the number of Jerusalemites living in the Kingdom without renewing the Israeli permits is increasing. According to the report this means that this category would lose any status in occupied Jerusalem as well as forcing the Jordanian authorities to correct their situation through converting yellow cards by which Palestinians enjoy all Jordanian political and civil rights to green cards which declare them as "Palestinians living temporarily on the Jordanian territories." The source clarified that as the Israeli permit expires, the Follow-up and Inspection Department would call the concerned person and warn him against the dangers of losing the Israeli permit and the consequent loss of his historical right in Palestine. In addition the Jordanian authorities would be compelled to convert his yellow card into a green one as a response to the Israeli project. It is worth mentioning that according to the procedures of the Follow-up and Inspection Department, yellow cards are granted to Palestinians with valid Israeli permits or Palestinian ID or those who continuously renew their Israeli documents. However, the holders of the yellow card enjoy the same rights and duties of the Jordanian citizen because they preserve their Palestinian identity and land, having a valid document issued by the "occupation."⁴⁶

Granting Jordanian citizenship to the Palestinians and then withdrawing it triggered much debate in Jordan in light of claims about the naturalization of a huge number of Palestinians. In this respect, there was a particular claim that during four years (2005–2008) the number of those who restored the national number and switched from the green to the yellow card amounted to 56,939 persons compared to 2,017 whose national number was frozen and their yellow card replaced with green card.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, official statistics published by *Addustour* newspaper about the number of persons who obtained Jordanian citizenship revealed the invalidity of these claims. The published figures showed that the number of persons receiving Jordanian citizenship from 1/1/2000 till 17/2/2011 amounted to 46,058 including 37,150 women who gained citizenship after marrying a Jordanian citizen as per the laws of nationality. According to the statistics, 1,322 Arab and foreign persons obtained Jordanian nationality based on nationality law, while 2,200 citizens

restored their Jordanian nationality after having earlier renounced it in order to claim a foreign nationality. In addition, figures showed that among the naturalized citizens only 217 were excluded from the instructions related to the disengagement decision from 2007 till mid-February 2011 by virtue of the foreign minister's decision, while the status of 5,169 citizens was corrected in accordance with the decision of disengagement.⁴⁸

Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sa'ad Hayel Srouer declared that in 2010 the number of cards that were converted from yellow to green was 818, while 8,473 were converted from green to yellow. He added that the allegations about naturalizing Palestinians were not true and the Jordanian authorities have not naturalized a single Palestinian while the measures taken were in the context of correction of situation of children or those who work abroad or have left via Lod Airport.⁴⁹

As a sign of positive development in the relation between Jordan and Hamas, reports mentioned in summer 2011, that King 'Abdullah welcomed Khalid Mish'al visit to Jordan. It was evident that there was a Qatari effort in breaking the ice between the two sides. However, the "Arab Spring," the developments of the Jordanian internal situation, besides the continuous strong unignorable role of Hamas in the Palestinian policies, played an important role in changing the Jordanian stance.

In general, and concerning the Jordanian approach towards the issues of the Palestinians in Jordan, no radical changes are expected to take place in 2011 because of the continuing fear of naturalization. Simultaneously, it is likely that relations between Jordan and the Palestinian factions will head towards relative openness. Thus, there will be more focus on the Palestinian issue, in the context of containing internal tension and controlling the internal situation. Therefore, Jordan in 2011 is likely to seek to adjust its relations with its citizens of Palestinian origin on one hand, and on the other hand make sure that its changed approach is not be taken as a foregone outcome of a peace settlement.

3. Syria

a. The Stance on the Peace Settlement

During 2010, Damascus maintained its opposition to the return of the PLO to negotiations with Israel, continuing to reject the concessions the PLO has made

to Israel. In addition, Damascus has realized that any negotiations in the light of the current conditions of weakness and division in the PA and the intransigence of the right-wing government in Israel would only lead to more concessions on Palestinian rights, such as the right of return, Jerusalem and stopping settlement building. Moreover, Syria was opposed to the decisions and measures taken by the Arab Follow-up Committee where it occasionally declared that it was not party to any statements or decisions issued by the committee. At the same time, Damascus has stressed that the issue of indirect negotiations is an internal Palestinian problem for which the Palestinian leadership is responsible. In this context, it has repeatedly criticized the PLO's pursuit of negotiations without securing any guarantees for the Palestinian rights it is duty bound to protect in the first place.⁵⁰

Syria stressed that the committee's decisions regarding indirect negotiations with Israel and discussion of future steps constitute a violation of the committee's rights, the authority of the Arab Ministerial Council and the decisions of the Arab Summit. Ambassador Yusuf Ahmad, Syria's permanent delegate to the Arab League and the head of the Syrian delegation in the Summit, declared that:

Syria views responding to the US request under all these conditions as a gift to Israel, and that direct negotiations are an Israeli demand and need... Israel considers direct negotiations as the starting point for lifting the international isolation it is suffering from and a cover to continue with the settlement and Judaization policies and impose new facts on the ground.⁵¹

The difference in the stances of Syria and the Palestinian leadership on the negotiations file and the inter-Palestinian reconciliation had negative impact on the relations between the two sides. In this context, the Syrian leadership officially apologized in early March 2010 for not receiving the Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas who was supposed to visit Damascus. This stance was, according to the PLO leadership, a political message reflecting a Syrian decision not to support President 'Abbas and at the same time expressing resentment of his policies.⁵²

On 9/10/2010, tension between the Syrian and Palestinian sides reached its peak when the Syrian and Palestinian presidents had an argument over the negotiations with Israel and the resistance, during the Extraordinary Arab Summit held in Sirte. The debate between the two presidents focused on the Arab Peace Initiative Follow-up Committee which, according to President Bashar Assad, was not mandated to give the Palestinians the approval to conduct negotiations with



Israel. President Mahmud ‘Abbas replied that the Palestinian issue is essentially an Arab issue and Arabs should not give up on it. According to media sources, the Syrian president told his Palestinian counterpart that the Palestinians should stop negotiations which have proven to be ineffective and focus on resistance instead. These sources added that President ‘Abbas reiterated that the Palestinians are focused on resistance more than others in the region, in reference to the absence of any resistance in the occupied Golan Heights.⁵³

Since March 2011, Syria witnessed a widening popular unrest calling for changing the regime and establishing a new democratic political system. Syrian officials declared that there is a “conspiracy” behind this unrest because of its role in supporting the Palestinian issue and resistance movements in the region. Hamas was put in a difficult position, as it can’t ignore the support of the Syrian regime, while in the same time it supports peaceful democratic rotation of power and the implementation of the political rights of the people. The unstable situation led several Hamas leaders to quietly leave Syria to other countries. More lights will be shed on this issue in *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12*.

b. The Stance on the Palestinian Reconciliation

The reconciliation file was expected to witness some progress this year based on the rapprochement between Damascus, Riyadh and Cairo, after realizing that no advance could be achieved without cooperation between these sides. The Syrian role remains effective in this sense as Syria embraces Hamas and hosts the head of its political bureau, Khalid Mish‘al. In addition, it has stressed on more than one occasion its continuous support of Hamas. This file witnessed, in the beginning of 2010, Khalid Mish‘al’s visits to Riyadh and some other gulf countries as well as Russia. On another hand, the Saudi foreign minister visited Cairo then Damascus for the first time in years.

However, the Arab efforts related to this file have not achieved a breakthrough for a number of different reasons mentioned previously in this chapter. For Syria, it seemed that tense relations with President ‘Abbas contributed to the stalemate. While the Syrian government made an official apology in March 2010 for not receiving the Palestinian president, sources said that Syria was not satisfied with the policies of ‘Abbas who they believed was ignoring Syrian concerns.⁵⁴ The tension was exacerbated after the altercation between the Syrian and Palestinian presidents in the Extraordinary Arab Summit in October 2010.

Indeed, the tension between ‘Abbas and Damascus had a negative impact on the reconciliation between the Palestinian factions. Thus, the meeting scheduled for 20/10/2010 between Fatah and Hamas to discuss the security file was postponed because of the disagreement between the two sides on the place of the meeting. Fatah leadership insisted on changing the place of the meeting which was scheduled in Damascus, while Hamas refused to hold the meeting in any other capital.⁵⁵ Eventually, the meeting was held on 9/11/2010 after the Fatah leadership had to agree on holding it in Damascus.

c. Syria’s Stances on Israel

During 2010, Syria was successful in managing the escalated Israeli threat of waging a war against it. Damascus warned against the consequences of any Israeli attack against Syria or Lebanon. Israeli officials launched provocative statements against Syria. Notably Defense Minister Ehud Barak commented that the stalemate on achieving a peace settlement with Syria might lead to war,⁵⁶ and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman warned Syrian President Bashar Assad against launching a new war saying that “not only will you lose the war, you and your family will no longer be in power.”⁵⁷ Syria, in return, escalated its rhetoric to the extent that its Foreign Minister Walid al-Mu‘allim warned Israel in the wake of Barak’s statement that the war would reach Israeli cities if Israel decided to launch an attack against Syria. In a joint press conference with his Spanish counterpart Miguel Ángel Moratinos, al-Mu‘allim said, “Israel is indeed planting the seeds of war in the region, I would tell them stop playing the role of thugs in the Middle East,” and then added “I would say it is going to be a comprehensive war, whether it starts in the south of Lebanon or from Syria.”⁵⁸

On 25/2/2010, the Syrian President responded to the Israeli verbal escalation in a joint press conference held with the Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad in Damascus. He said, “We hope others will not give us lessons when it comes to our region and history... We can decide how things will proceed.”⁵⁹ In addition, the online edition of *The New Yorker* published an interview with Assad, where he said that the Israelis “are like children fighting each other, messing with the country; they do not know what to do.”⁶⁰

Syria’s rigorous hard line succeeded in persuading the Israeli side to change its rhetoric. In an interview on Israeli Channel 1, Lieberman said, “It needs to be understood that we are not looking for either confrontation or friction with

Syria.”⁶¹ Later, Netanyahu declared that he was “prepared to immediately set out for Damascus to meet with President Assad, or to invite him to Jerusalem, or to meet with him in a third country.” This was totally rejected by Syria which stressed through its Foreign Minister Walid al-Mu‘allim that Israel has first to withdraw from the Golan Heights to the lines of 4/6/1967.⁶²

Hostility escalated in April and May 2010 after Israel’s President Shimon Peres accused Syria of giving Hizbullah long-range Scud missiles, capable of inflicting heavy damage on Israel’s cities. Israeli security reports claimed that Israel believes Hizbullah has obtained hundreds of M600 missiles, which pose a direct threat to Israeli population centers.⁶³ However, Syria denied the veracity of these reports stressing that they aim at paving the way for an aggressive act against Syria. At the same time, Syria reiterated that it would continue to support the resistance movements including Hizbullah and Hamas. This inclination was expressed by President Assad in an interview with the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) on 27/5/2010 in which he said, “The peace process is about two parties,” but then added, “Today, we don’t have this partner so far.”⁶⁴

It is possible to say that Syria was able, through warning against the repercussions of an Israeli attack, to overcome Israeli blackmail. Although it did not accept any unfair political settlement, it kept its support for the Arab Peace Initiative. The tone of the Syrian statements comes in the context of avoiding war at a time when preventing war needs strict tone, resolute conduct and better preparedness.

4. Lebanon

a. The Palestinian Arena in Lebanon

In February and March 2010, renewed factional conflicts witnessed the outbreak of clashes, where the Salafist-jihadist trend emerged especially in Ein el-Hillweh refugee camp. On 15/2/2010, skirmishes erupted between ‘Usbat al-Ansar and Fatah Movement which escalated into violent clashes leading to several casualties.⁶⁵ The Palestinian security problems were prompted by the inter-Palestinian struggles and by the ongoing tension between “moderate” Arab states and the Arab “refusal front” states.

On 10/3/2010, Abu Mazin, the leader of Fatah, issued a decree by which he appointed a new leadership for Fatah in Lebanon at organizational and military levels. Thus, Sultan Abu al-‘Aynayn, member of the Fatah Central Committee, was appointed

‘Abbas’ advisor for Palestinian refugee affairs, i.e., equivalent to a ministerial rank. This measure was meant to limit Abu al-‘Aynayn’s impact on the Lebanese arena in response to pressures exercised by the Lebanese authorities. Brigadier-General Ahmad Saleh was appointed commander of the Palestinian Armed Struggle in Lebanon to replace Brigadier-General Munir al-Maqdah who was excluded from any position. Brigadier-General Muhammad ‘Ali ‘Ubayd was appointed deputy commander of the Armed Struggle, Brigadier-General Subhi Abu ‘Arab chief of Fatah’s military forces and commander of Palestinian national security in Lebanon and Brigadier-General Muhsen al-Hallak was appointed his deputy. In addition, Colonel Mahmud ‘Isa was appointed military commander for Saida and Ein el-Hillweh refugee camp, Brigadier-General Fadl Mustafa commander in the military region of Tyre, Colonel Abu Iyad Sha‘lan commander in the Beirut region, and Lieutenant-Colonel Fakhri Tirawiyyah as the military leader for north Lebanon.⁶⁶ This decision sparked outrage within Fatah and even among other factions which held an extended meeting in Ein el-Hillweh with al-Maqdah at his residence in the refugee camp on 12/3/2010 with the participation of some Fatah officials. The meeting stressed the rejection of the exclusion of al-Maqdah, demanded the reconsideration of the new appointments and reiterating that al-Maqdah was a guarantee for stability in Ein el-Hillweh camp. Eventually, the participants agreed to send a letter to Abu Mazin urging him to cancel the decree.⁶⁷

Fatah replied to the objections by saying that the decision was based on the recommendations of a military committee headed by Major General Yunis al-‘Ass which has visited Lebanon in late 2009. However, some sources confirmed that the decision was based on the tension between President ‘Abbas and the Arab refusal front on one hand and the rapprochement between al-Maqdah, the Arab refusal front and Iran on the other hand. Al-Maqdah did not deny this argument in an interview with *Asharq Alawsat* newspaper yet he reiterated his full loyalty to Fatah which he had served for 40 years.⁶⁸

The Fatah leadership tried to resolve the disputes and delegated ‘Azzam al-Ahmad, a member of the Central Committee, for that purpose. On 6/5/2010, he announced that the internal disagreement was settled. He also attested that the new leadership of the Palestinian arena in Lebanon includes nine persons; five members of the FRC, the Regional Secretary-General, the commander of the military forces in Lebanon, the commander of the Armed Struggle and a Lebanese delegate on behalf of the Advisory Council.⁶⁹



In April, ‘Abdullah ‘Abdullah, a member of the FRC and the head of the Political Committee of the PLC, was appointed as representative of the PLO in Beirut (not an ambassador for Palestine as the Palestinian leadership had hoped), to succeed ‘Abbas Zaki.⁷⁰

On another level, on 8/4/2010 tension escalated between the Lebanese security forces and operatives affiliated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) in ‘Ayn al-Bayda, which is located in Kfar Zabad on the outskirts of the Syrian border in the Beqa’ Valley. Reports said that light and medium weapons were used in the clashes which resulted in the killing of one Palestinian and the wounding others. According to eyewitnesses, the site came under rocket attack from the neighboring Qusaya village. In the wake of these incidents, the Lebanese Army imposed security cordon around the site, thus preventing entry or exit from that area.⁷¹

There were varied explanations for this incident from within the PFLP-GC. In a televised interview, Anwar Raja, the PFLP-GC spokesman, accused Colonel Wisam al-Hasan, the head of the Intelligence Bureau of the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) of standing behind the Beqa’ clashes. He also accused the Intelligence Bureau of trying to challenge the agreed principle of dialogue on the Palestinian arms outside the refugee camps and therefore targeted the PFLP-GC site in Kfar Zabad.

Abu Ramiz Mustafa, the head of the PFLP-GC in Lebanon, refuted Raja’s assertions and said that one of the PFLP-GC operatives had some problems with his colleagues. He tried to solve these problems in a wrong way, as he came to Kfar Zabad along with some relatives and family members where the fighting took place.⁷²

For its part, the ISF denied what Raja said stressing that the clashes followed an attempt by a group affiliated with the PFLP-GC to take control of one of its sites (al-Jbayli site) near Kfar Zabad. After his dismissal from his position, Colonel Duraid Sha‘ban led a group who supported his position. The clashes ended with the arrest of four group members and Sha‘ban’s surrender to Lebanese army intelligence.⁷³

b. The Lebanese-Palestinian Relations

The question of the civil rights of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is still governed by traditional political tension between different sides which raise the

fear of naturalization every time the issue is put up for discussion to abort the attempts at giving the Palestinians minimal civil rights in Lebanon.

Consequently, the bills submitted by Lebanese deputies to grant the Palestinian refugees rights pertaining to labor, ownership and social security, triggered a political debate which acquired sectarian dimensions. Thus, the Lebanese right which includes the Christians of March 14 (Lebanese Social Democratic Party (*al-Kataeb*), the Lebanese Forces and the Christians in the Future Movement) in addition to the Christians of March 8 (Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)) declared their total rejection of giving the Palestinians any civil rights in Lebanon as opposed to the supportive position of the Muslims of March 14 (Future Movement and Lebanon First parliamentary bloc) together with the Muslims of March 8 (Hizbullah, the Amal Movement and their supporters). The issue of naturalization was always present in the arguments on Palestinian civil rights between the two political sides.

On 15/6/2010, a number of deputies from the Lebanese Democratic Gathering Bloc led by Walid Jumblatt, submitted bills on giving the Palestinian refugees civil rights including the right to labor, ownership and social security.⁷⁴ MP Wa'il Abu Fa'ur from the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) stressed that the PSP had submitted those bills in the context of its historical concern for the Palestinian issue and that the PSP rejects the naturalization of Palestinians and has no "internal political agenda" to that effect.⁷⁵ However, these motions were met with a storm of objections in which Lebanon's Christian parties opposed them for fear that they would facilitate the naturalization of the Palestinians, as the leader of the Lebanese Forces, Samir Geagea, said.⁷⁶ In contrast, the Muslim side backed the submitted bills while stressing that its support is not directed at encouraging the naturalization of the Palestinians but rather at giving them their normal human rights, not only because Lebanon should honor its commitment to its Arab environment but also consistent with the international covenants that it has signed in this respect.

It was not expected in the light of such controversy that these bills be wholly approved. However, a compromise was adopted whereby the Lebanese Parliament adopted on 17/8/2010 the right of Palestinians to work in all professions open to foreigners. In this sense, the Lebanese Parliament passed a proposal to amend Article 59 of the Labor Law and Article 9 of the Social Security Law. The amended text of Article 59 states, "Palestinian refugees, who are registered based



on accords, at the Ministry of Interior Affairs and Municipalities (Directorate of Political and Refugees Affairs) are exempted from the condition of reciprocity and the work permit fees issued by the Ministry of Labor.” While the amended text of paragraph 3 of Article 9 states:

Exempt the Palestinian refugee workers/laborers from the condition of reciprocity stated in the Labor Law and Social Security Law, so as to benefit from the contributions of end of service indemnity conditions which the Lebanese worker/laborer benefits from. Hereby, the Administration of the Social Security Fund should ascertain a separate independent account for the contributions belonging to the Palestinian refugees’ workers/laborers that does not bear the Treasury or the National Social Security Fund any financial obligation. Beneficiaries covered by the provisions of this law, do not benefit from the contributions of Sickness, Maternity and Family Allowances Funds.⁷⁷

For its part, the PLO welcomed the decision, its representative in Lebanon ‘Abdullah ‘Abdullah describing the decision as a step forward. He further stressed the need for proper mechanisms to implement what has been agreed on especially how to manage the refugees’ security fund.⁷⁸ Hamas, on the other hand, perceived the step as incomplete and insufficient, as stressed by its political official, ‘Ali Barakah.⁷⁹ Hamas issued a statement on 18/8/2010 demanding that Lebanese officials to act immediately to approve all the civil rights of the Palestinians to ensure their wellbeing alongside their Lebanese brethren. They considered steps that improve rights to be a key factor for facing naturalization and displacement plans and to enforce the steadfastness of the refugees so they return to their homeland, Palestine.⁸⁰

Fathi Abu al-‘Ardat, Fatah secretary-general in Lebanon, stressed that the continuous suffering of the Palestinians serves the naturalization project and stated that they who want the Palestinians to go back to their land must give them their rights to help them survive and prosper until the return is achieved.⁸¹ The representative of the PIJ, Abu ‘Imad al-Rifa‘i, asserted in a meeting with the leader of the PSP, Walid Jumblatt, that confronting naturalization requires stopping dealing with the refugee camps from a security point of view and instead treating the refugee question as a political issue.⁸²

The DFLP stressed that the law does not guarantee the minimum rights of the Palestinians in Lebanon but rather maintains the policy of deprivation pursued by

the Lebanese state. The DFLP stressed in a memorandum it sent in December 2010 to the political leaders, religious institutions, unions and the media that Lebanese laws have maintained discrimination against Palestinians through the work permit system and by barring them from liberal or syndicated professions. Consequently, a large proportion of the Palestinian people are deprived of the right to work.⁸³

Regarding the security file, the Palestinian issue is still the most sensitive and ever-present file on the Lebanese political agenda. In early 2010, this issue was brought to the forefront in the wake of the bombings which occurred in late 2009 in the Hamas office in Haret Hreik, the heart of Hizbullah's "security square." In this respect, the Lebanese Social Democratic Party said that Hizbullah was violating national consensus by providing an office for Hamas within its stronghold. The Social Democratic Party also considered that the mysterious bombing would not have happened had the Lebanese authorities in the recent years completed the implementation of the Security Council resolutions 1559 and 1701 and the Lebanese decision regarding the Palestinian weapons inside and outside the camps which was issued in 2006.⁸⁴ In addition, on 19/1/2010, the Lebanese cabinet stressed that the issue of Palestinian weapons outside the refugee camps is non-negotiable, while emphasizing the need to implement all the decisions of the dialogue table and the commitment to the ministerial statement in this respect.⁸⁵

The violence and clashes which broke out on the site of the PFLP-GC in April 2010 were an opportunity to raise the issue of the Palestinian weapons in Lebanon again, where the MP 'Uqab Saqr from the Lebanon First parliamentary bloc claimed that the PFLP-GC posed a threat to the Lebanese security and the Palestinian issue.⁸⁶ The weapons issue continued to be raised from time to time, dictated by the political situation and the levels of internal Lebanese tension.

c. Lebanon and Israel

Throughout 2010, Israel proceeded with the escalation of its threatening rhetoric directed against Hizbullah and Lebanon. In April, for example, the Israeli president Shimon Peres accused Syria of providing Hizbullah with weapons, including Scud missiles. Peres threatened Hizbullah and the Lebanese government with the launching of another war on Lebanon in retaliation, while Lebanese PM Sa'ad Hariri stressed that talking about Scud missiles in Lebanon is comparable to the search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq which were never found.⁸⁷

On another hand, the Kuwaiti newspaper *Alrai* quoted Arab sources saying that Tel Aviv has started to mass covert forces on its borders at the points of confrontation in order to be prepared in the case of a sudden attack being ordered against Lebanon. The newspaper added that Israel was gathering intelligence information necessary for the success of its first attack against Hizbullah through the destruction of weapons depots and missile arsenal.⁸⁸

Hizbullah Secretary-General Hasan Nasrullah responded to these threats by stressing that the party's resistance fighters are ready on the frontlines to defeat the Israeli enemy any time it launches an attack against Lebanon.⁸⁹ At the same time, the party official in south Lebanon Sheikh Nabil Qawuk declared that Hizbullah has requested thousands of its fighters to remain in full preparedness to face the Israeli maneuver which was declared in May 2010. He asserted that its timing was no coincidence but rather reflects Israel's aggressive intentions.⁹⁰

Taking the threats a step further, Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon spoke of the Israeli army power of deterrence on the Lebanese border. "Our policy of deterrence is not to allow Hezbollah to act against Israel. If Nasrallah dares, he knows what the significance of this is," he said. "There will be no separation between Lebanon and Hezbollah. Lebanon will be held responsible."⁹¹

All this verbal escalation made some observers believe that a war between Hizbullah and Israel was imminent, but these expectations were proved wrong. Developments confirmed that the Israeli escalation was an attempt to tighten the noose on Hizbullah and Syria and embarrass their position vis-à-vis the US and the EU by stressing their willingness to target Israel or bring damage upon it. The escalation on Hizbullah's side was not meant in the context of launching war but rather avoiding it. Although Hizbullah's ability to hurt Tel Aviv is not questioned, the new phase following its participation in the Lebanese government required the party to drift away from talking about resisting the existence of Israel to the need for a defense strategy for Lebanon. This was the price which Hizbullah had to pay when attempting to secure internal acceptance for its arms.

5. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The KSA (which is one of the pillars of the "moderate" Arab states and the drafter of the Arab Peace Initiative) joined the Egyptian efforts in pushing towards the PLO's return to negotiations with Israel. It has indeed played an effective role

in urging the Arab League to provide Arab cover for the Palestinian leadership for these negotiations despite the lack of any genuine guarantees other than the American promises.

As a matter of fact, Riyadh has stressed through the Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal that indirect negotiations should generate progress and the Arab world has given President Obama until September 2010 to achieve this progress,⁹² while the alternative to peace in the Middle East, in case negotiations failed, is to go to Security Council.⁹³ However, the KSA, along with other Arab sides including Egypt and Yemen, encouraged the Palestinian leadership to pursue direct negotiations before the deadline set by the Arab Follow-up Committee for the completion of the indirect negotiations.

Saudi support for inter-Palestinian reconciliation was based around a return to the Egyptian initiative and its goals rather any effort to replace it. In this sense, there were expectations in early 2010 of near reconciliation in the wake of Khalid Mish'al's meeting with the Saudi foreign minister. He reiterated that Hamas was still looking for a unique Saudi role, alongside Egypt and the other Arab countries, to help in achieving the Palestinian reconciliation, uniting the Palestinians and unifying the Arab stance to face Israel's intransigent leadership.⁹⁴

There were also talks about a Saudi initiative aiming at achieving the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas. Mish'al, heading a Hamas delegation to KSA, asked the Saudi Foreign Minister Sa'ud al-Faisal to add Saudi efforts to the Egyptian ones in order to achieve Palestinian reconciliation. Indeed, al-Faisal initiated contacts with Cairo, Damascus and Doha to discuss the possible ways forward.⁹⁵ However, these attempts were thwarted because of Egypt's reluctance to open the Egyptian reconciliation paper for more discussions, and Riyadh's confirmation that Egypt was the primary official sponsor of the Palestinian reconciliation.

It is unlikely that KSA will occupy itself with the Palestinian reconciliation during the remaining months of 2011, as the KSA is concerned with the unrest in the region and focusing its efforts on containing any internal Saudi tensions or in the Gulf region. Indeed, its efforts amounted to military intervention by sending the Peninsula Shield Forces to support in curbing the opposition in Bahrain. In the meantime, it is likely that other Gulf countries, such as Qatar, which are relatively distant from the events unfolding in the Arab world and are open to the various



Palestinian parties, to exercise a more important role in Palestinian reconciliation. Doha, which maintains good relations with Hamas and the Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas, can build on these relations and end the traditional Egyptian monopoly of the Palestinian file.

6. The Gulf Countries

For their part, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have pursued a position similar to the Saudi stance on the peace process and the Arab Peace Initiative. However, Kuwait showed a slightly different approach when its National Assembly held an emergency session on 1/6/2010 to discuss Israel’s attack on Freedom Flotilla. It submitted two recommendations: Kuwait’s withdrawal from the Arab Peace Initiative and tasking the Ministry of Justice with filing a criminal case against Israel, since the attacked Flotilla included 18 Kuwaitis; five women and the Islamist MP Walid al-Tabtaba’i. However, the constitutional expert Muhammad al-Dallal explained that the recommendation made by the National Assembly and approved by the government does suggest Kuwait’s withdrawal from the initiative.⁹⁶

The most prominent Palestinian event in the Persian Gulf in 2010 was the assassination of Hamas leader Mahmud al-Mabhuh in Dubai, which caused shock at official and popular levels as it constituted a breach of Arab national security. Nonetheless, the official Arab reaction in general and that of the Gulf countries did not reflect the magnitude of the crime. Most statements and comments were issued from Dubai Police rather than government sources. In a televised interview, the Commander in Chief of Dubai Police, Lieutenant General Dahi Khalfan Tamim said, “If the Mossad were proven to be behind the crime, which is most likely now, Interpol should issue a red notice for the head of the Mossad because he would be a killer.”⁹⁷ Khalfan stressed that the Mossad was planning to assassinate him because he has uncovered its role in al-Mabhuh assassination. He revealed that the syringe used to kill al-Mabhuh was strong enough to kill an elephant and he made fun of those who exaggerate the power of the Mossad, questioning whether sending or recruiting 42 persons to kill one unarmed person was a courageous act.⁹⁸ The authorities in the UAE refused to give an entry permit to Deputy Minister Gila Gamliel who was supposed to represent Israel in the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) third Summit on the Global Agenda held in Dubai because of al-Mabhuh assassination.⁹⁹

In fact, Dubai Police demonstrated great efficiency in investigating the assassination and detecting the perpetrators; however it was clear how much difficult it was to proceed to the end in the light of the Israeli world influence.

Regarding the other Palestinian files, such as the attack on the Freedom Flotilla, the position of the GCC ranged between verbal condemnation of the attack and material support of the PA. The GCC Secretary-General Abdul Rahman bin Hamad al-Ateyya, condemned the serious and continuous Israeli crimes aimed at discrediting the Islamic holy sites in the occupied Palestinian territories.¹⁰⁰ Al-Ateyya commented in a press release on the Israeli decision to deport those Palestinians in the WB who do not have Israeli IDs. He said that it proves the deliberate aggressive practices of the Israeli government, which is programmed to empty the occupied territories of their original population.¹⁰¹

The GCC condemned the attack on the Freedom Flotilla and described it as an act of piracy and state terrorism amounting to a war crime.¹⁰²

Third: Developments of Normalization

The Arab regimes proceeded with the normalization of relations with Israel overtly and covertly despite the public attempts to boycott Israel.

In Jordan, for example, the Department of Statistics (DoS) estimated Jordanian exports to Israel in 2010 at around 64.246 million dinars (\$90.743 million) compared to 73.042 million dinars (\$103.167 million) in 2009, i.e., a decrease of 12%. In addition, the statistical data showed a decrease in the volume of Jordanian imports from Israel of 32% in 2010 where it amounted to 63.158 million dinars (\$89.206 million) compared to 92.879 million dinars (\$131.184 million) in 2009. Thus, the volume of trade exchange between the two countries decreased from 165.921 million dinars (\$234.351 million) in 2009 to 127.404 million dinars (\$179.949 million) in 2010, i.e., a decrease of 23%.¹⁰³

On the other hand, Israeli official data mentioned that Jordanian exports to Israel amounted to \$94 million in 2010 compared to \$70 million in 2009 whereas its imports from Israel amounted to \$184.3 million in 2010 compared to \$231.3 million in 2009. This means that trade exchange between the two countries decreased from \$301.3 million in 2009 to \$278.3 million in 2010, i.e., by 8%.¹⁰⁴



It is not easy to reach specific conclusions about the reasons for the discrepancy between the Jordanian and Israeli statistics. Yet it is clear that the Israeli figures reflect higher trade volume and tend to reduce the decrease in the trade exchange.

Table 1/3: Trade Exchange Between Jordan and Israel According to Jordanian and Israeli Statistics 2009–2010 (\$ million)¹⁰⁵

Year	Jordan's export to Israel		Jordan's import from Israel		Trade exchange	
	Jordanian statistics	Israeli statistics	Jordanian statistics	Israeli statistics	Jordanian statistics	Israeli statistics
2009	103.167	70	131.184	231.3	234.351	301.3
2010	90.743	94	89.206	184.3	179.949	278.3

The Jordanian Agriculture Minister Sa'ïd al-Masri, stressed that the ministry cannot prevent the importation of agricultural products from Israel because the process of export and import is controlled by the private sector. He added that Jordan is committed to a peace agreement signed with Israel besides its commitment to the terms of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to which Jordan is a member.¹⁰⁶ In addition, Jordan Customs has issued a number of tariff exemptions and reductions on around 2,500 products of Israeli origin as of the beginning of 2010.¹⁰⁷

The Liaison Officers of the Regional Israel Boycott Offices demanded facing the Israeli attempts to infiltrate the Arab markets through forgery, fraud and smuggling. In October 2010, and with the participation of 15 Arab countries, the Liaison Officers held their 85th conference in Damascus. They stressed the need to stick to the principles and provisions of the Arab boycott of Israel and to pursue effective measures to compel Israel to abide by the resolutions of international legitimacy.

The conferees reiterated the importance of boycott at this critical stage of the Arab-Israeli conflict, because according to international law it is a form of legitimate resistance. It is considered a means of deterring Israeli aggression and curbing its criminality. They further called upon the international community to take bold steps that would immediately end the Israeli siege on the GS and the suffering of the Gazans.¹⁰⁸

In Egypt, the continued policy of normalization with Israel exceeded trade exchange and diplomatic and economic relations. Back doors were opened for the Israelis to work in Egypt in a way that threatens its national security. A press report mentioned that the head of The Egyptian General Tourist Guides Syndicate (EGTGS), Muhammad Gharib, revealed the presence of 203 tour guides, most of whom are Israelis, who entered Egypt via Egyptian tourist companies and worked during the last years without any supervision. According to the report, Gharib also announced that the Egyptian security forces deported 29 of them to Tel Aviv without any prosecution after they were caught red-handed in front of the pyramids informing tourists that the Jews built the pyramids while Egyptian history is faked.¹⁰⁹

In late December 2010, a group containing hundreds of Israelis flowed into Egypt to celebrate the Abu Hasira (*Yaakov Abuhatzzeira*) festival or remembrance ceremony in al-Buhayrah Governorate. Consequently, the security forces announced a state of alert amidst fears of public rage after an official declaration of the arrest of a network spying on behalf of Israel. In al-Buhayrah Governorate, the security forces took control of Damatiuh village in Damanhur to allow the Jews coming from Israel and other countries to participate in the ceremonies. The village looked like a barrack after the spread of a large number of Central Security cars inside and outside the village, while the snipers topped the roofs of the buildings and a curfew was imposed from 26/12/2010 till 7/1/2011.

Some citizens from Damanhur had earlier filed lawsuits demanding the abolishment of the festival and the accompanying celebrations. In 2004, the Supreme Administrative Court cancelled the decision issued by Culture Minister Faruq Husni which declared the mausoleum of Abu Hasira an archeological site. The villagers said that the Court's decision means also the elimination of all manifestations of celebration related to Abu Hasira in the village.

Opponents to the celebration of Abu Hasira festival decided to organize sit-ins. Isma'il al-Khawli, the head of the General Committee of al-Wafd Party in al-Buhayrah, said that the festival was only a pretext for Israelis to come to Damanhur. He called on the Israeli authorities to take Abu Hasira's remains if they really had the sincere faith in celebrating this anonymous person as they claimed.¹¹⁰

Aside from this drama, normalization with Israel continued apace, not only by importing Israeli goods but also by exporting goods to Israel. In this context,

al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper revealed that The International Union for Integrated Food Industries, Lazah, a Cairo-based food manufacture company which provided the Israeli army with food during its offensive on GS, has begun to sell its products within Israel. Similarly, *Elaosboa* newspaper revealed in a report published in early 2009 that a local company regularly provided the Israeli army with food via the al-‘Awjah border crossing during the Israeli war on GS, while the Rafah crossing was closed to the entry of relief materials and medical aid for the wounded Palestinians.¹¹¹

On 13/12/2010, Israeli reports revealed that several Israel Corporation subsidiaries signed long term natural gas supply contracts with Egyptian supplier East Mediterranean Gas Company (EMG). The gas supply is for three power plants that the group intends to operate on natural gas at three companies: Israel Chemicals Ltd.’s wholly-owned subsidiary Dead Sea Works Ltd., Oil Refineries Ltd. and OPC Rotem Ltd.

EMG shareholder Ampal-American Israel Corporation said that EMG has signed a total of five gas sale agreements. It also listed IC Power Ltd. (Israel Corp’s energy arm) among the customers. Ampal said the agreements are for a total quantity of 1.4 billion cubic meters (BCM) annually for 20 years, with an option to buyers to increase the total quantity up to 2.9 BCM annually. The total value of the five contracts according to Ampal is \$5–10 billion. Gas delivery is scheduled to commence between the first and second quarters of 2011.¹¹²

On a different level, on 26/12/2010, Israeli reports revealed that a deal would be signed between EMG and Hadera Paper Ltd., one of the largest paper companies in Israel. The deal would give Hadera 300 million cubic meters (MCM) of natural gas annually over 20 years in return for \$1 billion. *Energia News*, an Israeli newspaper specialized in energy matters, mentioned that the gas pumped by EMG would benefit Hadera’s planned power plant that has an investment of \$300 million. The newspaper considered that the deals with EMG would increase the percentage of contracts between the Egyptian company and Israel by 8% and would also increase the annual amount of Egyptian natural gas exported to Israel to around five billion MCM.¹¹³

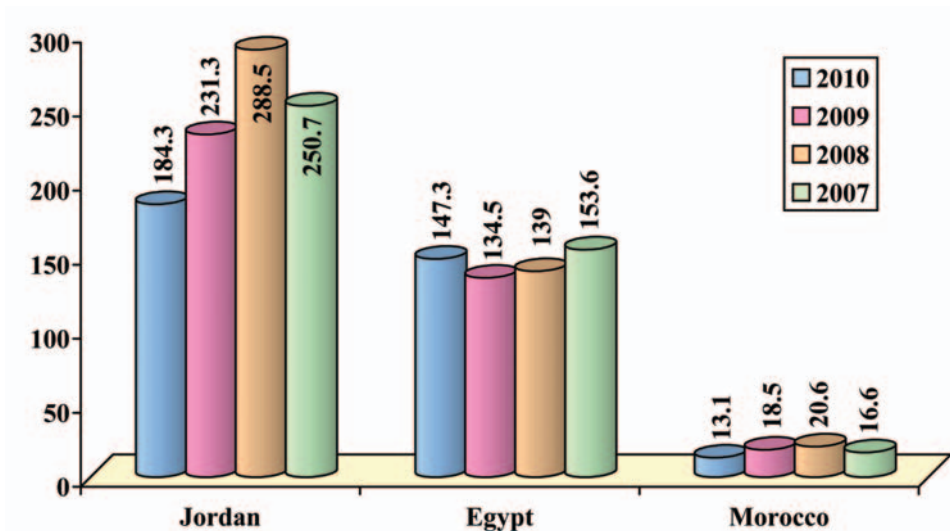
Israel’s most significant contract with the Egyptian company is a 2008 agreement to supply 2.1 BCM of gas a year to the Israel Electric Corporation. Thus, 40% of the utility’s electricity is produced from gas, and of the gas 45% comes from EMG.¹¹⁴

Elsewhere the UAE hosted an Israeli minister for the first time in its history when the Infrastructure Minister Uzi Landau participated in the conference of IRENA in Abu Dhabi. Landau told the Associated Press (AP) that although he did not meet any UAE official, the Israeli delegation was well received.¹¹⁵ The Arab League declared that the participation of an Israeli figure in any international activity hosted by an Arab country is imposed by the rules of international organizations. The League added that the Arab world cannot boycott participation in international conferences if Israel is a member in various international organizations.¹¹⁶

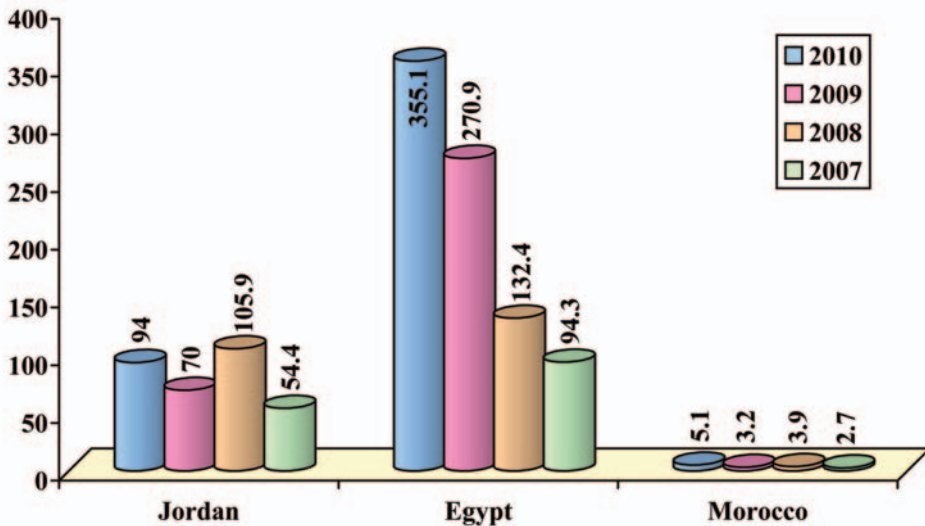
**Table 2/3: Israeli Exports and Imports with Some Arab Countries
2007–2010 (\$ million)¹¹⁷**

Countries	Israeli exports to:				Israeli imports from:			
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2010	2009	2008	2007
Jordan	184.3	231.3	288.5	250.7	94	70	105.9	54.4
Egypt	147.3	134.5	139	153.6	355.1	270.9	132.4	94.3
Morocco	13.1	18.5	20.6	16.6	5.1	3.2	3.9	2.7

Israeli Exports to Some Arab Countries 2007–2010 (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from Some Arab Countries 2007–2010 (\$ million)



Generally speaking, it is expected that in the near future, there will be a significant decline in the overt and covert practices of normalization with Israel at all popular and official levels. It is perhaps possible to say that there are signs that the normalization era has come to an end. Since the early days of the Egyptian uprising, pumping natural gas into Israel stopped after the bombing of the pipeline which feeds Israel with gas in the Sinai Peninsula. With the start of the interim phase in Egypt after the revolution succeeded to overthrow Mubarak and his regime, there was much talk about the gas deal with Tel Aviv and the need to end it. Although the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt announced its commitment to re-pump gas into Israel, the course of events pushes towards the reconsideration of the entire deal rather than just its value.

As for the exchange of diplomatic and official visits between Egypt and Israel, it is likely that 2011 will not witness any such visits as diplomatic relations between the two countries would be diminished. All forms of normalization between the two countries will likely stop and it is most probable that we witness a stage of anti-normalization at all levels where the hostile rhetoric towards Israel and its allies would be escalated, especially with the growing role of the Islamists in Egypt.

The same would apply to Jordan which would be forced to stop all overt forms of normalization with Tel Aviv and reduce official visits between the two countries to the lowest possible level consistent with the aspirations and demands of the Jordanian street. At the same time, popular rhetoric opposed to normalization will continue.

Fourth: The Arab Popular Stance

The popular position opposed to the occupation policies and supportive of the Palestinian issue flourished throughout 2010. The Arab capitals have witnessed demonstrations against the Israeli decision to add the Ibrahimi Mosque (The Sanctuary of Abraham) and Rachel's Tomb to the list of Jewish archeological sites. Thousands of students from the Muslim Brotherhood, in eight Egyptian universities, demonstrated to denounce the decision.¹¹⁸

The International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS) expressed deep and serious concern over the decision. The IUMS issued a statement that this step is new evidence of the Israeli intention to assume full control of historic Palestine. The statement warned against the repercussions of such step and called on the Arab masses in general and the Palestinian people in particular to face these measures by all means. It also called for a third *Intifadah* to be launched from the Ibrahimi Mosque and demanded the governments in all Arab and Muslim countries, together with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (formerly Organization of the Islamic Conference) and the Arab League, take a strong position to deter the Israeli government and urge it to reverse its decision. The statement was signed in Doha by IUMS's President Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Secretary-General Muhammad Salim al-'Awwa.¹¹⁹

The Egyptian People's Assembly called on the government to take all necessary steps to urge UNESCO to bear its responsibilities in preserving Islamic cultural heritage and reject Israeli attempts to Judaize Jerusalem.¹²⁰

Ahmad al-Tayyib, the grand sheikh of Alazhar, reiterated that he would not visit Jerusalem or *al-Aqsa* Mosque until after their complete liberation from the Israeli



occupation. He stressed also that he would not visit them now because the visit would mean giving legitimacy to the occupation.¹²¹

The Shari'a Scholars in GCC issued a statement which stressed that from an Islamic perspective the Arab Peace Initiative is void and the lasting peace with Israel while they are still occupying Muslim lands is forbidden. The statement stressed that the Arab and Muslim nations have to unify their efforts, exercise pressure on Israel, pray for the Palestinians and Jerusalemites in particular and above all stay prepared for Jihad. It also called on the GCC in particular to assume their usual stances in such momentous events.¹²²

In the wake of the reports which accused the Egyptian authorities of launching internationally forbidden gas into the tunnels, MPs and figures in the opposition, including the Egyptian Movement for Change (EMC), also known as *Kefaya* (Enough), the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Karamah and Labor parties condemned such conduct. On behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood MPs, Hamdi Hasan MP said in an urgent statement in the Parliament that they regret the deplorable conditions between the Egyptians and their Palestinian brethren, which are caused by the continued siege policy, deliberate bloodshed and the use of internationally banned toxic gases. Hasan added that Egypt's relations with its Arab neighbors have been turned into unprecedented hostile relations, contrasted to increased intimacy with Israel. This situation can be viewed uncontroversially as a violation of all common conventions which cannot be changed or altered by virtue of history, geography, religion and culture.¹²³

Following the attack on the Freedom Flotilla, the Arab peoples as one reacted to the attack and dozens of demonstrations took place in the streets of Arab capitals and towns condemning the Israeli crime.

In Egypt, more than 60 figures representing the different national forces demanded that Egypt's public prosecutor issues an arrest warrant against a number of Israeli figures and consider them war criminals. These include Benjamin Netanyahu, Ehud Barak, the Israeli army chief of staff and the commander of the Israeli navy. In addition, the Egyptian Bar Association demanded the cancellation of the peace treaties signed with Israel.¹²⁴

Conclusion

There is no doubt that 2011 is widely and accurately considered the year of the Arab peoples, for the Arab masses have proved that they are capable of change across different countries. These peoples have rebelled to demand reform and change without forgetting Palestine. This inclination was clear for example in the calls of the Egyptian people celebrating the collapse of the old regime. They chanted slogans that support the right of the Palestinian people to return to its homeland.

Based on the above, the new phase will probably witness an activation of the Arab popular position towards the Palestinian issue. In addition, new forms of support for the issue will emerge not allowed by the previous regimes. At the same time, other Arab regimes will, under pressure, allow popular forces to exercise a greater role in defending the Palestinian issue and the media role in highlighting these issues will continue to grow in significance.



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Chapter Four

The Palestinian Issue and the Muslim World

The Palestinian Issue and the Muslim World

Introduction

During 2010, differences were evident between the public and official Muslim stances concerning Palestinian developments; mainly the Palestinian Israeli negotiations and the attempts to lift the siege of GS. The strongest official Muslim stances were demands to freeze settlement building activity and condemnations of Israel's obstruction of the peace process and its violations against the Palestinian people, their lands and holy sites. 2010 saw citizens of Muslim and non-Muslim countries risking and even losing their lives attempting to break the siege of GS; the Freedom Flotilla was assaulted by Israel on 31/5/2010. Due to such Israeli arrogance, stubbornness and disrespect for others, the year 2010 witnessed a widening of the diplomatic gap between Israel and Turkey that started with the humiliation of the Turkish ambassador in Israel and deepened with the killing of nine Turkish citizens on board the Mavi Marmara ship in the flotilla.

In this chapter, we will tackle in detail the role played by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in addition to examining the stances of the two major Muslim countries involved in the Palestinian issue during 2010: Turkey and Iran. We will also review public and official positions in Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan.

First: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation

The OIC was established shortly after the fire at the *al-Aqsa* Mosque in 1969 with the aim of defending Islamic holy sites, most urgently the *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The OIC been holding regular and emergency meetings for more than 40 years, condemning Israel's aggression towards Islamic holy sites in Palestine; condemnations that have failed to achieve even the minimum of Muslim nations' wishes. As we anticipated in *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10*, the OIC standing concerning the Palestinian issue did not witness any essential changes during 2010. Their influence never went beyond the condemnation and denunciation of violations against holy sites in Palestinian lands.

The OIC, represented by Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu, continued to call for Palestinian reconciliation, meeting Khalid Mish'al, head of the Hamas political bureau, at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah in a closed meeting that lasted for three hours and covered the reconciliation process and all topics related to the Palestinian issue. In the press conference that followed the meeting, Ihsanoğlu clarified that the meeting focused on the Hamas-Fatah reconciliation and the importance of the Mecca Agreement as a solid ground for Palestinian reconciliation. He stressed the importance of the continuation of talks between the two movements due to their weight in the Palestinian arena. Ihsanoğlu denied allegations that the OIC is not sufficiently engaged with Palestinian reconciliation. He recalled the OIC's role in 2006 affirming that it had been the first to attempt building bridges of trust and communication between Damascus, Ramallah, and GS through various visits by its secretary-general. The OIC has also continued communications with all Palestinian sides, Ihsanoğlu clarified, and has remained close to the Mecca agreements which were signed between Fatah and Hamas movements under Saudi sponsorship.¹

In the final communiqué of the OIC Expanded Extraordinary Executive Committee Meeting at the Level of Foreign Ministers held on 6/6/2010, concerning the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla, the OIC affirmed their support for Palestinian reconciliation and Egyptian efforts to this aim and stressing “the need to end the Palestinian discord as soon as possible.”²

Meanwhile, the siege on GS was a key issue on the international and Islamic political scene, where Ihsanoğlu confirmed that the OIC condemns the siege on GS and continues to support the Strip and sustain the delivery of aid. According to him, several humanitarian organizations in the EU use the OIC's al-'Arish bureau in Egypt to help people in GS.³ In his address to the Ministerial-Level Extended Executive Committee Meeting, Ihsanoğlu described the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla as a “policy of piracy, criminality and state organized terrorism.” He said that:

The piracy in international waters, which has been carried out in defiance of international law, perpetrated by the Israeli forces, requires an independent, impartial, credible and transparent investigation, corresponding to international standards with the aim of identifying those responsible for their illegal acts against humanity.⁴

The secretary-general also referred in his speech to the previous resolutions, adopted by the Executive Committee, which called upon “all States to break the blockade imposed on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip,” at its expanded extraordinary meeting on 18/11/2006, or which called for drumming up “support to secure the necessary humanitarian needs of the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip,” at its expanded extraordinary meeting on 3/2/2008. He considered this to be a suitable moment for implementing these resolutions in addition to whatever other new steps and measures required under the current circumstances to put an end to this unprecedented humanitarian tragedy. He added, “there is still a lot that can be done to put an end to this Israeli contempt of International Law and disdain of our Ummah [Nation].”⁵ However, the OIC seemed unable to implement such measures.

In the same context, the secretary-general of the OIC called for setting up a group of legal experts to bring Israel to justice, saying that “the legal course needs to be duly explored in our endeavor to achieve justice and ensure the lifting of the oppression visited upon our brothers in the blockaded Gaza Strip.”⁶ The OIC Ambassadorial Group in Geneva exerted joint efforts at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) for the adoption of a resolution condemning the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla and establishing an international investigation committee about it.⁷

Although not meeting the level of public aspirations, the OIC efforts were not limited to political statements only as the OIC continued to provide economic support to the GS. In a visit to GS, the OIC launched a package of projects including building new housing units, and restoring a thousand homes partly demolished during the 2008–2009 Israeli war. Fouad al-Mezna’y, head of the 27-member OIC delegation and director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in the OIC, declared that the cost of the OIC-funded projects allocated for building and restoring housing units for those affected by the Israeli war reached around \$10 million. The funding covered—among other tasks—restoring 1,700 housing units, 700 of which have already been completed, and work commenced on the other thousand housing units, in addition to building 100 units at a cost of \$3.7 million.⁸

Despite affirmations by the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC on the centrality of Jerusalem to the Muslim world, the OIC role during 2010 was limited to condemnation and denunciation. It did not extend itself beyond the Arab Peace Initiative of the two-state solution entailing the establishment of an independent



Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital, and finding a “just solution” to the plight of the Palestinian refugees in accordance with the UNGA Resolution 194. However, all of these demands remained below the minimum ambitions of the Palestinian people. Statements made by one of the OIC officials to *al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper reveal that adopting positions outside “the Arab stances box” triggers anger among some Arab countries, which the OIC cannot afford to risk due to its reliance on these countries’ for funding.⁹ This dilemma explains the weak stances and restrained role played by the OIC in facing up to Israeli aggression against Jerusalem and the holy sites. The result was that the OIC limited itself to expressing denunciations and condemnations of Israeli policies.

During 2010, the OIC role was primarily limited to taking stands concerning the Palestinian issue at all levels. It did not affect any serious changes in the course of the Palestinian issue that would enable the OIC to realize the ambitions of the Muslim nations.

Second: Turkey

If 2009 witnessed one of the worst periods in Turkish-Israeli relations, as a result of the Davos incident at the end of January, 2010 was witness to an unprecedented level of tension when the Israelis attacked the Freedom Flotilla on 31/5/2010 in the international waters of the Mediterranean Sea. The attack was the climax of tensions between Ankara and Tel Aviv that had started at the beginning of the same year.

The Low Seat Crisis

What has been referred to as the low seat crisis marked the first of the diplomatic tensions between Turkey and Israel. On 11/1/2010 Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon summoned the Turkish Ambassador to Israel Ahmet Oğuz Çelikkol to denounce the anti-Israel stances of Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and criticize a Turkish television drama that depicted Israeli security forces kidnapping children and shooting old men.

The Israeli official intentionally seated the Turkish ambassador on a sofa lower than Ayalon’s. To make things worse, Ayalon refused to shake the ambassador’s

hand when asked to do so by journalists attending the official reprimand, in addition to letting the Turkish ambassador wait a few minutes outside Ayalon's office before allowing him to enter.

Despite the fact that the Turkish ambassador was not informed of the presence of media, Ayalon invited photographers to enter the meeting room to take shots of the meeting, addressing them in Hebrew, "Pay attention that he is sitting in a lower chair... that there is only an Israeli flag on the table and that we are not smiling."¹⁰ The incident triggered angry reactions from the Turkish side, as well as varying Israeli reactions.

Erdoğan, who was on his way to Moscow, condemned Israel's behavior, saying "History is the witness that we have demonstrated the necessary tolerance to Jewish people. But any sort of an approach like that will always be retaliated by Turkey."¹¹ Moreover, the Turkish Foreign Ministry issued two consecutive statements condemning Israeli behavior and demanding an apology.¹²

Explanations for Israel's behavior varied. Erdoğan believed it was due to internal discord within the Israeli government describing it as "their internal problem." Others said that it was an attempt by Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman to hinder Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak's visit to Turkey which was scheduled for 17/1/2010, thus preventing any rapprochement with Turkey led by Barak. Lieberman was keen to avenge Turkey's negative stances on Israel, specifically Erdoğan's vehement speeches against Israeli policies. Yet, despite possibilities of delay or cancellation, Barak's visit was fulfilled although without meeting Erdoğan or Abdullah Gül, and without yielding any specific results.

On the Israeli side, Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer criticized Danny Ayalon's action saying that:

The Turkish ambassador's dignity should have been maintained. We have no interest in adding Turkey to the hostile countries. However, there does need to be criticism, and it is fitting to criticize the statements made by the Turkish prime minister. There is no doubt that there is a problem with him, but this must be done with respect.

Ben-Eliezer added "We have enough troubles with the Arabs. Today, we don't need to pit the entire Muslim world against us. We must remember that this is a country of 72 million people under Muslim leadership."¹³



Initially, Israel refused to apologize, but the threat to recall Turkish ambassador to Tel Aviv eventually led Israel to issue a clear apology to Turkey. Turkish President Abdullah Gül described the insult to the Turkish ambassador as “unacceptable” and called on the Israeli leadership to rectify the situation. “It may have been the act of a man who does not know what he was doing,” he said, “However, in the final analysis the liability lies with the Israeli government...Israel is responsible here,” he added.¹⁴

Freedom Flotilla

The frayed Turkish-Israeli relations reached an unprecedented peak following the Israeli assault on the Freedom Flotilla at dawn on the 31/5/2010, which left nine Turkish civilians on board dead.

The incident was referred to in the Arab media as the Freedom Flotilla incident while Turkish sources called it the Mavi Marmara case, or blue Marmara, which was the largest ship on the flotilla.

The Freedom Flotilla, which set sail from Istanbul heading to GS to break the Israel-imposed blockade, was organized by several civil society organizations from different countries. Foremost among these organizations was The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (*İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı—IHH*), headed by Fehmi Bülent Yildirim, active in most Muslim countries. Over 600 people were on board the flotilla and the majority were on the Mavi Marmara ship.

Israeli naval commandos raided the flotilla at 4:00 am in international waters, killing nine people—all Turkish—and leaving dozens injured. The ship was then towed to Ashdod Port, and its passengers—from different nationalities—were arrested.¹⁵ Investigations were made with the arrested passengers before they were deported to their home countries while the ships were sent back to Turkey weeks later.¹⁶

The assault on the Freedom Flotilla marked the first bloody confrontation between Turkey and Israel throughout their history, triggering incensed reactions in Turkey, along with similar international reactions. Turkey, its PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu as well as the Turkish parliament responded to the shock, demanding:

1. The release of ships and to allow them to deliver the humanitarian assistance to its destination.
2. The retrieval of the deceased and wounded.
3. An Israeli apology to the international community and to the families of those who have been killed and wounded in the attack.
4. Compensation for the families of the deceased, wounded, NGOs and shipping companies concerned.
5. An urgent inquiry and an appropriate international legal action against the authorities responsible for and perpetrators of the aggression
6. The ending of the blockade on GS.¹⁷

As for the American stance, Davutoğlu said that Turkey, an important US ally on issues ranging from Middle East peace to the war in Afghanistan, was disappointed that the US had not offered stronger backing. "Some of our allies are not ready to condemn the Israeli actions," Davutoğlu said, comparing the incident to the September 11, 2001, attacks on the US.¹⁸

Turkish PM Erdoğan made an impassioned speech at the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in the afternoon of Tuesday 1/6/2010. He condemned Israeli piracy saying that "Turkey's hostility is as strong as its friendship is valuable," and that this attack "must be punished by all means," and that "no one should test Turkey's patience."¹⁹

Turkey summoned up all its capacities facing such dangerous repercussions where, for the first time since World War I, Turkish civilians were killed as a result of a foreign military attack. Many voices demanded a declaration of war on Israel, but Deputy PM Bülent Arınç made it clear that this was not under consideration.²⁰ The Turkish reaction focused on diplomatic maneuvers, along with taking gradual steps against Israel, unless Turkish demands were met.

During the following weeks, Turkey was preoccupied with the Freedom Flotilla incident and the change in Turkish-Israeli relations that it brought. There was much analysis and speculation concerning the reasons and circumstances surrounding the assault, which may be summarized in the following points:

1. Israel started being suspicious of the repeated attempts by Arab and international civil society organizations to break the blockade of GS. Through this bloody attack, Israel wanted to deliver a harsh message to the international community that it will not allow any pressure to be exerted from then on.

2. The attack on the Freedom Flotilla seemed well planned. Available information reveals that the flotilla changed its direction from GS to al-‘Arish, and Ankara informed Israel and Washington of this change. Despite this, Israel carried out its raid, which reflects Israel’s desire to put across a retaliatory message to Turkey for its unfriendly stance toward Israel and its support of the Palestinians, particularly as expressed by Erdoğan.
3. American support of Israel added an international dimension to the incident, as American Vice President Joe Biden provided justifications for the raid saying that Israel had a right to engage in such action. American support of Israel had been made clear from the first moments when Washington vetoed any UN Security Council resolution that condemned Israel, leading Ankara to accept the non-binding presidential statement issued.²¹
4. In addition to the well known American stance giving support to Israel, there were analyses that the US also wanted to discipline Turkey for its role in Tehran’s nuclear declaration, undertaken in cooperation with Brazil on 17/5/2010,²² a declaration that makes America’s justification of its pressure on Iran less credible. Backing such theory is the prominent role which Turkey played alongside Brazil on the international scene, achieving what world powers including Russia and China had failed to achieve. Iran agreed to deposit 1,200 kg low enriched uranium (LEU) in Turkey. This LEU will continue to be the property of Iran, and both International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and Iran may station observers to monitor the safekeeping of the LEU in Turkey. Thus, the American message to Turkey had been a twofold response to the Turkish stance on Iran and GS in addition to its increasing role on the international scene.
5. The American stance on Turkey, along with its Iranian and international dimension, was affirmed as Washington attempted on 9/6/2010—only a few days after the Freedom Flotilla incident—to pass a Security Council resolution imposing tighter sanctions on Iran; Resolution 1929 despite the objections of Turkey and Brazil and the abstention of Lebanon. Reportedly, the resolution attempted to directly suspend the Tehran declaration and the Turkish role involved in it.²³

On 12/7/2010, the American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asked her Turkish counterpart Ahmet Davutoğlu to leave Iran’s nuclear dispute to international mediators. This confirmed to many Washington’s role in the attack

on the Freedom Flotilla and its disturbance over the Turkish stance on Iran. However, a Turkish diplomatic source responded to the US demand by saying, “The participation of Turkey [in the Iran negotiations] is not necessary, but it is true that Iran wants us in the process. If Turkey is called to participate, we will consider it,” and he added, “However, no one should expect Turkey to stay indifferent to the developments in its region.”²⁴

6. The rocket attack by the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan—PKK*) on the Iskenderun naval base, which left seven Turks dead and was only four hours before the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla, also raised suspicions about a connection between the Israeli and Kurdish attacks.

In a bid to discuss the tension between Turkey and Israel, public opinion was surprised by the covert meeting held in Brussels on 30/6/2010 between Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, and Israeli Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, which was the first between two high profile officials in the two countries since the incident. Though initially secret, news of the meeting was later disclosed by the Israeli media.²⁵

In the midst of such a fierce dispute between Turkey and Israel, including Israel’s accusations to the then new Turkish Chief of the National Intelligence Organization (*Millî İstihbarat Teşkilâtı—MİT*) Hakan Fidan of being “a friend of Iran,” UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon announced, on 2/8/2010, the establishment of a Panel of Inquiry on the flotilla incident. The committee comprised of four members: former Prime Minister of New Zealand Geoffrey Palmer as Chair, former Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, in addition to two members; a Turkish and an Israeli.²⁶

Ideologically and Realistically

Turkish Israeli relations remained frozen and strained in the months following the Freedom Flotilla incident. Turkish ideological discourse was heightened during this time, as reflected in the terms used by most Turkish officials, most notably Erdoğan and Davutoğlu. Palestine was at the core of the discussion, to the extent that Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu expressed his wish to pray soon at *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

During his visit to Lebanon on 24–25/11/2010, Erdoğan staged a strong anti-Israel position when he asked, “Does [Israel] think it can enter Lebanon with

the most modern aircraft and tanks to kill women and children, and destroy schools and hospitals, and then expect us to remain silent?” then he added, “We will not be silent and we will support justice by all means available to us.”²⁷

With the release of the WikiLeaks documents at the beginning of December 2010, publishing more than a quarter of a million documents from US embassies all over the world and the US Department of State, eight thousand Turkey-related documents were revealed reflecting the crisis of trust in the relations between Ankara, Washington and several neighboring countries.

Parallel to the discourse condemning Israel, however, Turkish officials also sent positive messages to Israel in December 2010. Turkey sent two firefighting planes to Israel to help extinguish the fire in Mount Carmel, Haifa. The Turkish aircrafts were sent at dawn on Friday 3/12/2010 with direct instructions from Erdoğan who said, “No one should look for something else in this thing. There is nothing but our humanity and culture of solidarity involved in this.”²⁸ Moreover, Foreign Minister Davutoğlu said that Turkish assistance to Israel is, above all, their debt to the people of this region.²⁹

Turkish participation in firefighting efforts was followed by meetings in Geneva that were the first of their kind since the meeting between Davutoğlu and Ben-Eliezer on 30 June. This time, two meetings saw Turkish Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioglu sit down with the Israeli representative at the UN panel investigating the Mavi Marmara raid Joseph Ciechanover on 5–6/12/2010.³⁰

Turkish-Israeli Relations

The moment the raid on the Freedom Flotilla occurred, Turkey threatened, in the words of its officials, to reconsider all of its ties with Israel at all levels if Israel refused to apologize and pay compensation. The Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*—AKP) Deputy Chairman Ömer Çelik said, “Regarding Turkey-Israel relations, everything will be cancelled in the short term, from military agreements to other ties,” but then he clarified that any measure will take into account international laws and agreements.³¹

Similarly, President Gül kept a moderate stance from ties with Israel. He said:

I must also emphasize that Turkey and Israel are friends. There are strong, centuries-old ties of friendship between our peoples. Turkey was the first

Muslim majority country to recognize Israel back in 1949. Yet, we cannot pretend as if nothing happened this past May. Therefore, we expect Israel to take the necessary steps.³²

The first measure taken was to summon the Turkish Ambassador Ahmet Oğuz Çelikkol from Tel Aviv but without asking Israel to withdraw its ambassador from Ankara. In this regard, Ankara neither severed its diplomatic relations nor decreased the level of representation in Israel as previous Turkish governments had done in 1956 and 1980. Turkey cancelled three joint military exercises with Israel and the Chief of Turkish General Staff Mehmet İlker Başbuğ called his Israeli counterpart Gabi Ashkenazi and described the attack of being “grave and unacceptable.”³³

Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül said that the Freedom Flotilla crisis would not pose any problems for the delivery of four Israeli Heron UAVs which would be delivered as scheduled.³⁴ On the other hand, Turkey prevented Israeli Air Force aircrafts from flying over Turkish soil on their way to other countries.

On 27/10/2010, the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Kurulu—MGK*) agreed to make radical changes to the National Security Policy Document (*Milli Güvenlik Siyaseti Belgesi—MGSB*), also known as Turkey’s secret Constitution or the Red Book, in which the main threats to Turkey’s security are outlined, referring to Israel’s instability-inducing actions in the Middle East as a threat. The document draws attention to the instability in the region caused by Israel and the possibility that Israel’s actions may lead the countries in the region to be engaged in an arms race.³⁵

Turkey also proposed a draft law preventing Israelis and citizens of other nationalities from the right to own property in Turkey.³⁶ The rift between Turkey and Israel had further impact on the Jewish immigration from Turkey to Israel, though the numbers remain small.³⁷

Economic Relations

Despite the political stand off, economic relations remained outside the sphere of the impact as statistics confirmed increased trade exchange between Israel and Turkey. The Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) said that Turkey’s exports to Israel reached around \$2,080.1 million in 2010 against \$1,522.4 million in 2009. Turkish imports from Israel also recorded exports to Turkey of \$1,359.6 million in 2010 in comparison to \$1,074.7 million in 2009. Overall, the trade volume between

the two countries was estimated at \$3,439.7 million in 2010 in comparison to \$2,597.1 million in 2009, an increase of 32.6%.³⁸

Though showing lower figures than Turkish statistics on the volume of trade exchange between the two countries, Israeli official data confirm the increased exchange throughout 2010, recording \$1,800.2 million in Turkish exports to Israel, \$1,324.4 million Turkish imports from Israel, and a total trade volume of \$3,124.6 million, an increase of 26.3%.³⁹

Statistics confirmed by the two sides prove that political tensions have not affected commercial relations and that to date the political tension has not been mirrored in other aspects, revealing a pragmatic attitude on both sides.

Table 1/4: Trade Exchange Between Turkey and Israel According to Turkish and Israeli Statistics 2009–2010 (\$ million)⁴⁰

Year	Turkey's export to Israel		Turkey's import from Israel		Trade exchange	
	Turkish statistics	Israeli statistics	Turkish statistics	Israeli statistics	Turkish statistics	Israeli statistics
2009	1,522.4	1,387.7	1,074.7	1,086	2,597.1	2,473.7
2010	2,080.1	1,800.2	1,359.6	1,324.4	3,439.7	3,124.6

Data also showed that the projects which have been assumed by Turkish contracting companies in Israel amounted to nearly \$583 million in mid 2010.⁴¹ Figures published by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism show that the numbers of Israeli tourists to Turkey declined five fold in 2010 compared to two years earlier. The number of Israelis arriving in Turkey numbered 558,183 in 2008, while in 2009 it was 311,582, and then in 2010 it was down to 109,559.⁴²

Palestine in Turkish Discourse

Turkish official discourse continued to offer support to the Palestinian issue, particularly the blockaded GS, throughout 2010. Speeches by Erdoğan as well as statements by Gül and Davutoğlu have all been at the forefront of such support.

In an opinion poll by the International Strategic Research Organisation (*Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu—USAK*) published on 31/12/2009, a 63% majority of Turks approved of their government's policies toward Israel.⁴³ Erdoğan clearly decried Muslim leaders' inadequate response to Palestinian suffering in GS, by saying that they "have failed to show the reactions that

the world's Muslims expected from them. This has been a pitiful aspect of the matter."⁴⁴ Foreign Minister Davutoğlu took Turkey's concern with Jerusalem to a more advanced stage saying that:

We need to exert maximum efforts in terms of achieving unity and reconciliation in Palestine and addressing the humanitarian tragedy in the Gaza Strip. We should also redouble our endeavors to mobilize the international community to put an end to Israel's practices that are altering the demography, status and character of Jerusalem, a city sacred for all three monotheist religions. The Islamic character of Masjid al-Aqsa, Bilal Mosque [Rachel's Tomb] and Ibrahimi Mosque in el-Halil [Hebron] should be respected and preserved.⁴⁵

Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stressed that the *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the Ibrahimi Mosque, and Rachel's Tomb "will never be Jewish sites, but rather Islamic ones." He said that these sites and antiquities can by no means be Israeli heritage sites, and if anything, should be considered as part of the human heritage collectively if not an Islamic heritage. He reaffirmed, "Palestine is our problem, it has never been removed even for a day from our agenda."⁴⁶

The peak of the Turkish embrace of the Jerusalem issue came at the 22nd Arab Summit in the Libyan city of Sirte on 27/3/2010 where Erdoğan, in his speech, said: "Jerusalem is the apple of the eye of each and every Muslim... and we cannot accept any Israeli violation in Jerusalem or in Muslim sites."⁴⁷

On 10/5/2010, while addressing the second extraordinary meeting of the Parliamentary Union of the OIC, Erdoğan said, "If Jerusalem burns, the Middle East burns. If Jerusalem burns, the world burns."⁴⁸

In the presence of his Arab counterparts at the Turkish Arab Economic Forum on 13/6/2010, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu also launched a slogan that was the first for a non-Arab official by promising to pray soon at the *al-Aqsa* Mosque.⁴⁹

However, economic relations between Turkey and the Palestinians during 2010 less positive, the only major event being the Second Palestinian Business Forum which was held in Istanbul, on 5/10/2010, with participation of around a thousand Palestinian businessmen from 20 different countries. The forum was a step towards achieving strategic partnership with Turkish investors to support the growth and development of the Palestinian economy. At the forum, Turkish Foreign Trade Minister Zafer Caglayan declared the Turkish intention to open a trade office in

Ramallah to boost commercial ties with the PA. He said, “We will open an office in Ramallah so we can improve contacts and enable our investors to work better.” The minister added that Turkish-Palestinian trade volume amounted to some \$30 million, heavily in favor of Turkey.⁵⁰

The Peace Process

Undoubtedly, the peace process, in which Turkey tried to play a role as mediator between Israel and Syria on one hand and between Palestine and Israel on the other, was affected by Turkish-Israeli tensions in 2010; tensions that continued to hamper Turkish diplomatic efforts as they had since the war on GS at the end of 2008.

Notwithstanding this long-term problem, Turkey continued to hint throughout the year about its willingness to resume mediation between Israel and Syria as well as the Palestinians and Israel. The Turkish stance on the peace process can be summarized as follows:

1. Turkey continued to call the international community to put more pressure on Israel in order to reach a peace settlement on the basis of establishing an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital.
2. Turkey encouraged the resumption of negotiations between Israel and the PA headed by Mahmud ‘Abbas during spring 2010. In a statement issued later, Turkish Foreign Ministry said that “the decision to launch proximity talks between Israel and Palestine is a positive step.”⁵¹

On 25/5/2010, Turkey hosted the United Nations International Meeting in Support of the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process in Istanbul, organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said in his speech that “the fulfillment of the rightful aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish a homeland has become all the more essential,” going on to explain that “a political solution would only be viable if it is complemented by progress on the ground, especially in the economic and social realms, we attach utmost importance to state-building efforts in Palestine.” He added that what they had been striving to attain for a long time was “the establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State.”⁵² Turkey also welcomed the resumption of talks in September 2010 between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

3. Turkey stressed the importance of including Hamas movement as an integral part of any peace talks. Erdoğan expressed his conviction that Abbas’s negotiations

with Israel would not succeed as long as Hamas was not included in the process. He added that he was in agreement with the international Quartet's envoy Tony Blair in this respect. Blair said that any meeting without participation of Hamas would not yield any result.⁵³ He maintained this stance at the onset of 2011.

On 12/5/2010, President Gül asserted, in a meeting with the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, that peace could not be achieved if Hamas was not involved. "Nobody should be excluded when these talks are held. The Hamas side won the elections in Gaza and so cannot be ignored."⁵⁴ To affirm Turkey's recognition of Hamas' legitimacy and impact, in addition to its importance in the peace process, Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu met with the Head of the Hamas Political Bureau Khalid Mish'al in Damascus on 23/6/2010. In addition, Turkey continued to defend Hamas as a political movement, when Erdoğan said that "They [Hamas] won the election. You [Israelis] are always talking about democracy. You'll never let Hamas rule. What kind of democracy is this?" Then he added, "I do not think that Hamas is a terrorist organization. I said the same thing to the United States. I am still of the same opinion. They are Palestinians in resistance, fighting for their own land."⁵⁵

4. Rhetoric about lifting the GS blockade remained a priority in Turkish official and public discourse, reaching its peak and practical crystallization in the Freedom Flotilla. The lifting of the siege is a Turkish condition for resuming normalized relations with Israel since, according to Turkey's public position, the people in GS are facing an isolation policy and have no rights and that GS is a "modern ghetto."⁵⁶
5. Turkish rhetoric pinpointed the building of settlements as the greatest obstacle in the way to progress in the peace process.
6. Turkish discourse also considered the Palestinian political schism as one of the obstacles in the way of achieving a peace settlement. Turkey continued its call for the Palestinians to resolve their differences. According to Turkish officials, efforts have been made with all sides to reach Palestinian reconciliation, without any progress. Turkey was also a participant at the Arab Peace Initiative Follow-up Committee meeting in March 2010, where Davutoğlu reiterated the urgency of achieving Palestinian reconciliation, and at the same time resuming negotiations, clarifying that any one step without the other will come to naught.⁵⁷

Conclusions

1. 2010 can be seen as a turning point in Turkish-Israeli relations. For the first time in modern Turkish history, Turkish civilians were killed in a military assault by the soldiers of another country, namely Israel.
2. The assault on the Freedom Flotilla and the murder of nine Turks was aggravated by the fact that the decision to carry out the operation was taken before hand by the Israeli government; and was therefore neither an accident nor a misunderstanding.
3. The incident caused the further deterioration of official Israeli-Turkish relations, as bilateral meetings decreased among the upper civil and military ranks.
4. There were heightened anti-Israeli sentiments on Turkish streets, leading to an increase in Jewish emigration from Turkey. This small number of Jewish departures from Turkey was due to concern that an anti-Semitic campaign was at hand.
5. Turkish-Israeli tension impacted on Turkey's relations with American Jews, who started lobbying the US administration and members of Congress to put more pressure on Turkey to back down from its anti-Israel policies.
6. Economic relations between the two countries in 2010 grew by 40% since 2009, despite bilateral tensions.
7. Deteriorating relations with Israel did not affect the AKP inside Turkey. In fact, anti-Israel rhetoric helped the AKP win more votes in the referendum on reform on 12/9/2009.
8. The Turkish reaction to the raid on the Freedom Flotilla did not meet the magnitude of the assault. Turkey was satisfied with filing complaints demanding official apology and compensation, as well as recalling its ambassador from Tel Aviv. The possibility of a military confrontation in retaliation for the Israeli assault was never openly considered by the government. And despite Israeli resistance to apologizing, Ankara did not escalate matters to pressure Israel to comply with their demands.
9. Turkish feeling that in the Freedom Flotilla incident, the country had been subjected to an assault spearheaded by Israel, forced it to consider the situation rationally, preferring to refrain from taking steps that would please public opinion at home, but would open new areas for foreign pressure, particularly from the West. These are the pressures that Turkey does not

need at this stage of its rising power, as it continues to expand its influence regionally and internationally.

10. The diplomatic stand off has affected Turkish mobility, as the Turkish role reduced on a number of files, including its mediation between Israel and Syria, between Palestinian factions and between Israel and the Palestinians.
11. Turkish discourse remained closely tied to the Palestinian issue, particularly GS and Jerusalem, its emotional tone growing, Turkish initiatives toward the WB, GS and Jerusalem were reduced significantly. The reason behind this could have been the severe restrictions imposed by Israel on aid from Turkey to GS, after the low level crisis at the beginning of 2010. This was followed by the major blow dealt in the Freedom Flotilla incident, in addition to the siege imposed by Egypt on the GS with the Rafah border crossing remaining closed, preventing aid from reaching GS, except according to specific political calculations.

Future Possibilities

1. Turkish-Israeli relations will not return to the way they were prior to the Freedom Flotilla incident. The killing of Turkish citizens has a symbolism that will grow as time passes, and its impact on the Turkish psyche is likely to become more evident later on, particularly at a popular level.
2. The AKP government inherited a wide range of cultural, economic and military agreements. All the statements made by Turkish officials have indicated that Turkey respects international laws and agreements. Hence, Ankara did not annul any previously signed agreement, opting instead for specific measures that would appease Turkish public anger regarding Israel. The most prominent proof of the continuation of strong Turkish-Israeli relations is the rise in trade volume in comparison to 2009.
3. Ankara was well aware of the risk in letting the tension with Israel and the other international players in the flotilla incident—primarily the US and the West—affect its presence and role as a regional and international actor. Thus it opted to avoid any radical measures against Israel.

To elaborate, the Turkish position relies on a policy of working simultaneously on various dimensions, keeping an equal distance from all sides. Such a role cannot be advanced in the presence of difficult relations with Israel, and consequently the West. This truth prompted Turkey to leave space for



mending relations with Israel, while preserving a minimum of face-keeping before the Turkish public.

This became evident when Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu agreed to meet with Israeli Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer on 30/6/2010, despite the fact that Israeli officials had boasted that their soldiers fulfilled their duty and killed those who they said deserved to die.

The Turkish bid was also manifested in Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's personal initiative in sending aircrafts to join the fight to contain the Carmel blaze although Israel had not made any concessions. On the contrary, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu stated after Turkish aircrafts ended their mission that his country would not be offering any apology or compensation.

Based on these facts, it is not expected that Turkish-Israeli relations will make speedy progress due to the deep wounds they have sustained. It can be predicted that Ankara will continue in its attempts to repair relations within reasonable limits.

4. Israel is risking the loss of its historic Turkish ally by insisting on its extreme positions towards Ankara. However, Israel's confidence that it will not be left alone in this confrontation encourages it to maintain its stance. Israel is forewarning Turkey that it will be the loser if it holds on to its tensions with Israel, which would affect Turkey's relations with the West, and result in a lack of progress in fighting the PKK. Israel warned that it would form alliances with Turkey's rivals in the Balkans and the Mediterranean, such as Greece, Greek Cyprus, Bulgaria and Romania. There is no suggestion either that the Israeli stance is associated with Benjamin Netanyahu's government, or that a change of government in Israel will soften the Israeli stance.
5. As for Turkish-Palestinian relations, Turkey continued to provide assistance to GS and the WB, although at a reduced rate as a result of events in 2010.

On the political level, Turkey tried to achieve reconciliation between the PA and Hamas, but to no avail. This was due to the deepening Palestinian schism, Arab polarization, and Turkey's preoccupation with the repercussions of incidents that led to tensions with Israel. Consequently, it is not likely that a change will occur in Turkey's policy regarding the Palestinian internal issue unless some progress is made in repairing Turkish ties with Israel, or if the Egyptian stance towards GS—and Hamas—changes due to geographical proximity considerations.

Third: Iran

Among Muslim countries, Iran stood its ground on previous stances on the Palestinian issue. During 2010, despite the sanctions on Iran, described as the most severe available by the US; the Iranian leadership, particularly President Mahmud Ahmadinejad, affirmed on various occasions their consistent stance on Palestine, and the illegitimate nature of Israel's existence. Iran also took clear positions on all incidents facing the Palestinians: breaking the siege of GS, the Egyptian Steel Wall, Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and the threats of war. Consequently, Iran dissented from the official stances of Muslim states, which supported talks and called on the US to pressure Israel to freeze settlement building activities in order to allow the negotiations to succeed.

Generally speaking, Muslim countries — with the exception of Iran — supported Palestinian negotiations with Israel. At first, these same countries backed the Arab Peace Initiative, although to varying degrees, depending on whether this country has direct relations with Israel. Others, like Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey and the OIC were content to pursue pro-negotiation stances and condemnations of Israel's continuing settlement building. Overall, Muslim state concern with the Palestinian issue does not go beyond supporting the peace process and negotiations. Objections are usually expressed when the Israeli side places obstacles in the way of these negotiations or continues to build settlements. The leaders of Muslim countries did not change their strategies and opt for resistance or boycott as means of pressure.

Condemning Judaization

Iran condemned the Judaization of Jerusalem and the listing of the city along with the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem as Jewish heritage.⁵⁸ Tehran also slammed the rebuilding of Hurva Synagogue, describing it as a "catastrophe that has distressed the Islamic world." Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast added, "We condemn the move and call on the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the Arab League and the United Nations to take appropriate measures to stop this occupying regime."⁵⁹ Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki called on the OIC to hold an emergency meeting on the issue.⁶⁰ Moreover, Iran berated Israel's settlement plans in East Jerusalem.

Mottaki also stated that the expansion of the Israeli settlements, the destruction of Islamic and Christian structures and the construction of new synagogues in Jerusalem have unveiled the Israeli plan, “which, unfortunately, has been approved by Washington.” He urged Arab states to put the issue high on the agenda of the Arab League conference, which was underway in Sirte, Libya, and said, “This has raised the alarm for people across the globe and has highlighted the necessity of taking serious measures and maximizing potential in all Muslim nations.” Mottaki also called for the formation of a committee consisting of the foreign ministers of the Arab League and the OIC member states to discuss the latest developments in Jerusalem.⁶¹

The Iranian Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution (*Murshid*) Ali Khamenei considered the removal of signs of Islam from Jerusalem as “a perilous plot which is taking place before the eyes of the world,” and added that the OIC “which is principally established for the Palestinian issue, was expected to fulfill its essential duty in defense of Palestine and mobilize the Islamic world against the Zionists’ insidious moves.”⁶²

Supporting GS

Iran called for lifting the siege of GS throughout 2010, declaring its support of the Hamas government in the GS and strongly condemning the Steel Wall built by Egypt along Egyptian borders with GS. Iranian President Ahmadinejad said that the move must have been done against Israel, adding, “I wish the steel wall was built around the Zionists so that the people of the region would have felt comfort.”⁶³

Iranian leaders did not hesitate to declare their support for the Freedom Flotilla’s attempt to break the blockade of GS. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said that Iran voices its all-out support and backing for the efforts of the group of pro-Palestinian activists to break the Gaza sea blockade.⁶⁴ President Ahmadinejad said that the assault on the flotilla signified the imminent demise and collapse of Israel.⁶⁵ In addition, the Secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Saeed Jalili said, “Under growing pressure from world public opinion, the criminal and terrorist Zionist regime has now resorted to maritime murder,” and he dismissed the attack as a “terrorist piracy.”⁶⁶ Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said in a meeting with his Indonesian counterpart Marzuki Ali “Palestine needs a joint move by the

Islamic states to restore the rights of the oppressed Palestinian people.” Larijani also underlined the important role of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) in defending the rights of the Palestinian people.⁶⁷

Chairman of Iranian Parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Committee Alaeddin Boroujerdi also decried the Israeli attack, and called on the UN Security Council to send the case to the International Criminal Court (ICC). He said that the setting up of a committee to probe the Israeli raid on the Gaza aid convoy is only aimed at wasting time.⁶⁸

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei described the Israeli commandos attack on the Freedom Flotilla as “another link in the chain of the great crimes committed by that criminal and evil regime.”⁶⁹

As tension mounted between Turkey and Israel in the wake of killing nine Turks on board the Mavi Marmara ship of the Freedom Flotilla, the Iranian president thanked Erdoğan for “his efforts to explain the Palestinian cause to the whole world and his support to dispatch of humanitarian aid to Palestinian people.” He also underlined that the international community is necessitated to speedily form a consensus about political sanctions against Israel and exert pressures on those responsible for its “international crimes, sea piracy and state-sponsored terrorism.”⁷⁰ In Brussels, Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki described Israeli actions against the Freedom Flotilla as “barbarian,” and praised “the strong reaction in Europe as well as in all around the world.”⁷¹ Iranians held rallies across the country calling for the trial of Israeli leaders.⁷²

According to a statement issued by the Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS) on 27/6/2010, “Following further Israeli restrictions on the transfer of aid to Gaza and the prevention of issuing a permit to allow the passage of the Iranian ship through the Suez Canal, the departure of the ship carrying Red Crescent aid has been postponed,” later denied by Egypt.⁷³ Cairo also rejected the visa requests of four Iranian MPs who were scheduled to visit GS.⁷⁴ As for Washington, it was suspicious about the “intentions” of the IRCS and considered Iran’s intentions vis-à-vis GS not benign.⁷⁵

As many Arab and international organizations and agencies announced their desire to send more vessels to break the blockade of GS, and in light of Israeli threats to face and prevent such vessels from approaching Palestinian shores, the semi-official Mehr News Agency (MNA) reported Ali Shirazi, representative

of the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei to the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Navy, as saying that “The Islamic Revolution Guards Corps Navy is ready to escort the peace and freedom convoys that carry humanitarian assistance for the defenseless and oppressed people of Gaza with all its strength.”⁷⁶ He added that “If the Supreme Leader issues an order for this then the Revolutionary Guard naval forces will do their best to secure the ships,” and that “It is Iran’s duty to defend the innocent people of Gaza.”⁷⁷

On 27–28/2/2010, Tehran welcomed the leaders of the Palestinian factions in The International Conference on National and Islamic Unification of the Future of Palestine. The conference was concluded in Tehran with a final statement that condemned Judaization of the Palestinian lands, Jewish settlement construction in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas.⁷⁸ Prior to the conference opening, the Supreme Leader Khamenei met the leaders of Palestinian factions and said that most of the Arab governments failed the test they were put to during the 22-day war on Gaza and added:

These governments claim that the issue of Palestine is an issue which is related to the Arab world. But when it came to helping Palestinians, they ignored this fact and left their Palestinian brothers alone in their battle against the Zionist enemy and its supporters. This is a fact which will go down in history.

He further stressed the formation of a new and Islamic Middle East and said that supporting the Palestinian nation is an Islamic and human duty. He further stated that Islamic governments shoulder a heavier duty in this regard.⁷⁹

On another level, Israeli army radio reported Israeli military sources as saying that Iran provided Palestinian factions in GS with long range missiles that can reach strategic targets in Israel and even Tel Aviv.⁸⁰ Israeli military sources also disclosed that Hizbullah is armed with surface-to-surface missiles able to reach as far as the Dimona reactor in southern Israel. These include Fajr-5, which has a range of 33 km, and the M-600, developed by Syria from the Fateh-110, whose range is 250 km. Both are precise, propelled by solid fuel and carry 500 kg warheads of conventional explosives, as well as being able to deliver chemical, biological and radioactive materials. The sources claimed that Iran has built for Hizbullah five expanded commando brigades whose mission in a future conflict will be to capture and hold key northern Israeli towns and villages, including the town of Nahariya or

parts thereof. This tactic would force Israeli forces marching into Lebanon to turn back and recover lost land. In addition, sources mentioned that Syrian instructors trained Hizbullah men in the operation of ground-to-air weapons, including self-propelled missiles, for use against warplanes and incoming missiles and cruise missiles.⁸¹ Military sources warned of the possibility of a pre-emptive attack by Hizbullah accompanied by intense attacks from the GS. They said that the cause of the next war in which Syria, Hizbullah and GS are involved, will be in response to any attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities.⁸²

In the same context of forging a relationship between Hamas and Iran, *Haaretz* newspaper mentioned that Israeli sources confirmed a report by the Palestinian Ma'an News Agency that the Egyptian police raided three arms depots in the central Sinai Peninsula containing nearly 200 surface-to-air missiles apparently headed for GS.⁸³ *Haaretz* quoted Israeli sources as saying that a considerable number of similar armaments had probably already been transported through Sinai to Hamas, PIJ and other Islamist militant groups. Israeli experts believe that Tehran and Damascus have sent the ordnance in a bid to give Hamas more advanced weapons of the kind employed by Hizbullah. The sources also said that the weapons appear to be Russian-made SA-7 missiles. The missile, commonly known as the Strela, is not generally considered a highly advanced weapon, but its very presence in GS could have far-reaching implications for Israeli air mobility over the coastal territory. The quantity of missiles in the depots seems to indicate that Palestinians possess a higher number of projectiles than previously thought, and that in any renewed fighting with Israel, may try to shoot down not only military helicopters and fighter jets, but also civilian aircraft such as crop dusters. They also pointed out that Egyptian Bedouin and Palestinian tunnel operators in the Rafah area have been able to penetrate Egypt's Steel Wall in several places, and through it, to dig tunnels for continued weapons smuggling.⁸⁴ This implies that the Egyptian strategic bid to stop arms smuggling to GS was a resounding failure.⁸⁵

Israeli media reported that experts from both Iran and Syria arrived at GS to improve various military capabilities of resistance factions there, a claim denied by Sheikh Nafidh 'Azzam, member of the political bureau of PIJ, as reported by Sama News Agency.⁸⁶ *Haaretz* also reported that members of Hamas left GS, via the Sinai tunnels, to attend training camps in Syria and Iran, with foreign experts also entering GS. It said that the Israeli army believes that Hamas is still trying to



rearm and restore its military capabilities, damaged in operation Cast Lead, and is therefore not interested in provoking too harsh an Israeli response.⁸⁷

Condemning Palestinian-Israeli Negotiations

The Israeli military attack on the Mavi Marmara became an unresolved dispute between Turkey and Israel; while international concern with the siege has since downscaled. No other ships were able to head to GS, and Iran was not obliged to face the challenge of protecting these ships as world attention was once again turned toward UN Security Council sanctions imposed on it. If the Iranian support for lifting the siege of GS and its condemnation of Israeli actions had been normal and acceptable in light of the international condemnation of the massacre and global calls to break this siege; its negative stance toward the resumption of Palestinian Israeli talks cannot be viewed separately from the sanctions imposed on it. Many officials in Washington, Israel and even some Arab capitals, found a link between these negotiations and the sanctions imposed on Iran, especially that such a link was based on what is deemed an “Iranian interference” in the Palestinian issue through supporting resistance movements and refusing negotiations with Israel. They considered that this Iranian policy impedes talks and encourages a section of Palestinians like Hamas and PIJ to lean toward “extremism.” This is to say that sanctions on Iran will not only have an impact on limiting the progress of the Iranian nuclear program but will also be aimed at exerting economic and diplomatic pressure on Tehran to weaken its “negative” impact on the Palestinian issue. In this context, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed UN Security Council Resolution 1929 regarding the fourth round of sanctions imposed on Iran, while Israeli commentators counted the resolution at this time as a “diplomatic gift,” and nothing more than the first step on a long road.⁸⁸

The logical conclusion of the connection between sanctions on Iran and Palestinian negotiations with Israel is as follows: As long as the talks are on hold, there will be a great chance for the expansion of Iranian influence in supporting resistance movements in Lebanon and Palestine. Hence, progress in the peace process will limit tensions and block Iran from further influencing the Palestinian issue. For these reasons, *The Washington Post* newspaper expressed hope that talks between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders would be more positive than previously, since they would share a fear of Iran which had grown since talks broke off between Israelis and Palestinians in December 2008. It clarified that Israel’s fear was of the

Iranian nuclear program, while ‘Abbas also fears Iran which has crossed sectarian lines to support Hamas with money and military training. *The Washington Post* explained that “‘Abbas’s secular Fatah movement fought a virtual civil war with Hamas, which now runs the Gaza Strip, over several months in 2007.” The newspaper considered that Iran’s ambitions, which had cast a long shadow over the greater Middle East, may serve as a common bond keeping a frail peace process intact despite threats that have arisen even before the start of negotiations. *The Washington Post* added that a strong Hamas is a problem for Mubarak—and Iran is interested in just that. And peace between Israel and the Palestinians is perhaps the best way for Mubarak—and Jordan, Israel, the Palestinians and the United States—to counter those ambitions.⁸⁹

Dennis Ross, Barack Obama’s special adviser on the Middle East, also linked peace in the Middle East to Iran, when he said in his remarks to the Anti-Defamation League National Leadership Conference on 3/5/2010 that “pursuing peace is instrumental to shaping a new regional context,” but it is not “a substitute for dealing with the other challenges.” He pointed out that “the greatest challenge to peace and security in the Middle East lies with Iran.” He also said that “Clearly, one way that Iran exerts influence in the Middle East is by exploiting the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.”⁹⁰

Israeli leaders did not care for the connection being made between Iran’s influence and freezing talks. Despite their affirmation of the “existential Iranian threat,” the Israelis would not accept freezing their policy of settlement building. Thus, talks were brought to a halt despite generous American military and financial aid incentives to Israel and the commitment that settlement building could resume at a later stage.

As a consequence of Israel’s hard line, Iran was handed the opportunity to criticize negotiations, while several senior officials in the PA and some Arab countries warned against Israeli obstinacy, calling for halting negotiations on the one hand, and asked Washington to pressure Israel to accept the settlement freeze on the other.

In harmony with their consistent stances on this issue, Iran criticized the negotiations and Iran’s military, spiritual and political leaders reaffirmed the futility of talks with the Israel. Previously, Iran had avoided speaking out against the Palestinian or Arab side of the negotiations; however, in 2010, President

Ahmadinejad, criticized ‘Abbas for becoming a “hostage” of Israel.⁹¹ The PA responded with an attack on the Iranian president, with Spokesman for the Palestinian Presidency Nabil Abu Rudaina saying, “he who does not represent the Iranian people, who forged elections and who suppresses the Iranian people and stole the authority, is not entitled to talk about Palestine, or the President of Palestine.” He added:

The Palestinian leadership and the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, who knows how to defend their rights and will not allow anyone to undermine the national president or the legitimacy of the Palestine Liberation Organization or the political and national line, on which it is.⁹²

The Iranian president met with the Syrian President Bashar Assad to declare that supporting “the resistance front not only will absorb nations and countries to this trend but also promote peace in the region.”⁹³ In the annual *al-Quds* Day rally in Tehran President Ahmadinejad referred to compromise talks as stillborn and said that while no attention is paid to the rights of Palestine and regional realities, talks will fail. He added: “There is no foundation for talks and the fate of the Palestinians will be decided by their resistance in their land, not in Washington, Paris and London.” As for the negotiators he questioned who had made them representatives to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians. “They are talking about what? Who has the right to sell part of the Palestinian land to the enemy?” he asked, “I announce that neither the Palestinian nation nor the regional states will allow an inch of its soil be ceded to the foe.”⁹⁴

During his visit to Lebanon, Ahmadinejad again criticized the PA and said that “the existence of this entity in any form, even on one inch of Palestinian land, gives opportunities to this entity [for occupation and crimes].” He commented on the “Jewishness of Israel” by saying that “the Jewish state means a racist state.”⁹⁵

Following the disruption of Palestinian-Israeli talks, the discrepancy between the American and Israeli estimates in dealing with the “Iranian threat” surfaced. The then US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said that he disagreed with the assertion by Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu that a military threat was the only way to influence Iran’s nuclear policies. He added, “We are prepared to do what is necessary, but, at this point, we continue to believe that the political-economic approach that we are taking is, in fact, having an impact on Iran.”⁹⁶

In his visit to the US, Netanyahu commented on the issue and said, “The only way to ensure that Iran will not go nuclear is to create a credible threat of military action against it if it doesn’t cease its race for a nuclear weapon,” and he added, “The economic sanctions are making it difficult for Iran, but there is no sign that the Ayatollah regime plans to stop its nuclear program because of them.”⁹⁷

Gates reiterated his stance and argued that military strikes are just a “short-term solution” that would only make Iran’s nuclear program “deeper and more covert.” He said they would also unify the Iranian people around an increasingly unpopular government and would “bring together a divided nation; it will make them absolutely committed to obtaining nuclear weapons.” Gates added, “The only long-term solution to avoiding an Iranian nuclear-weapons capability is for the Iranians to decide it’s not in their interest,” whereas “Everything else is a short-term solution -is a two- to three-year solution.”⁹⁸

Throughout 2010, Iran continued asserting its position regarding the legitimacy of resistance and the illegitimacy of Israel. Contrary to the logic of other Muslim countries, Tehran continues to stress the demise of Israel, its officials expressing their optimism that this demise is nearing. In addition they declared their rejection of Palestinian Israeli negotiations, expressing doubts about the legitimacy of the Palestinian negotiator and threatening Israel with a war that would annihilate it, should it consider launching a new attack on GS or on any other country. Iran also condemned Israel’s Judaization policies and affirmed its confidence that resistance is the only way to achieve freedom.

Although mainly based on rhetoric and threats, Iran’s position certainly differed from the stances of other Muslim countries, which continued to support negotiations with Israel or called on the US to pressure Israel to stop settlement building and respect Palestinian rights. Undoubtedly, it is valid to construe that Iranian stances during 2010 were more harmonious with the logic of resistance movements than those of other Muslim countries. These stances continued to disturb Israel as well as many Arab and Muslim countries that have chosen a different path in dealing with Israel. Iran’s stances created a more volatile environment, more likely to flare up.

Presumably, Iran will continue on the above course, while Arab and Western concern, namely that of the US, over such Iranian policies toward Palestine will continue in parallel. In addition, the Arab and Palestinian sides are urged to view the success of these negotiations as urgent and to avoid the danger of letting them

freeze or fail lest Iranian influence grows. US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell said that Iran constitutes an important issue among ruling elites. He added that on his first and subsequent visits to the region:

during which I met with the leaders of, I believe, 14 or 15 countries in the region, without exception Iran was included in the conversation. And in most of them, it was the first or second item mentioned. So clearly that is an important issue and one which has an impact on this process.⁹⁹

Fourth: Malaysia

Malaysia is one of the key actors in the Asian region, and a major player in the global markets in a number of sectors. The economic revival of Malaysia has placed the country at an advanced position, especially in the fields of finance and business. Malaysia has economic relations with Israel, although they remained relatively limited throughout 2010. It is no surprise that Israel pays a great deal of attention to this developing country.

During a parliamentary session of the *Dewan Rakyat*, on 6/4/2010, Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim claimed that there were Israeli agents present at the Federal Police or Royal Malaysian Police Headquarters. He said that he had documents that Israeli intelligence had access to the country's strategic information through a company, Asiasoft Online Sdn Bhd, which was a sub-contractor for the project to upgrade the communications system and technology at the federal police headquarters. Ibrahim clarified that the company Asiasoft is registered in Singapore and based in Tel Aviv. He claimed that the presence of two former Israeli military officers in the company was known to the country's top police officer as well as the then Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar. The latter, who was present at the parliament session, denied claims by the Malaysian opposition leader, saying that Anwar Ibrahim was making an assumption and a slanderous statement because many of the facts he had presented were not valid. Meanwhile, speaking to reporters later, Anwar Ibrahim said that he would write a letter to the King of Malaysia, Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin, "requesting that the Meeting of the Conference of Rulers intervene to revoke the government contract with the consultant firm, APCO Worldwide, which he claimed to have links with Israel."¹⁰⁰

APCO is a global consultancy firm that addresses clients' interests and objectives through communication and public affairs consulting. The International Advisory Council Members include among others; former US congressman Don Bonker, former US senator and congressman Donald W. Riegle Jr. and former Israeli ambassador to the US Itamar Rabinovich.¹⁰¹ APCO also has a strong partnership with Asero Worldwide, a Washington-based company that is home to a number of Israeli security experts and has a main office in Israel. Asero is a global security and risk management consulting firm.¹⁰²

Malaysia strongly condemned the Israeli attack on the Freedom Flotilla. The Malaysian PM Mohd Najib bin Tun Abdul Razak said, "The Malaysian government and the people strongly condemn this inhumane, brutal aggression by the Israeli regime on the flotilla which is bringing humanitarian aid to the beleaguered people of Gaza" and added that he hoped that "the incident will result in a censure on Israel."¹⁰³ On 7/6/2010, speaking in parliament, the Malaysian PM referred to Israel as a "world gangster" and proposed that like-minded countries bring a resolution to the UNGA to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Najib also called on like-minded countries to bring a resolution to the UN Security Council to refer the Israel's attack on the Turkish aid ship Mavi Marmara to the ICC.¹⁰⁴ Worth mentioning is that the Malaysian PM received, at a homecoming reception at his residence, the 12 Malaysian activists who were on board the Freedom Flotilla. He said that these volunteers had achieved a huge moral victory for Malaysia and its people, and that what they went through "has not only touched our hearts but has opened the eyes of the people of Malaysia and the rest of the world to the atrocities of the Zionist regime towards the people of Palestine."¹⁰⁵

On the public level, hundreds of Malaysians participated in demonstrations outside the American Embassy in Kuala Lumpur chanting slogans like "Death to Israel" after the flotilla atrocity.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, on 4/7/2010, the Malaysian organization Aman Palestin Berhad was able to send a truck fully loaded with relief aid and medicine to the GS through the Rafah border crossing in Egypt. The content of the truck was worth \$100 thousand. Egyptian Authorities denied entry to the delegation of 12 legal representatives of Malaysian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and correspondents for television channels, who were accompanying the truck.¹⁰⁷ The Kelab Putera Malaysia humanitarian mission was

able to enter GS in the evening of 9/8/2010. The team included 67 multinational volunteers including doctors, directors and 10 journalists. The delegation included a medical team of 10 Malaysians, 10 Indians and 10 Chinese of different specialties and worked in the hospitals in GS.¹⁰⁸ Pro-Palestine activities also continued to increase, and Malaysian organizations were active in organizing donation campaigns for the Palestinian people.

Fifth: Indonesia

2010 did not witness any significant change in Indonesian policies toward the Palestinian issue. Public and official support campaigns continued and the policy of rejecting normalization with Israel continued. This policy was best expressed when the Indonesian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology said that a company would be dropped from a tender if it had an Israeli shareholder. He said “We don’t have diplomatic ties with Israel, how can we establish a business relation that doesn’t have ties with Indonesia.” Ministry spokesman Gatot Dewa Broto said the Minister of Communication Tifatul Sembiring’s decision of “banning comes from an effort to protect the people’s interests,” and added, “It’s not because the minister is from the PKS [*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*].” PKS means Prosperous Justice Party, known as conservative and Islamic.¹⁰⁹

In a move that increased the credibility of Indonesian diplomacy, the Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF) held in Bali on 24–26/2/2010 adopted the recommendations contained in the report “Environmental Assessment of the Gaza Strip following the escalation of hostilities in December 2008–January 2009.” The report, prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), clarified the extent of the environmental disaster left behind by the Israeli aggression and the ecological challenges faced by the GS population, outlining ways to deal with the problems. Thus, as GMEF member countries adopted the document, it became an official UN document. The forum was held in the absence of the Israeli delegation since Indonesian authorities did not grant approval for the security procedures set by Israel for its participation.¹¹⁰

On 20/3/2010 tens of thousands of Indonesians marched in the streets of the Indonesian capital Jakarta in support of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Around 100 thousand Indonesian citizens gathered in response to a call by the PKS, where Islamic

leaders in Indonesia were at the forefront of the gathering. The late MP Yoyoh Yusroh was the first speaker, stating that they came to stand in solidarity with the people in Palestine in their defense of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and holy sites.

The former Speaker of Indonesia People's Consultative Assembly Muhammad Hidayat Nur Wahid also addressed the crowd, urging the Indonesian government to assume its role as the biggest Islamic country in the world and work to check Israeli attacks on Islamic holy sites. Moreover, he urged the Arab and Islamic countries, especially Egypt, to play a bigger role in ending the inter-Palestinian rift. He also added that if reconciliation was not reached in Egypt, then all sides were more than welcome in Jakarta, so the Indonesians would have the opportunity to play a historic role in achieving Palestinian reconciliation.¹¹¹

The government and people of Indonesia spared no effort in supporting the Gazans and participated in bids to break the siege, by sending official and public delegations and providing financial support. In this context, the Indonesian Foreign Ministry "condemned Israel's storming of the Mavi Marmara, which was sailing in international waters." Jakarta said the attack was illegal as it took place in international waters, highlighting that Israel's blockade of GS has also violated international law. "Indonesia will work with the international community to demand accountability from Israel in accordance with international law," said Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa. "We urge the United Nations to investigate the incident."¹¹²

On 29/5/2010, in a joint press conference between the Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas and the Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in Jakarta, Yudhoyono asserted his support to the Palestinian people and his support for the establishment of a Palestinian state, declaring the allocation of \$2.15 million for building a hospital in GS.¹¹³ On 29/6/2010, an Indonesian parliamentary delegation, headed by the Parliament Chairman Marzuki Alie, visited GS and laid the cornerstone for the hospital.¹¹⁴ MP Agus Kartasasmitha said in an interview that the parliamentary delegation will relay to the people and parliament in Indonesia all that it had seen and heard in GS, with utmost transparency. He added that the delegation would also tell Indonesians that the people in GS have clear aims: freedom and independence.¹¹⁵

Sixth: Pakistan

Despite the unstable political and security situation and the immense suffering due to floods that Pakistan experienced, these circumstances did not prevent official Pakistani institutions from continuing to declare their support for the Palestinian people and their right to establish an independent state. Pakistani PM Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani reaffirmed these values during his reception for the Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas in Islamabad on 12/2/2010. He said that Pakistan supports “the full realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people including the establishment of an independent state with al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.” The prime minister extended Pakistan’s full support to the peace efforts in the Middle East, including the Oslo Peace Accord, the Arab Peace Initiative and UN Resolutions 242 and 338. As for Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, he said, “Pakistan believes that peace will remain elusive in the Middle East unless the Palestinian problem is resolved.” Zardari said that Pakistan favors an early settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of two-state solution, and he condemned the brutal Israeli invasion of GS and its continued blockade.¹¹⁶

In a press interview with the Pakistani ambassador to Jordan Muhammad Akhtar Tufail, he stressed the fact that his country does not recognize Israel and will not recognize it until it first recognizes the Palestinians’ existence, a Palestinian state is established, Israel reached a peaceful settlement with the Palestinian people, and until the Palestinian nation achieves all its aspirations. He said that peace is in Israel’s best interests and that the absence of a “wise” Israeli leadership is harming the peace process. He added that the prospects of success of peace settlement talks are slim, and that if Israel doesn’t reconsider its policies and does not allow Palestinians to establish their independent state, it will be hurt. Moreover, he revealed a proposal presented to a number of Arab countries that suggests involving Muslim countries in the Palestinian issue and activating their role in order to solidify effective support for the Palestinians. Thus, in this interview, he affirmed the Islamic dimension of the Palestinian issue.¹¹⁷

In the context of reactions to the assault on the Freedom Flotilla, the Pakistani Foreign Ministry declared that the “killing of members of this humanitarian mission, which also included women, is brutal, inhuman and constitutes a flagrant violation of international law and norms.” Pakistani PM Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani said that he

expects the international community to take cognizance of this brutal act. Whereas, in front of the National Press Club in Islamabad, dozens of journalists, political figures and different segments of the society participated in a protest organized by the journalistic community. They demanded of the government to ensure the safe return of renowned journalist Tal'at Hussain and two other Pakistanis, while chanting slogans against Israel.¹¹⁸

Seventh: Trade Exchange

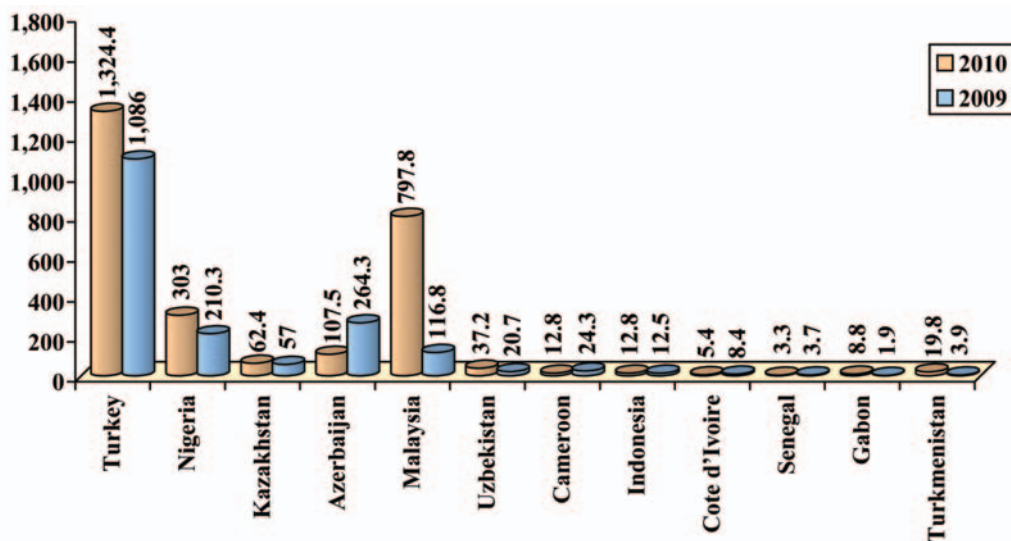
Despite the mounting level of diplomatic turmoil between Israel and Turkey during 2010, which peaked after the Freedom Flotilla attack, trade exchange between the two countries witnessed a significant boost. According to Israeli statistics, Israel's exports to Turkey increased during 2010 to \$1,324 million, 22% more than 2009. Israeli imports from Turkey also increased during 2010, a rise of 30% from 2009.

It must be noted that 2009 is not a useful measure of any economic level, as it witnessed an economic crisis that hit the world and affected the Israeli economy directly. Thus, the progress in trade exchange between Turkey and Israel during 2010 can be partially attributed to the recovery of Israeli economy from the global economic crisis. Another reason for adopting this view is the fact that military exchange plans and arms deals were not significantly affected. In addition, it should be noted that many on both sides were more inclined to neutralize economic issues, keeping them separate from political developments and repercussions. As for Malaysia, there is a significant, soaring trade volume with Israel, as Israeli exports to Malaysia skyrocketed by 583% during 2010 from 2009, taking trade back to the rate experienced before *al-Aqsa Intifadah* when Malaysia was a top trading partner with Israel. This requires a careful reading of the reasons behind this rise, which could be related to reactivating deals connected to Information technology industries and the fact that large American corporations export these kinds of services from Israel, for example the Intel Corporation. Meanwhile, the remainder of the Muslim countries recorded a relative stability in their trade exchange (see table 2/4).

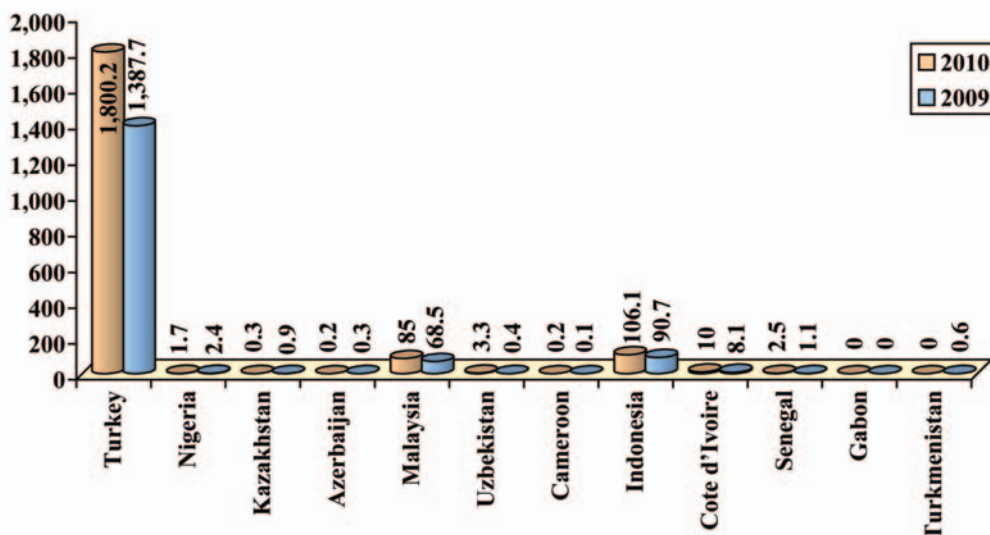
Table 2/4: Israeli Trade with a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries
2007–2010 (\$ million)¹¹⁹

Countries	Israeli exports to:				Israeli imports from:			
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2010	2009	2008	2007
Turkey	1,324.4	1,086	1,609.9	1,195.8	1,800.2	1,387.7	1,825.3	1,606.9
Nigeria	303	210.3	304.3	205.1	1.7	2.4	1.4	0.2
Kazakhstan	62.4	57	158.6	99.6	0.3	0.9	3.4	3.3
Azerbaijan	107.5	264.3	129.4	82.6	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2
Malaysia	797.8	116.8	30.2	70.4	85	68.5	100.6	63.6
Uzbekistan	37.2	20.7	23.3	25.6	3.3	0.4	2.7	2
Cameroon	12.8	24.3	18.2	8.9	0.2	0.1	0.5	0.2
Indonesia	12.8	12.5	15.8	17.6	106.1	90.7	293.4	89.3
Cote d'Ivoire	5.4	8.4	9.3	7.9	10	8.1	8.9	5
Senegal	3.3	3.7	8.8	7.1	2.5	1.1	0.7	0.6
Gabon	8.8	1.9	2.9	1.1	0	0	0	0.2
Turkmenistan	19.8	3.9	1.7	2.2	0	0.6	0.2	0.8

Israeli Exports to a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries
2009–2010 (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries 2009–2010 (\$ million)



Conclusion

The year 2010 highlighted the strong connection between the Muslim public and the Palestinian issue. The Gazans' steadfastness in the face of Israel's aggression and its unjust siege of GS, condemned globally and around the Arab world, unified Islamic efforts to break the siege. This reflects the return of the Palestinian issue to its central Islamic dimension. The increasing moral and financial public support of non-Arab Muslim countries, especially Turkey, Iran, Indonesia and Malaysia, is proof of the centrality of the Palestinian issue to the people of these countries.

Moving forwards we face a real dilemma when it comes to the passivity with which the OIC deals with the Palestinian issue. The OIC still suffers the commonalities and contradictions of its member countries, especially those of major Arab countries that finance the OIC and impose their political agenda regarding the Palestinian issue. Reappraising the legal articles and foundations of the OIC and reframing the basic goal for which the OIC was established is needed, but remains difficult to achieve in the absence of Arab democracy and in view of the fact that non-Arab Muslim countries remain shackled by the low level of Arab demands.

As for Turkey, with its pro-Islamic leadership, it has proved its ability to play a key role in the region and be an effective opponent of unrestrained Israeli policies. Turkey has supported the Palestinian people, and confronted Israeli arrogance; these stances were harmonious with the wishes of the Turkish people who sacrificed blood for the sake of defending the Palestinian people. Thus, Turkey was able to achieve a political detachment from its connections with the US and EU, which had prevailed during previous secular governments. However, a long road lies ahead before the Turkish leadership unties military, economic and political relations with Israel and adopts a purely Islamic agenda.

Iran continues to provide its political and financial support to the Palestinian people and the resistance movement, albeit at a slower rate, due to its preoccupation with internal economic and political events. It is likely that these pro-Palestinian resistance policies will persist, particularly in view of accelerating events and political changes that are expected to be a major factor in opening new horizons for the resistance project in the region.

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- ¹⁴ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 13/1/2010, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3834078,00.html>; *Haaretz*, 13/1/2010; and *Today's Zaman* newspaper, Turkey, 14/1/2010, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-198503-israel-apologises-to-turkey-in-diplomatic-spat-after-ultimatum.html>
- ¹⁵ *Almustaqbal*, 2/6/2010.
- ¹⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 24/7/2010.
- ¹⁷ Address by H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu at the United Nations Security Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey, 31/5/2010, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/anasayfa-3105-un.en.mfa>; and *Today's Zaman*, 3/6/2010, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-211974-parliament-issues-declaration-condemning-israel.html>
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Chapter Five

The Palestinian Issue and the International Situation

The Palestinian Issue and the International Situation

Introduction

International diplomatic efforts in 2010 focused on three major issues, two of which were fundamental, the other procedural. The fundamental issues were: first, the extension of the Israeli 10-month settlement moratorium which began in 2009. This matter came to an end with the US declaration, on 8/12/2010, that it was ending its efforts at achieving another moratorium. The second fundamental issue was the sustained and ongoing blockade imposed on the GS. The procedural issue, meanwhile, involved the efforts to persuade the Palestinian and Israeli sides involved in the peace process to return to the negotiating table.

A review of the various diplomatic efforts shows that the members of the Quartet (the US, the EU, Russia and the UN) were concerned with a number of alternative approaches to the three issues mentioned above. The urgent obstacle was the need to convince the Israeli side to extend the moratorium on settlement building, which expired in the last week of September 2009. Should the Israeli government not respond positively, then diplomatic efforts would turn toward finding another approach, whereby the Palestinian side is persuaded to agree to return to negotiations.

With regard the blockade imposed on GS, it was clear that the efforts of international civil societies to break the siege were significantly ahead of official political stances, be they Arab, Islamic or Western. This is a trend that must be afforded a great deal of attention, given its immediate and long-term strategic implications, particularly when the prospects for its growth are clearly extant, as emphasized in *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10*.

With regard to procedural issues, the strategic choice of the PA was to persist in giving way to international efforts aimed at convincing Benjamin Netanyahu of “a way out,” giving a minimal level of credibility to the PA’s negotiation policies. We shall review what international diplomats discussed as a way out. However, the failure to reach agreement over an extended moratorium on settlement building in late September revealed the PA’s multiple attempts

to postpone its decision to halt negotiations until the Arab Peace Initiative Follow-up Committee convened, or until the Sirte Summit took place in Libya, or even until the PLO made a decision. These actions reflected the Palestinian side's limited margin of maneuver.

The fading of the promising image that US President Barack Obama tried to project for his prospective policies faded. This is evident through his rapid backtracking at each juncture in the Middle East in 2010, in particular on the Palestinian issue. This has proven to be equally encumbering for Palestinian negotiators and official Arab circles alike.

First: The Quartet

The Quartet issued six statements in 2010, which focused in the main on the usual issues as follows:¹

1. Statement by Middle East Quartet on 12/3/2010: The brief statement included a condemnation of Israel's decision to advance planning for new housing units in East Jerusalem. The statement reaffirmed that "unilateral actions taken by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community." The Quartet also called on "all concerned to support the urgent resumption of dialogue."²
2. Statement by Middle East Quartet on 19/3/2010: the Quartet welcomed the readiness to launch proximity talks between Israel and the Palestinians, it added that the "Quartet believes these negotiations should lead to a settlement, negotiated between the parties within 24 months, that ends the occupation which began in 1967." The statement also called on all states in the international community "to support dialogue" between the parties of the conflict. The Quartet reiterated "its call on Israel and the Palestinians to act on the basis of international law and on their previous agreements and obligations," and urged the Government of Israel "to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth, to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001, and to refrain from demolitions and evictions in East Jerusalem." The Quartet also called on the PA "to continue to make every effort to improve law and order, to fight violent extremism and to end incitement." The Quartet said that the annexation of East Jerusalem is not recognized by the international community, and that it is aware that:

Jerusalem is a deeply important issue for Israelis and Palestinians, and for Jews, Muslims and Christians, and believes that through good-faith negotiations, the parties can mutually agree on an outcome that realizes the aspirations of both parties for Jerusalem, and safeguards its status for people around the world.

The Quartet expressed concern at “the continuing deterioration in Gaza, including the humanitarian and human rights situation of the civilian population,” and it stressed “the urgency of a durable resolution to the Gaza crisis.” The Quartet called for a solution that addresses Israel’s legitimate security concerns, promotes Palestinian unity based on the PLO commitments and the reunification of GS and the WB under the legitimate PA; and “ensures the opening of the crossings to allow for the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza, consistent with United Nations Security Council resolution 1860.”

The Quartet called for the immediate release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, captured by Hamas.

The Quartet also urged “regional Governments to support publicly the resumption of bilateral negotiations...and take steps to foster positive relations throughout the region.”³

3. Statement by Middle East Quartet on 11/5/2010: The statement welcomed “the first round of proximity talks between Israelis and Palestinians.”⁴
4. Statement by Middle East Quartet on 21/6/2010: The statement focused on the situation in the GS, wherein the Quartet believed that “efforts to maintain security while enabling movement and access for Palestinian people and goods are critical.” It also stated that it “will actively explore additional ways to improve the situation in Gaza, encourage involvement of the Palestinian Authority at the crossings and promote greater commerce between the West Bank and Gaza.” The statement also stressed its commitment “to work with Israel and the international community to prevent the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition into Gaza.” The Quartet also reiterated its call for the release of Gilad Shalit, and condemned “the violation of Hamas’ international obligation to provide him access by the International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC]” and it demanded that “Hamas immediately remedy the situation.”⁵
5. Statement by Middle East Quartet on 20/8/2010: The Quartet expressed its “determination to support the parties throughout the negotiations, which can be completed within one year, and the implementation of an agreement.” It

welcomed “the result of the Arab Peace Initiative Committee in Cairo on 29 July.” The Quartet also called on the Israelis and the Palestinians to join in launching direct negotiations on 2/9/2010 in Washington, D.C., “to resolve all final status issues.”⁶

6. Statement by Middle East Quartet on 21/9/2010: The Quartet noted that “the commendable Israeli settlement moratorium instituted last November [2009] has had a positive impact and urged its continuation.” The Quartet also reaffirmed “its support for the Palestinian Authority’s August 2009 plan for building the institutions of a Palestinian State within two years.” The statement made reference to the World Bank report which concluded that “If the Palestinian Authority maintains its current performance in institution-building and delivery of public services, it is well-positioned for the establishment of a State at any point in the near future.” The Quartet condemned continuing violence against both Palestinian and Israeli civilians, in particular the attack near Hebron on 31/8/2010. The Quartet also repeated its call for the release of Gilad Shalit.⁷

By examining these statements, the following inferences can be made:

1. The Quartet continue to be subservient to American wishes, which dictate its course of action. Its role remains marginal, except in those instants when the US requires the intervention of the remaining parties to salvage the situation or eliminate certain complexities.
2. Despite the utter failure of peace efforts, and the continuation of Israeli settlement building, the Quartet’s Special Envoy to the Middle East and former UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair said in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) on 13/9/2010 that the “feeling of cynicism [regarding a peace settlement] had been significantly reduced.”⁸

However, this assessment is largely inaccurate, because the peace process has been suffering a major crisis following Israel’s refusal to freeze settlement activity, and following American backtracking on its pledges to apply pressure to halt the building. Even the French President Nicolas Sarkozy, in late September 2010, criticized the Quartet and said, “I observe that, 10 years after Camp David, we have made no progress and perhaps we’ve even gone backwards in terms of resuming dialogue. You can see there’s a methodological problem.” He also said that the “Quartet and its members must collectively and concretely carry out the supervisory role that is theirs.”⁹

3. The issue of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit is a central issue referred to in most of the Quartet's statements, while no similar references are made whatsoever to the nearly six thousand Palestinian prisoners. This illustrates a profound lack of evenhandedness and objectivity.
4. There was agreement among all the parties that settlement activity is illegal, in addition to continued emphasis that the point of reference for the negotiations is the UN resolutions. This is despite the vagueness in explaining how these resolutions should be implemented and the limits thereof. However, the Quartet's stance on settlement activity remains ambivalent, as no practical measures are coupled with the rhetoric.
5. The Quartet stance on the siege of GS remains weak and ineffective; no influential pressure is exerted to end or ease the blockade, giving Israel cover for its ongoing conduct. The Quartet is always keen on not offending Israel in its support of the peace process, which Israel happens to be impeding and thwarting in practice.

It is worth noting that on 23/9/2010, Gary Grappo took up his post as Head of Mission for the Office of the Quartet Representative in Jerusalem. Previously, he was the Minister Counselor for Political Affairs at the American Embassy in Baghdad, in the period that followed the US occupation of Iraq. He also worked for 18 years in the US embassies in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Oman.¹⁰

Second: The United States of America

It is worthwhile identifying US strategy as set out in the National Security Strategy released on 27/5/2010 by the Obama Administration. Regarding the "greater Middle East," the US has important interests, which include:¹¹

1. Unshakable commitment to the security of the state of Israel.
2. The achievement of the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations for statehood.
3. The unity and security of Iraq and the fostering of its democracy and reintegration into the region.
4. The transformation of Iranian policy away from its pursuit of nuclear weapons, support for "terrorism," and threats against its neighbors.
5. Access to energy.
6. Integration of the region into global markets.



The document identifies the two pronged strategy that must be followed in order to implement the above plan. First, they “will draw on diplomacy, development, and international norms and institutions to help resolve disagreements, prevent conflict, and maintain peace, mitigating where possible the need for the use of force.” Otherwise, they “will seek broad international support, working with such institutions as NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] and the U.N. Security Council.”

The US sought to secure a favorable atmosphere for the resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations that have been stalled over 17 months because of Israel’s continued settlement activity. It exerted diplomatic efforts so the proximity talks between the Palestinians and the Israelis were conducted, but these efforts failed. On 8/12/2010, the then Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Philip J. Crowley, said:

There was considerable thought given to moratorium as being a mechanism by which we could make the kind of progress we’re looking for and, at this point after an intensive effort, we’ve concluded that that particular course is just simply not going to bear fruit at this time and we’re going to move in a different direction.

Then he added:

We are going to shift the discussion and begin to focus intensively on the core issues and see if we can make progress on the substance itself. And we’ll be looking to see if these discussions and this effort creates the momentum that we would expect. Ultimately, we’ll have to move back into direct negotiations at some point.¹²

It appears that this failure did not come as a surprise to President Obama. On 15/1/2010, *Time* magazine interviewed Obama who said, “The Middle East peace process has not moved forward. And I think it’s fair to say that for all our efforts at early engagement, it is not where I want it to be.” He said that from Mahmud Abbas’s perspective, “he’s got Hamas looking over his shoulder and, I think, an environment generally within the Arab world that feels impatient with any process.” Obama then added that although “the Israelis, I think, after a lot of time showed a willingness to make some modifications in their policies, they still found it very hard to move with any bold gestures.” He continued, “If we had anticipated some of these political problems on both sides earlier, we might not have raised expectations as high.”¹³

Meanwhile, on 15/4/2010, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton gave a speech in dedication of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace. She said, “Those who benefit from our failure of leadership traffic in hate and violence, and give strength to Iran’s anti-Semitic president and extremists like Hamas and Hezbollah,” and described the PLO as “a credible partner for peace.” She also said:

Israel can and should do more to support the Palestinian Authority’s efforts to build credible institutions and deliver results.... If President ‘Abbas cannot deliver on those aspirations, there’s no doubt his support will fade and Palestinians will turn to alternatives—including Hamas. And that way leads only to more conflict.... So for Israel, accepting concrete steps toward peace—both through the peace process and in the bottoms-up institutions building I have described—are the best weapons against Hamas and other extremists.... So we encourage Israel to continue building momentum toward a comprehensive peace by demonstrating respect for the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians, stopping settlement activity, and addressing the humanitarian needs in Gaza, and to refrain from unilateral statements and actions that could undermine trust or risk prejudicing the outcome of talks.¹⁴

Clinton’s stance on a settlement freeze is not consistent with US conduct, as evidenced by Clinton’s opposition to the UN HRC decision in March 2010, which called for the cessation of settlement activity, even though EU countries had endorsed it.

This means that the main focus of American peace efforts, in addition to serving Israeli goals, is to prevent the emergence of an environment that helps widen the base of Palestinian and regional factions that consider the peace process to be futile. This is not dissimilar to the recommendations posted by a team of senior intelligence officers at the United States Central Command (CENTCOM). In a “Red Team” report issued on 7/5/2010, the team stressed the need for Hamas to be integrated into the Palestinian security forces led by Fatah, and Hizbullah into the Lebanese Armed Forces. It concluded that:

The U.S. role of assistance to an *integrated* Lebanese defense force that includes Hizbullah; and the continued training of Palestinian security forces in a Palestinian entity that *includes* Hamas in its government, would be more



effective than providing assistance to entities—the government of Lebanon and Fatah—that represent only a part of the Lebanese and Palestinian populace respectively.¹⁵

Neither was failure discounted from the beginning, as evident from the results of the visit made by US Vice President Joe Biden to the region on 8/3/2010. Eli Yishai, the Israeli minister of the interior and leader of the Israeli right-wing party Shas, approved on 9/3/2010, i.e., during Biden's visit, the addition of 1,600 housing units in East Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramat Shlomo.¹⁶ While the US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell announced, on 8/3/2010, that “the Israeli and Palestinian leadership have accepted indirect talks.” He added that the US encouraged “the parties, and all concerned, to refrain from any statements or actions which may inflame tensions or prejudice the outcome of these talks.”¹⁷

Also, the US government welcomed the Arab Peace Initiative Follow-up Committee decision taken on 3/3/2010, putting forward a time frame of four months for negotiations between the two sides.

It is important here to stop at Biden's remarks during his visit, to determine the extent of the disagreement between the US and Israel, and whether it is tactical or strategic?

On 9/3/2010 Biden condemned the Israeli announcement regarding the construction of housing units, by saying:

I condemn the decision by the government of Israel to advance planning for new housing units in East Jerusalem. The substance and timing of the announcement, particularly with the launching of proximity talks, is precisely the kind of step that undermines the trust we need right now and runs counter to the constructive discussions that I've had here in Israel. We must build an atmosphere to support negotiations, not complicate them.... Unilateral action taken by either party cannot prejudge the outcome of negotiations on permanent status issues.¹⁸

The *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper quoted Biden who castigated his interlocutors. “What you're doing here undermines the security of our troops who are fighting in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. That endangers us and it endangers regional peace.” Afterwards, Biden denied these statements.¹⁹

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, meanwhile, called Netanyahu on 12/3/2010 “to make clear that the United States considered the announcement to be a deeply negative signal about Israel's approach to the bilateral relationship

and contrary to the spirit of the vice-president's trip." The same conclusion was reached by the Ambassador of Israel to the US Michael Oren, who said that US-Israeli relations faced their worst crisis in 35 years.²⁰

In February 2010, the US criticized Israel for adding the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron and Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem to the list of Jewish heritage sites marked for renovation and preservation. The then US Department of State Acting Deputy spokesman Mark Toner said that the administration viewed the move as provocative and unhelpful to the goal of getting the two sides back to the table. He also confirmed that Washington's position had been conveyed to senior Israeli officials by American diplomats.²¹

In the meantime, US military officials have expressed positions that are consistent with stances taken by US politicians. On 16/3/2010, CENTCOM Chief Gen. David Petraeus said before the Senate Armed Services Committee that:

The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests in the AOR [Area Of responsibility]. Israeli-Palestinian tensions often flare into violence and large-scale armed confrontations. The conflict foments anti-American sentiment, due to a perception of U.S. favoritism for Israel.... Meanwhile, al-Qaeda and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilize support. The conflict also gives Iran influence in the Arab world through its clients, Lebanese Hizballah and Hamas.²²

In addition, on 16/1/2010, a team of senior military officers from CENTCOM, who were responsible for overseeing American security interests in the Middle East, briefed Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Michael Mullen on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The team had been dispatched by CENTCOM commander General David Petraeus to underline his growing worries at the lack of progress in resolving the issue. The briefers reported that Israeli intransigence on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was jeopardizing US standing in the region.²³

The other development which underscores the tactical divergence in US-Israeli relations was the ramifications of the Israeli attack the Freedom Flotilla, on 31/5/2010.

The assault took place at an incongruous time for US diplomatic activity when:

1. The US was making every effort to secure a 'yes' vote in the UN Security Council on a fourth round of sanctions on Iran.

2. The US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell was preparing to visit the region to initiate new peace talks, which led to the postponement of Netanyahu's trip to Washington.
3. The assault took place in the same day that President Obama called on the parties in the Middle East to show restraint.

Upon examining other statements made by Joe Biden during the same visit, the strategic nature of US-Israeli relations becomes apparent. In a joint press conference with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, Biden assured that "the cornerstone of the relationship is our absolute, total, unvarnished commitment to Israel's security," and added that "progress occurs in the Middle East when everyone knows there's simply no space between the United States and Israel" when it comes to Israel's security. Biden also said that the US was "determined to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons," and that "Iran must also curb its other destabilizing actions in the region... that is their continued support for terrorist groups that threaten Israel, and I might add, our interests as well."²⁴

In line with this strategic relationship, the US House of Representatives approved, by a vote of 410 to 4, Obama's request to grant \$205 million in aid to Israel for the Iron Dome missile defense project. The project is being developed to protect civilians, primarily along the GS and Lebanese borders, from short-range rockets and mortar attacks. This level of support to Israel took place in the context of 78% of the American Jewish voters voting for Barack Obama in the presidential elections. Moreover, the Republican party regaining their majority in the US House of Representatives, enhancing conservative influence at the highest levels of American politics.²⁵

A statement by Howard Berman, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the House of Representatives said, "With nearly every square inch of Israel at risk from rocket and missile attacks, we must ensure that our most important ally in the region has the tools to defend itself."²⁶

When examining the distance between the tactical approaches of the two allies (e.g., over the Israeli settlement building plans) and strategic alliance (strategic support), the following observations can be made:

1. The US did not take any concrete measures to protest the Israeli announcement on settlement building, on the political, economic or military levels, unlike what could be expected for Iran, Sudan, Hamas, Venezuela, North Korea, Cuba,

Syria or even Egypt in certain cases. The only US response was to postpone a visit by Mitchell to the region, while Clinton called on Israel to cancel the plans announced by the Israeli Ministry of Construction and Housing, to investigate the clear provocation, and to demonstrate its good intentions by encouraging the Palestinians to return to negotiations.²⁷

The US administration thus pursues a policy of “deterrence” with its opponents, while pursuing a policy of “grants” with its allies. According to *The Independent* newspaper, Netanyahu rejected:

a draft letter drawn up by the State Department and a senior Israeli official promising — in return for a 60-day extension of the moratorium — massive military aid, a veto on any UN Security Council resolution criticising Israel over the next year, and support for a continued Israeli military presence in the Jordan Valley after the launch of a Palestinian state.

The draft also offered not to ask for a further extension after the 60-day period ran out.²⁸

At the end of the meeting of the US-Israel Joint Economic Development Group (JEDG) in Jerusalem, the US Department of the Treasury announced that as of 1/10/2010, Israel has \$3.481 billion available in US loan guarantees, subject to statutory deductions.²⁹ Therefore, continued settlement activity did not impact these guarantees.

The US Congress also passed amendments to the Foreign Assistance Act governing US War Reserves Stockpiles for Allies (WRSA), where the value of US weapons to be prepositioned in Israel will reach \$1 billion in 2011, with another \$200 million added in 2012. Established as a means of US forward basing as well as a vehicle through which allies gain immediate emergency access to US stocks, WRSA content, maintenance and usage procedures are routinely updated by government-to-government agreement, at threshold levels authorized by Congress. Under the new legislation, Israel not only gains access to more US stockpiles, but will enjoy greater latitude in the categories and specific types of weaponry.³⁰

By contrast, the US Department of the Treasury announced that it imposed sanctions on two organizations in the GS linked to Hamas, the Islamic National Bank (INB), and al-Aqsa TV. Thus, it froze any assets INB or al-Aqsa TV hold under US jurisdiction and prohibited US persons from engaging in any transactions with these parties. The Treasury said that sanctions have been imposed against the INB, which was established by Hamas in April 2009,

for providing financial services to Hamas members and employees, including members of the organization's military wing. The Treasury also said that the bank lacks a legal license from the Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA), and operates outside the legitimate financial system. With regard to al-Aqsa TV, the Treasury claimed that it is financed and controlled by Hamas, and operates as the primary Hamas media outlet which "airs programs and music videos designed to recruit children to become Hamas armed fighters and suicide bombers upon reaching adulthood." The Treasury "will not distinguish between a business financed and controlled by a terrorist group, such as al-Aqsa Television, and the terrorist group itself," said Stuart Levey, the Treasury's Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, in a statement.³¹

2. The US defended Israel's boycott of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It was held in New York on 3–28/5/2010, was attended by 189 nations. In a press conference held by Barack Obama on 6/7/2010, he said:

We strongly believe that, given its size, its history, the region that it's in, and the threats that are leveled against us—against it, that Israel has unique security requirements.... the United States will never ask Israel to take any steps that would undermine their security interests.³²

In a possible attempt by Israel to divert attention away from the crisis ensuing from its settlement plans, the issue of Syria sending Scud missiles to Hizbullah was raised, at a time when the US Senate was preparing to vote on posting Robert Ford as the US ambassador to Syria, after an estrangement of five years.

3. If we examine the diplomatic efforts of the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on the Palestinian issue in particular and the Middle East in general, we find that, up until the end of October, she spent 67 days outside Washington including seven days allocated for the Middle East in general, i.e., 10.4% of her diplomatic efforts.³³ However, this does not necessarily reflect the extent of American interest in the region, if we take into account the repeated visits by the US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell.

The complexity of analyzing American-Israeli ties lies in the massive US military, political and economic support for Israel on the one hand, and the lack of Israeli compliance to some US dictates that are more in line with Arab demands, such as in the case of the freeze on settlement building in the WB including Jerusalem, on the other hand.

Explaining this apparent contradiction is possible when we explore the Palestinian stance in particular, then the Western stance in general. At each point where the US finds itself between two contradictory positions taken by the Arabs on the one hand and Israel on the other, the US begins putting pressure on both parties to alter their positions. In most cases, the Arab side complies faster and in a more drastic manner than the Israeli side. This can be seen very easily throughout all the issues where American and Israeli positions diverged concerning Middle Eastern affairs. When the American side senses that there is a strong Arab position, the pressure is put on Israel which would be under pressure to comply. This can be observed in many historical examples, such as Yitzhak Rabin's refusal to withdraw from certain important locations in Sinai during the negotiations with Egypt in 1975. But when the then-US President Gerald Ford realized that Egypt would never accept that these locations would remain under Israeli control, Ford threatened that "the U.S. would reassess all aspects of its relationship with Israel,"³⁴ which prompted Rabin to quickly comply and approve the withdrawal, especially as he realized the importance of Egypt for the US.

Moreover, the American side uses the financial support it provides to the PA as leverage to push the PA to press ahead with its current policy. In 2010, the US gave around \$500.4 million to the PA, in addition to nearly \$237.8 million to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Then in November 2010, \$150 million in budgetary assistance were provided to the PA via presidential waiver as an advance on Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 Economic Support Fund (ESF) funds.³⁵

In general, two major setbacks for the US policy towards the Palestinian issue have taken place: First, with Obama considering historic Palestine to be the historic homeland of the Jewish people, and second, with US official endorsement of the "Jewishness" of the state of Israel, even though George W. Bush had mentioned this in a speech in the past.

American relations with Israel have shifted from those experienced during the Cold War, because of the growing Jewish-Zionist influence on US decision-making bodies. This is evident in the increasingly prominent role of the religious right, the neoconservatives and the Jewish lobby, especially The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), in contrast to a declining Arab and Islamic influence. It is clear that the US administration has to a large extent reconciled itself to the Israeli position, having failed at the end of 2010 to convince Israel of even a temporary moratorium on settlement building.



Third: The European Union

There can be no doubt that Israel feels less reassured by European diplomatic activity than by that of the Americans. Perhaps the reported argument between Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and his French and Spanish counterparts Bernard Kouchner and Miguel Angel Moratinos, during their trip to the region on 11/10/2010, is indicative of this. Lieberman was quoted as saying to his counterparts, “Before coming here to tell us how to solve our conflicts, I would expect you could have at least solved all the problems within Europe.” As he traveled to Amman, Moratinos responded to Lieberman by saying, “If we didn’t have a role, if we didn’t have any weight, if we didn’t have any influence, maybe our friend Lieberman wouldn’t have reacted as he did.”³⁶

There are many such instances that suggest a gradually increasing gap between Europe and Israel. A number of examples are noted below:

- 1. The Settlement Issue:** No European country has expressed its support for settlements in any manner. On the contrary, some European countries took executive measures to express their rejection of settlements. In a statement on 16/9/2010, the EU recalled that “settlements are illegal under international law and calls for an extension of the moratorium decided by Israel. It continues to call for a complete stop to all violence, in particular rocket fire and terrorist attacks.”³⁷ Meanwhile, the Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi expressed his opposition to Israel’s decision not to extend the moratorium, and said at a press conference held in Rome with Egyptian President Husni Mubarak, “I will try to intervene with my Israeli friends and my European colleagues to convince Netanyahu to extend the moratorium” until the end of 2010.³⁸ This stance is further confirmed by other instances, such as:
 - a. The ruling by the Court of Justice of the European Union in Brussels that rejected the exemption of goods produced in settlements from custom tariffs, as settlements do not fall within “the territorial scope of Israel.”
 - b. The EU’s condemnation of plans to build 1,600 housing units in Jerusalem, and its rejection of Israel’s annexation of the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron.
 - c. Renewed boycott by European trade unions of the products originating from Israeli settlements in the WB.
 - d. Cancellation by the Netherlands of a scheduled tour by a forum of Israeli mayors, because the delegation included representatives of WB settlements.

- e. In a statement following the US announcement that it has abandoned efforts to persuade Israel to renew a freeze on settlement-building, Catherine Ashton, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said, "The EU position on settlements is clear: they are illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. Recent settlement related developments, including in East Jerusalem, contradict the efforts by the international community for successful negotiations."³⁹
- f. A group of 26 ex-EU leaders urged the EU to impose sanctions on Israel for continuing to build settlements in the WB. The leaders said that Israel "like any other state" should be made to feel "the consequences" and pay a price for breaking international law. The letter asked EU foreign ministers to reiterate that they "will not recognise any changes to the June 1967 boundaries and clarify that a Palestinian state should be in sovereign control over territory equivalent to 100% of the territory occupied in 1967, including its capital in East Jerusalem." The letter, sent to European governments and EU institutions, also asks ministers to give the Israeli government an ultimatum that, if it has not fallen into line by April 2011, the EU will seek an end to the US-brokered peace process in favor of a UN solution. The letter added that the EU should link its informal freeze on an upgrade in diplomatic relations with Israel to a settlement construction moratorium; ban imports of products made in the WB settlements; and force Israel to pay for the majority of the aid required by the Palestinians. The letter also urged EU member states to send a high-level delegation to East Jerusalem to support Palestinian claims to sovereignty and reclassify EU support for Palestine as "nation building" instead of "institution building."⁴⁰

The letter was signed by Javier Solana and 10 former leaders of European countries—including Romano Prodi and Giuliano Amato of Italy, Richard von Weizsäcker and Helmut Schmidt of Germany, Mary Robinson of Ireland, Felipe Gonzalez of Spain and Norway's Thorvald Stoltenberg—in addition to 10 former ministers and several members of the European Commission (EC).⁴¹

However, in a letter of response to the former leaders, Baroness Ashton said that the EU's approach to Jewish settlement expansion would remain unchanged at that time. She also said that the demand for a peace treaty based on pre-June 1967 borders was "commonly accepted" and that she supported the US-brokered negotiations.⁴²

2. The al-Mabhuh Issue: The Mossad's assassination of the Hamas leader Mahmud al-Mabhuh in January 2010 caused a diplomatic rift between the EU and Israel, owing to the use of forged European passports by the Israeli assassination squad. The immediate results of this incident were:

- a. The EU condemned the use of EU passports.⁴³
- b. A European boycott of a session in the Israeli Knesset.⁴⁴
- c. Israel lost out on an Irish bullets contract.⁴⁵

3. The Siege of GS: European policy generally moved between a call for the siege to be completely lifted, and for the siege to be eased, with an inclination towards the second option, while aid was offered to GS. This is evident from the following policies:

- a. The endorsement of the European Parliament of the findings reached by the United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, known as the Goldstone Report, on the assault on GS in late 2008 and early 2009.
- b. The visit by a number of European parliamentary delegations to GS, in addition to that of Catherine Ashton, and their calls for the blockade to be lifted. The Europeans also proposed the deployment of a European force to monitor the coast of GS, with access to the port and measures to monitor arms smuggling operations.

Meanwhile, 18 European human rights and humanitarian organizations, including Amnesty International, issued a statement in July 2010 calling on the EU to “insist on the full lifting of the blockade of Gaza, not just its easing.”⁴⁶

Dockworkers from the Swedish Dockworkers Union launched a boycott of Israeli ships and goods to protest against the raid on the Freedom Flotilla carried out by Israel in international waters.⁴⁷

During a visit to GS on 18/7/2010, Catherine Ashton said, “The position of the EU is very clear. We want to see the opportunity for people to be able to move around freely, to see goods not only coming in to Gaza but exports coming out of Gaza.” The Israeli Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz responded to Ashton by saying, “Some Europeans tend to ignore the real character of the Hamas regime in Gaza.”⁴⁸

Meanwhile, in June 2010, an op-ed by the Italian, French and Spanish foreign ministers suggested a European force to lift the GS siege. They said that:

The European Union already has a civilian mission on the spot ready to be deployed simultaneously at the Karni [al-Mintar] and Rafah frontier posts linking Gaza to Israel and Egypt. To guarantee full security of supplies, we propose that inspections supported and funded by the E.U. should be put in place there in conditions acceptable to all in order to ensure that consignments bound for Gaza contain neither weapons nor explosives. A similar regime could be considered for maritime consignments bound for Gaza, for example, by deploying E.U. monitoring teams in Cyprus. These arrangements would be implemented only against a backdrop of very substantial relaxation of the restrictions on imports and exports to and from Gaza.⁴⁹

A meeting of the EU and Asian leaders, representing 60% of the world population in 46 countries, had called for “a solution that ensures the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza.”⁵⁰

A delegation of 60 parliamentarians from 13 European countries, headed by the veteran British MP and former Minister Sir Gerald Kaufman, arrived in GS in mid-January 2010. The organizer of the visit was the European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza (ECESG), which is an umbrella body of 30 NGOs across Europe. Kaufman stressed that they would put pressure on the EU to take decisive steps to end the unjust blockade on GS. At a press conference he held with Palestinian MPs upon his arrival in GS and his visit to the demolished PLC headquarters in GS, he said, “Anybody who uses white phosphorus should be arrested and should be tried for war crimes.” He also said, “We have had a fuss in our country about the inability of certain Israeli politicians to visit Britain for fear of being arrested,” adding that:

But when we read of an Israeli politician being afraid of being arrested in Britain, we remember that 1.5 million people in Gaza are under arrest every day of their lives by the Israelis, suffering deprivation, hunger, lack of satisfactory medical treatment, lack of screws to put school desks together so your children can learn.⁵¹

The Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and MPs started taking practical measures to convey the suffering they found to their parliaments and people, in the hope that parliamentary and popular pressure would take shape to push European governments to pressure the Israeli side, and end the siege imposed on GS. According to a statement issued by ECESG, the MEPs



and MPs submitted reports to the heads of parliaments in their countries, in order to inform them of the effects of the blockade they had seen firsthand. In addition, The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) wrote an open letter, which was supported by over 70 civil society leaders, to the PM David Cameron calling for the immediate lifting of the inhumane blockade of Gaza on the back of the Gaza Aid Flotilla Attack.⁵²

Official stances in the EU must be distinguished from unofficial stances, for they remain ahead of the latter in terms of their support for the Palestinian issue. Also, the EU often announces stances without these having any practical impact when it comes to criticism of Israeli policies.

- c. The granting of financial aid to GS, including the EU's allocation of €22 million (about \$29 million) to support the private sector of GS, in addition to the allocation of €37 million (about \$48 million) to cover employees' payroll, and €58 million (about \$75.5 million) in humanitarian aid to the Palestinians in the WB and Lebanon. The Netherlands also offered support for two agricultural projects in GS worth €6 million (about \$8 million), while France gave €68 million (about \$88.5 million) in total aid in 2010, and £74 million (about \$111 million) for the year 2010/2011.

On 14/10/2010, Finnish Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb visited GS, and called for the further lifting of movement restrictions on GS. He also called on the EU and other foreign ministers to visit GS "to see what the situation is on the ground." He said, "You can only be struck personally with a sense of despair once you cross the border, when you see all the rubble, when you see all the poverty." He also called for end to Palestinian rocket attacks and demanded the release of Gilad Shalit.⁵³

Irish Foreign Minister Michael Martin also arrived in the GS in February 2010, through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, to inspect the institutions that had been destroyed during the Israeli war on GS.⁵⁴

- d. The decision by Greece to cancel joint military exercises with Israel.
- e. The stance declared by the Archbishop of Wales Barry Morgan, who criticized the conditions in GS and said, "The situation resembles the apartheid system in South Africa because Gaza is next to one of the most sophisticated and modern countries in the world—Israel."⁵⁵
- f. The report issued by the Committees on Arms Export Controls (CAEC) called for the licenses of arms exports to Israel to be reassessed, after the British government admitted that "arms exports to Israel were almost certainly used

in Operation Cast Lead,” and that this is in “direct contravention” to the UK Government’s policy that UK arms exports to Israel should not be used in the WB and GS. The CAEC also concluded that the “revoking of five UK arms exports licences to Israel since Cast Lead is welcome, but that broader lessons must be learned from the post conflict review to ensure that UK arms exports to Israel are not used in the Occupied Territories in future.”⁵⁶

It also appeared in 2010 that European efforts were heading in the direction of recognizing the de facto state that Salam Fayyad is attempting to build, as evident from the following developments:

1. The French Foreign Ministry issued a statement on behalf of the Chair and the Co-Chairs of the International Donors’ Conference for the Palestinian state in early 2010, after the Follow-up meeting; which was attended by the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Stoere, High Representative Catherine Ashton, and Quartet Representative Tony Blair. The Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad and Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmad Abu al-Ghait also participated in the meeting. The statement pointed out that the Chair and Co-Chairs reaffirmed their support for Fayyad’s “Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State” program, and that they “urged the international community to increase its support for the implementation of this plan, at the financial as well as the political level.” They also welcomed “the reforms introduced by the PA, in particular in the areas of public finance, governance and security.” They called on Israel to take immediate further measures “in order to improve the movement of persons and goods,” and not just in the WB. In addition, “They discussed the appalling situation that the Palestinian people find themselves in as a result of the Gaza blockade. Reiterating the numerous appeals to open up the border crossing points.”⁵⁷
2. In an interview published in *Le Journal du Dimanche* newspaper, the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner said:

What’s important at the moment is to build facts on the ground: France is training Palestinian police officers; businesses are being set up on the West Bank... Then we can envisage the rapid proclamation of a Palestinian State and its immediate recognition by the international community, even before its borders are negotiated—I’d be tempted by that—by [recognition by] European countries. I’m not sure of being followed or even of being right.⁵⁸



Both Spain and France had insinuated the idea of possible European recognition of a Palestinian state before negotiations end, which means that Europe is seeking the establishment of a *de facto* state, which would gradually become a recognized *de jure* state.

In addition, and as soon as Palestinian-Israeli talks began on 2/9/2010, Ashton declared the next day that both sides must “engage in this process with determination to overcome the obstacles and work fast and hard on all the final status issues to meet the Quartet’s call for a negotiated settlement within one year.”⁵⁹

In response to Netanyahu’s calls for the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a “Jewish state,” Maja Kocijancic, a spokeswoman for EU Diplomatic Chief Catherine Ashton, said on 12/10/2010, “We support the two democratic states living side by side in peace and security,” and added “We also stress that the future states of Palestine and Israel will need to fully guarantee equality to all their citizens,” then she said, “Basically in the case of Israel this means whether they are Jewish or not.”⁶⁰

When analyzing the many statements given by EU officials and the analyses published in the European media and press, one can conclude that the European performance in the peace process is mediocre at best, and remains mostly confined to the limits of the US position. This is clearly reflected by the statements given by Ashton. On 6/10/2010, when justifying her absence from the Palestinian-Israeli talks, which resumed after having been suspended since 2009, she said, “I went from Washington to the Middle East in order to support what George Mitchell is doing on the ground. It became clear to me that in order to support what George Mitchell does on the ground, the EU’s voice should be added.” Regarding Israel’s refusal to extend the moratorium on settlement activity following its expiration in November, she said:

What I was interested in was whether our voice (should be) added to others to try to persuade Israel to extend the moratorium, but also to find if there were other ways in which the talks could keep going, to try to deal with this issue differently... I don’t have any great solution to that. The discussions are still going on.

She justified her absence from the talks by saying that her decision in no way reflected a priority shift for the EU.⁶¹

On the other hand, Palestinian resistance operations in the WB and GS are always criticized by the EU, as was the case, for example, with the Hebron attack on 31/8/2010, which claimed the lives of four residents of the “illegal” settlements, as deemed by the EU’s own statements. Nevertheless, Ashton had the following to say about the attack:

There are forces in the region which are determined to undermine the peace process. We must not allow them to succeed. Supporters of peace must persevere through difficult times. It is very important that all relevant parties avoid provocative actions which could undermine the success of the talks. This attack underlines, above all, the urgency of a two-state solution.⁶²

In general, there appears to be a decline in the positions of France, Italy and Germany, under Sarkozy, Berlusconi and Angela Merkel, wherein European policy became subservient to US policy, and it became difficult to differentiate between the two, especially on the issues of the settlements, Jerusalem and the blockade of GS, and also with regard to the stance on Hamas, the resistance, and land swaps. At the official level, Europe still sanctions trade with settlements in the WB, and refuses to boycott them. Also, the European position regarding security cooperation with the PA has dangerous implications. This is not to mention that the Europeans’ undertaking of removing the traces of devastation resulting from the Israeli war on GS has raised many questions. This was carried out under the guise of reconstruction, while no reconstruction has actually taken place. Essentially, the ugly side of the Israeli war was removed, while the Palestinians were not aided in rebuilding their destroyed homes.

Fourth: Russia

Russian policy in the Middle East in 2010 did not witness any significant changes, and pragmatic considerations and commercial interests remain the most salient feature of this country’s policies.

The nature of Russian policy may thus be inferred from the following features:

1. Dealing with all parties to the conflict, including Hamas. In a press conference held in Moscow, this stance was elaborated by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who said, “We are positive that all parties to the conflict should be engaged in dialogue. We will continue contacts with Hamas,” and

added, “Only a united Palestine can ensure proper conditions for the talks that I hope [Palestinian President] Mahmoud Abbas will eventually resume with Israel.”⁶³

It appears that Russia’s dialogue with Hamas is motivated by the desire to bring it to the negotiating table, one way or the other, with Israel, and to try to ensure that that Hamas will not carry out any operations that may hinder the peace process. This is evident from Lavrov’s statement to journalists following his visit to Cuba, in which he said, “As for Hamas, it is difficult to hope for the Palestinians to conduct talks effectively without it. The unity of the Palestinians, which Abbas and Khaled Mashaal have clearly acknowledged, is now one of the most pressing tasks.”⁶⁴

In a telephone conversation with the Khalid Mish‘al, Lavrov said that rocket attacks from Gaza on southern parts of Israel were “unacceptable.”⁶⁵

Relations between Russia and Hamas reached their highest level when President Dmitry Medvedev visited Damascus, and met with Mish‘al, in May 2010. This implied that Russia recognized the movement’s legitimacy, and confirmed that Hamas had held out against the countries who had expected that the siege and isolation of Hamas would result in its elimination.⁶⁶ The official spokesman for the Russian Foreign Ministry Andrei Nesterenko commented after the visit, “Our contacts with this movement are regular. It is known that all the other Middle East Quartet members also maintain contacts with the Hamas leadership in some form or another, although, for incomprehensible reasons, hesitate to admit it publicly.”⁶⁷

After the meeting, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev asserted that the US Administration is not doing enough as to push the process forward. He described conditions in the Middle East as being increasingly “more tense and negative.” He also said that Russia remains willing to host a conference on the Middle East in Moscow.⁶⁸

A few days after the meeting, a Russian official said that President Medvedev discussed with Mish‘al a comprehensive Russian package for the resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which would include the release of the captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in a prisoner swap, the opening of the border crossings, and the engagement of Hamas in the peace process, whether through partnership with the PA in Ramallah, or in a separately, in order to reach binding security agreements between Israel and Hamas. In return, Hamas

would undertake not to carry out any military operations or fire rockets from GS towards Israel. The official also said that several European countries had proposed similar ideas in the past, and that there are officials in the Obama administration who are discussing these proposals behind closed doors.⁶⁹

In response to the Russian position, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said that Tel Aviv “will not accept any ultimatum with regard to Hamas, and we won’t let this movement take part in any peace process.”⁷⁰

2. Russian diplomacy does not exhibit any optimism regarding the possibility of a peace settlement being reached soon. The Russians are aware of Israel’s rejection of the most important prerequisites of a peace settlement, made clear by Lavrov’s statement that the prospects for peace settlement are not rosy. He added:

Unfortunately, those steps the Israeli government is prepared to take in terms of a ten-month moratorium on certain types of settlement activity are insufficient, even if going in the right direction. The categorical refusal to discontinue settlement activities in East Jerusalem worries us greatly, because a physical wall of separation is being erected there which will then be very difficult to eliminate. This is contrary to all decisions taken by the UN Security Council.⁷¹

3. Growing Russian-Israeli relations in various fields, most notably with regard to military cooperation, for example through the state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd. (IAI) and the Russian company United Industrial Corporation (UIC) Oboronprom. They announced that Russia will purchase Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) made by Israel, under an agreement signed between the two companies, wherein the UAVs are assembled in Russia. The deal is worth \$400 million, eight times the value of a preliminary deal that had been announced in April 2009, which was worth \$50 million. According to the specialized Israeli newspaper *Globes*, UIC Oboronprom will pay IAI a \$280 million down payment, and will pay the balance as the UAVs are delivered over the three year term of the contract.⁷²
4. The limited financial support to the Palestinians continued. Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister of Russia, approved a \$10 million humanitarian aid package to Palestine in 2010. The prime minister also instructed the Foreign Ministry to deliver the Russian aid package, in coordination with the PA.⁷³



Fifth: China

The general outline of China's position remained close to the Arab position, through China's continued support for "the achievement of the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace on the basis of the relevant UN resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, the principle of 'land-for-peace,' and the 'roadmap.'" China also assigned great importance to the role played by the Quartet and the UN Security Council in seeking to get both sides back to the negotiating table, as evident from a number of developments, namely:⁷⁴

1. The settlements issue: On 27/1/2010, in an open debate on the situation in the Middle East at the Security Council, China clarified its stance when its Ambassador to the UN Zhang Yesui said, "Israel should freeze all settlements activity and cease the building of separation walls." He added, "Israel should also refrain from moves that do not contribute to resumption of the peace talks on the issue of East Jerusalem." This stance was reiterated each time the issue of settlements was raised.⁷⁵
2. The Israeli attack on the Turkish Freedom Flotilla: On 1/6/2010, the Chinese Foreign Ministry urged a "quick response" from the UN Security Council to the Israeli assault. Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ma Zhaoxu said, "We were shocked by the Israeli naval attack on the Turkish flotilla carrying humanitarian goods to Gaza which led to severe casualties and condemn it." A Chinese diplomat also said that Beijing "was prepared to back quick [UN Security] council action on the raid."⁷⁶
3. Lifting the blockade of the GS: In most of its relevant statements on the Middle East, the Chinese Foreign Ministry has called for the blockade of the GS to be lifted, and all border crossings with GS to be opened. The Foreign Ministry also called for unity among Palestinian factions, and expressed its support for the Egyptian efforts in this regard.
4. China's position on Israel's nuclear arsenal: China expressed its full support for rendering the Middle East a nuclear weapons-free zone. The Chinese representative at the IAEA said, "China supports the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and advocates that Israel join the NPT [Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty] as a non-nuclear-weapon state and place all its nuclear facilities under IAEA comprehensive safeguards." China also expressed its support for the "holding in 2012 of an international conference on the Middle East free of nuclear weapons."⁷⁷

Meanwhile, the issue of occupied Jerusalem became a point of contention between the Chinese and the Arab delegation during the 4th Ministerial Meeting of the China-Arab Cooperation Forum, which was held in the Chinese coastal city of Tianjin. The dispute erupted when Chinese officials refused to sign a joint document with the delegation that included Arab Foreign Ministers, asserting that East Jerusalem is the capital of the Palestinian state. According to press sources, the Arab delegation was surprised at the last minute when Chinese officials refused to sign the document, despite all the efforts made to contain the situation.⁷⁸

This Chinese stance is completely at odds with the previous Chinese positions. The extent of this contradiction is clear in the statement given by Hong Lei, a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, when commenting on the Israeli bill passed by the Knesset on 22/11/2010, which demands a referendum “should any Israeli government make territorial concessions in East Jerusalem to the Palestinians or in the Golan Heights to Syria,” i.e., it would require a two-thirds majority of consent in the Israeli public. Hong Lei said, “The law goes against the spirit of United Nations (UN) resolutions and cannot change the fact that East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights are occupied lands of the Arab countries.”⁷⁹

It is important to note the growing volume of trade between the Middle East and China, which was estimated at \$107 billion at the end of 2009, including approximately \$4.3 billion with the state of Israel.

Since the bulk of the trade with the Arab world involves the oil sector, China is primarily concerned for the shipping routes through which oil is transported, as the majority of these routes are controlled by US navy fleets. This prompted China to collaborate with Russia to build an oil pipeline from companies in Siberia to China, at a capacity of 15 million tons annually for 20 years. This pipeline will help China reduce its reliance on sea routes by securing oil via land.⁸⁰ This is especially important in light of the growing tension witnessed in the Gulf region throughout 2010.

In general, China and Russia benefited from the US preoccupation with “rearranging the Middle East,” and from the fact that it did not include them in the list of threats faced by the US. Russia and China (and also Brazil, Turkey, India and other countries) thus capitalized from this policy, and set out to improve their economic, military and technological capabilities.

The policy of buying time pursued by Russia and China, or their refraining from antagonizing the US in the international arena, explains what can be called Russian and Chinese political pragmatism. It is ultimately a policy of self-improvement and strengthening at all levels, focusing on regional security, but nonetheless lacking a coherent global strategy.

Sixth: Japan

It may be inferred from Japanese government statements that there is Japanese approval of the idea of supporting the “de facto state” plan mentioned above, also apparently supported by the EU. In addition to the traditional Japanese diplomatic stances, the then Japanese PM Yukio Hatoyama announced that he had agreed with the Palestinian president to offer Japanese assistance in the area of institution and capacity building of the Palestinian state, and enhance cooperation in trade and investment. Hatoyama reiterated his position that, while “Palestinians continue to abide by the cessation of all act of violence against Israelis, Israel should freeze all settlement activities in the West Bank including East Jerusalem.” Hatoyama also said that his country “would not recognize any act by Israel that would prejudice the final status of Jerusalem and territories in the pre-1967 borders.”⁸¹

The new Japanese PM Naoto Kan continued the policy of his predecessor in this regard, by reaffirming Japan’s support for the state-building efforts undertaken by the PA on the basis of the two-state solution. The Japanese prime minister also urged his Palestinian counterpart to resume peace talks with Israel, pledged to continue assisting the PA’s state-building efforts, and announced that Japan would extend assistance to the PA by approximately \$100 million within FY 2010.⁸²

Seventh: International Organizations

1. The United Nations

a. The General Secretariat

The stances of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon concerning the implementation of UN resolutions on the Palestinian issue were vague and evasive. He failed to clearly express the wishes of the majority of UN member states. His statements were presented as equivocal and inconsequential, in line

with US policy and Israeli sensitivities to the point that some have described him as a “US Secretary of State.” His attitude was monotonous with respect to lifting the blockade of the GS, stopping Israeli settlement activities and ensuring that the Palestinians secure their legitimate demands. Stances adopted by the General Secretariat on the Palestinian question on several occasions are detailed as follows:

1. Direct or Indirect Negotiations Between the Two Sides

In his speech before the Arab Summit in the Libyan city of Sirte on 27/3/2010, Ban Ki-moon stressed his commitment to the goal of “finding a way through negotiations for Jerusalem to emerge as the capital of two States, and a just and agreed solution for the refugees.” He urged Arab leaders “to support efforts to start proximity talks... [which] should lead to direct negotiations between the parties.” Then he said, “Our common goal should be to resolve all final status issues within 24 months.” In a press conference held the same day, Ban Ki-moon added that “This is why I strongly supported the League’s decision to provide political support for President Abbas to participate in and begin proximity talks.”⁸³

2. The Settlements

Ban Ki-moon reiterated the UN position that “settlement activity is illegal and must stop,” and said:

Like all of you, I was deeply dismayed when Israel advanced planning to build 1600 housing units in East Jerusalem. There are several other recent unilateral actions as well, including decisions on holy sites in Hebron and Bethlehem, further settlement announcements, actions in places like Silwan and Sheikh Jarrah, and tensions surrounding the al-Aqsa Mosque.⁸⁴

At the opening of the 2010 session of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on 21/1/2010, Ban Ki-moon expressed his concern that “Settlement activity and financial support for settlement expansion continues in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.” He recalled that “the international community does not recognize Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem, which remains part of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.” He emphasized that:

The international community has repeatedly appealed to Israel to halt settlement construction throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Settlement construction violates international law and contravenes the Road Map, under which Israel is obliged to freeze all settlement activity, including the so-called “natural growth.”

He added that this settlement activity is “in no one’s interest, least of all Israel’s. Settlement activity undermines trust between the two parties, seems to pre-judge the outcome of the future permanent status negotiations, and imperils the basis for the two-State solution.” He criticized the Israeli authorities’ continued discrimination “against Palestinian residents, including by ordering house demolitions and evictions and revoking identity cards,” and also criticized local authorities, which “have also announced plans to consolidate and expand settlement infrastructure.” The UN Secretary-General said that the “question of Jerusalem is a central and highly sensitive issue to be addressed by the parties in permanent status negotiations,” and that “a way must be found, through negotiations, for Jerusalem to emerge as the capital of two States living side-by-side in peace and security, with arrangements for the holy sites acceptable to all.”⁸⁵ This last statement by Ban Ki-moon regarding Jerusalem indicates that there is a calm diplomatic effort, if not a secret one, to find a way out of the embarrassment to the Palestinian side in order to resolve the issue of the holy sites.

3. The Blockade of GS

Ban Ki-moon asserted that “Gaza is a priority,” and that the situation there is “unacceptable and unsustainable.” He added, “The closure is wrong and must end, and I have been working hard on that front.”⁸⁶

Ban Ki-moon also expressed regret that accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law during the Israeli assault on GS “has not been adequately addressed.” He said that Israel must “end its unacceptable and counterproductive blockade and to fully respect international law.”⁸⁷

4. Armed Resistance

Ban Ki-moon condemned the operation in Hebron mentioned earlier. A spokesman for the UN Secretary-General said, “This attack must be recognized for what it is: a cynical and blatant attempt to undermine the direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations starting tomorrow [2/9/2010].” The Secretary-General “extends his condolences to the families of the victims and calls for the perpetrators of this crime to be promptly brought to justice.”⁸⁸

b. The UN Security Council

A non-binding statement issued by the UN Security Council called for self-restraint, in the aftermath of the violent clashes that erupted on 5/3/2010 between the Israeli police and Palestinian protesters in the courtyard of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the Old City in occupied Jerusalem. The statement called for an early return to the negotiating table. The 15 UN Security Council members expressed their “concern at the current ‘tense’ situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.” Ambassador Emmanuel Issoze-Ngondet of Gabon, which held the rotating Council presidency for March 2010, said that the 15 member states “urged all sides to show restraint and avoid provocative acts”; they also stressed that “peaceful dialogue was the only way forward and looked forward to an early resumption of negotiations.”⁸⁹

c. The General Assembly

1. On 15/11/2010, an overwhelming majority of the Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization Committee), a subordinate committee of the UNGA in New York, passed a number of important resolutions on UNRWA, Palestine refugees’ properties and revenues and the need for an accelerated return of the displaced persons. However, the US was among the minority which opposed most of these resolutions.⁹⁰

The resolutions made a reference to the critical humanitarian situation and socio-economic conditions of the Palestine refugees in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly in the GS. The resolutions called on Israel to comply with the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and “to cease obstructing the movement and access” of UNRWA’s staff, vehicles and supplies, and “to fully lift the restrictions impeding the import of necessary construction materials and supplies for the reconstruction and repair” of UNRWA’s facilities that were damaged or destroyed as a result of the Israeli assault on GS. The resolutions also urged “all states, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to continue and to increase their contributions” to UNRWA, in order for it to be able to continue its work and provide assistance to Palestine refugees in all fields of operations.⁹¹

The committee also endorsed the resolution concerning the “Applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of

War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories.”⁹² In addition, a resolution was approved reaffirming that “Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan are illegal and an obstacle to peace and economic and social development.”⁹³

2. In the resolution passed on 30/11/2010, the UNGA declared that:

All legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purported to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, in particular the so-called ‘Basic Law’ on Jerusalem and the proclamation of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith,

and it also recalled “the Security Council resolutions relevant to Jerusalem, including resolution 478 (1980) of 20 August 1980, in which the Council, *inter alia*, decided not to recognize the “Basic Law” on Jerusalem.”⁹⁴

After recalling the advisory opinion rendered on 9/7/2004 by the ICJ on the *Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory*, the UNGA expressed its grave concern about:

the continuation by Israel, the occupying Power, of illegal settlement activities, including the so-called E-1 plan, its construction of the wall in and around East Jerusalem, its restrictions on access to and residence in East Jerusalem and the further isolation of the city from the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which are having a detrimental effect on the lives of Palestinians and could prejudice a final status agreement on Jerusalem.⁹⁵

The resolution also criticized “the continuing Israeli demolition of Palestinian homes and the eviction of numerous Palestinian families from East Jerusalem neighbourhoods, as well as other acts of provocation and incitement, including by Israeli settlers, in the city.” The resolution stressed that:

A comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of the City of Jerusalem should take into account the legitimate concerns of both the Palestinian and Israeli sides and should include internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of its inhabitants, as well as permanent, free and unhindered access to the holy places by the people of all religions and nationalities.⁹⁶

d. United Nations Human Rights Council

The HRC issued a number of resolutions throughout 2010, condemning Israel over its policies in the WB, GS and the occupied Syrian territories; however, the US voted against all these resolutions.

In its Follow-up to the report of the United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, the HRC adopted a resolution that called upon “the High Commissioner to explore and determine the appropriate modalities for the establishment of an escrow fund for the provision of reparations to the Palestinians who suffered loss and damage” as a result of the Israeli assault on GS between late 2008 and early 2009. Other resolutions urged Israel to end its occupation of Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, and to “stop the targeting of [Palestinian] civilians and the systematic destruction of the cultural heritage of the Palestinian people.” HRC strongly condemned “the Israeli military attacks and operations” in the WB and GS and demanded that “Israel, the occupying Power, immediately lift the siege imposed on the occupied Gaza Strip, and that it open all borders and crossing points.” The resolutions also called for Israel to stop building all settlements in the “occupied territories,” and to dismantle existing settlements.⁹⁷

There was a contrast between the stances of the EU and the US during HRC meetings, regarding the Report of the international fact-finding mission to investigate violations of international law during the Freedom Flotilla Israeli attack, where the investigation concluded that a “grave violation of human rights law and international humanitarian law” has been committed by the Israeli military and other personnel towards the flotilla passengers.⁹⁸ The mission spoke of “clear evidence” to support prosecutions against Israel, for practicing wilful killing and torture against the passengers of the Mavi Marmara, when it was raided by the Israeli navy. The committee based its report on Article 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The mission considered Israeli conduct towards the flotilla passengers “not only disproportionate to the occasion but demonstrated levels of totally unnecessary and incredible violence. It betrayed an unacceptable level of brutality.” The mission also considered the blockade of GS to be “illegal” since it was imposed at a time when GS has been witnessing a “severe humanitarian situation.”⁹⁹



Commenting on this before the Council's 47 members, the US spokesperson Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe expressed concern about "the report's unbalanced language, tone and conclusions."¹⁰⁰

e. UNRWA

The Commissioner-General of UNRWA Filippo Grandi raised the subject of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, amid controversy surrounding the issue of naturalization of Palestinian refugees there. He said that the question of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon is a very sensitive matter in light of the delicate political and economic balance in this country and the naturalization of Palestinians, which many Lebanese are concerned about, is not on the table. Nonetheless, Grandi called for granting the Palestinians more rights in Lebanon, including the right to work legally. Grandi acknowledged that the dire conditions in the camps contribute to instability.¹⁰¹

Israel complied with UN demands that it should pay reparations for the material damage caused by its military against UNRWA's properties in the GS, between the end of 2008 and early 2009, despite the fact that Israel refused to acknowledge its legal responsibility for what happened.

Martin Nesirky, UN Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, said that in accordance with arrangements reached between Israel and the UN, the government of Israel paid \$10.5 million to the international body "in respect of the losses sustained by the United Nations in the incidents that were investigated by the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry," despite the fact that "Israel did not admit that it was legally responsible for any of the incidents that were investigated by the Board of Enquiry." However, the UN "maintained its position that Israel was legally responsible for the losses sustained in the seven incidents for which the Board of Enquiry had found Israel responsible."¹⁰²

f. World Health Organization

Washington voted against a resolution by the World Health Organization (WHO) which demanded Israel to "immediately put an end to the closure of the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly the closure of the crossing points of the occupied Gaza Strip," while the EU abstained.¹⁰³

g. International Atomic Energy Agency

In September 2010, the members of the IAEA rejected an Arab-backed resolution calling on Israel to join the NPT.

Washington justified the US rejection of the resolution and its efforts to block it by saying that the motion “could derail broader efforts to ban nuclear warheads in the Middle East and also damage fresh Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.”

US officials had warned that approval of the resolution would erase any chance of Israel attending an Egyptian-proposed conference in 2012 toward establishing a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction.¹⁰⁴

2. Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations

Certain international governmental organizations remain less responsive to Palestinian ambitions, in particular those in which the US and the EU yield considerable influence. While Palestinian demands are met with more receptiveness by other international organizations, be they governmental or non-governmental, as evident from the following:

- a. The General Assembly of the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) voted to invite Israel to become a member, despite Palestinian and Arab attempts to dissuade major OECD members from supporting Israel’s accession, or to encourage them to postpone it. Press reports suggested that Israel had benefited from American and European pressure to accelerate its formal accession OECD.¹⁰⁵
- b. In a report entitled “Suffocating: The Gaza Strip under Israeli Blockade,” Amnesty International called for the blockade of Gaza to be lifted immediately, deeming it to constitute unacceptable “collective punishment.”¹⁰⁶
- c. The Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA), which represents more than 80 NGOs, called for the immediate opening of the border crossings with GS. The Resident Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territories Maxwell Gaylard, said:

The continuing closure of the Gaza Strip is undermining the functioning of the health care system and putting at risk the health of 1.4 million people in Gaza. It is causing on-going deterioration in the social, economic and environmental determinants of health. It is hampering the provision of medical supplies and the training of health staff and it is preventing patients with serious medical conditions getting timely specialised treatment outside Gaza.¹⁰⁷



- d. Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated that “Israel’s ongoing blockade of Gaza has also created massive humanitarian need and prevented the reconstruction of schools, homes, and basic infrastructure,” and that the “Israeli blockade of Gaza has prevented basic reconstruction. The only things getting built in Gaza are desperation and despair.”¹⁰⁸
- e. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) criticized Israeli restrictions aimed at protecting the settlements, and said that such measures “have a severe impact on the lives of many Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.”¹⁰⁹
- f. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), which includes 155 members from all around the world, condemned Israeli measures and violations in the WB and GS. A report issued by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians also discussed the conditions of detained parliamentarians in several countries, including Palestinian parliamentarians held in Israeli prisons.¹¹⁰

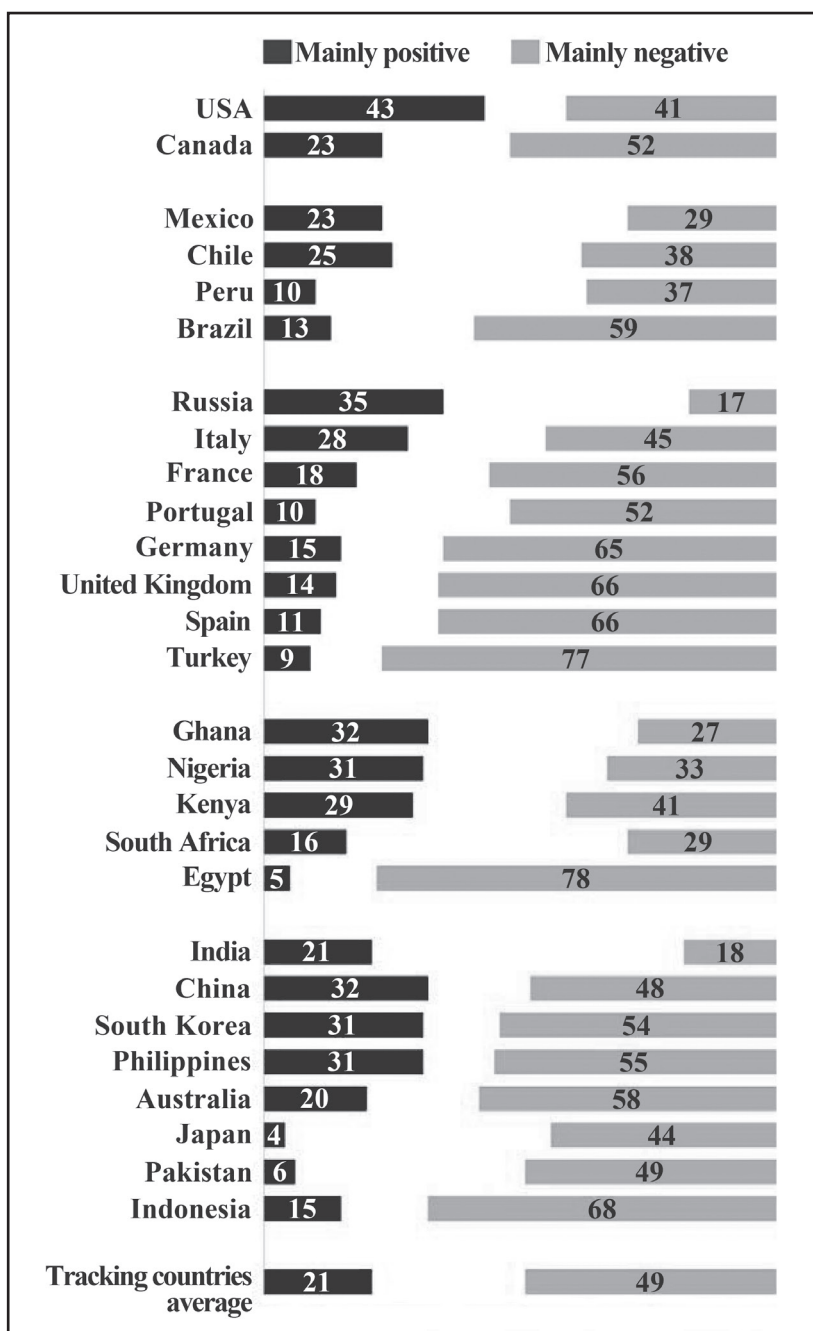
Eighth: International Public Opinion

Israel’s image during the past decade underwent a profound change in international public opinion. No doubt, the nature of Israeli policies provides the explanation for such changes, which encouraged Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman to propose a major new public relations drive in Europe aimed at bolstering Israel’s flagging image. The Israeli public seems to be aware of these changes. In a poll conducted by Tel Aviv University in 2010, 56% of Israelis said they believed “the whole world is against us.”¹¹¹

International polls that tracked opinions about Israel’s influence in the world underscore the depth of these changes. A study conducted by the BBC, during the period 2/12/2010 and 4/2/2011, and included 28,619 people from 27 countries, shows that 49% gave Israel an unfavorable evaluation and 21% gave it a favorable one. Those who gave it a favorable one ranged from 4% in Japan to 43% in the US, while noting that the study only included one Arab country which is Egypt.

Of 27 countries polled in 2011, 22 viewed Israel negatively, two positively, and three are divided. Despite the static nature of the overall trend, views of individual countries have shifted in both directions. Perhaps the most interesting shift is the change in American opinion, as the US public is now divided rather than favorable in its rating.¹¹²

Views of Israel's Influence by Country 2011



The white space in this chart represents "Depends," "Neither/neutral," and "DK/NA." Asked of half of sample



Statements issued by a number of public bodies or figures betray a gradual decline in Israel's traditional image, as evident from the following examples:

1. Four female laureates of the Nobel Prize for Peace issued a statement that called for "divesting from companies that provide significant support for the Israeli military." The statement was signed by Mairead Maguire, Ireland's 1976 Nobel Peace Laureate, Rigoberta Menchu Tum, Guatemala's 1992 Nobel Peace Laureate, Jody Williams, US 1997 Nobel Peace Laureate, and Shirin Ebadi of Iran, the 2003 Nobel Peace Laureate.¹¹³
2. The American Association of Jurists (AAJ), refused to accept the Israeli account regarding the Freedom Flotilla attack, in which they claimed that the activists on board the ships were armed.¹¹⁴
3. The continued dispatching of international aid convoys to the GS, in particular by sea confirms international public opinion's rejection of the blockade of GS.
4. On the opposite end of the spectrum are the traditional pro-Israeli groups in American society; the Jewish lobby, Christian fundamentalists, and those associated with the military-industrial complex are now facing an opposing trend as slogans calling for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, are heard in certain unions, churches and universities.¹¹⁵

This trend is also accompanied by a creeping sense in American strategic thinking that the US-Israel strategic relationship is headed towards less intimacy. Here, it is enough to cite several reports and studies in 2010 that are related to the 2006 study *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, by Stephen M. Walt and John J. Mearsheimer of Harvard University and the University of Chicago respectively.

According to the US researcher Anthony H. Cordesman, hardly anti-Israeli by any measurement, considered "the depth of America's moral commitment does not justify or excuse actions by an Israeli government that unnecessarily make Israel a strategic liability when it should remain an asset."¹¹⁶

Meanwhile, Paul Pillar, former intelligence analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Steven Metz from the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) of the US Army War College, both said that Israel's focus on its security considerations at the expense of those of other countries, including the US, has become a strategic problem. Martin Indyk, former US ambassador to Israel who is known for his links with the Israel lobby, agrees with this assessment, and believes that

Netanyahu is not eager to take the necessary steps to resolve the Palestinian question, and concludes that this is a strategic point of contention between the US and Israel.¹¹⁷

According to the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*, 54 US congressmen called the “Gaza 54” have become a source of ire for traditional Israel supporters in the US. The newspaper said that the time when US congressmen were pro-Israel by default has passed. The Israeli journalist Shmuel Rosner said in *Maariv* that 54 US Democrat members of Congress out of 435 is a small percentage, but is nonetheless a large enough bloc to cause astonishment, as they all signed a letter to President Barack Obama, asking him to put pressure on Israel to ease the blockade of GS.¹¹⁸

5. Members of the eminent international group, The Elders, asked the US and the rest of the international community to insist on an end to all Israeli settlement activity. Elders’ chair Desmond Tutu said, “Settlements are illegal; they contravene UN Resolution 242 and violate the Fourth Geneva Convention. The resumption of direct talks cannot be based on one side negotiating its way out of an important question of international law.”¹¹⁹

Meanwhile, former Irish President Mary Robinson refused to endorse the attempts to entice Israel into approving a temporary freeze on settlement activity, and said:

We heard repeatedly across the Arab world that the United States is no longer seen as an honest broker: Washington is perceived to be too close to Israel. This effort to do a short-term deal on settlements to restart direct talks is desperate and wrong. It betrays international law and the entire family of nations—not to mention the Palestinians.¹²⁰

Further, Gro Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway, said, “During the Oslo process in 1993 Israel promised to stop settlement expansion pending the outcome of final status negotiations. This deal sends us backwards instead of towards a sustainable long-term solution.” This is while former US President Jimmy Carter said that “The mistreatment of Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem is a gross violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This abuse cannot be condoned by the international community.”¹²¹

Meanwhile, the EU’s Trade Chief Karel De Gucht caused controversy among Jewish circles in Europe in September 2010, and was accused of anti-Semitism

when he spoke about the power that the Israel lobby has over US policy. He said, “It is not easy to have a rational discussion with a moderate Jew about what is happening in the Middle East.” However, the ensuing reactions prompted the EU to stress that De Gucht was making “personal comments.” He himself then apologized by asserting that “he did not mean ‘to cause offense or stigmatize the Jewish Community.’”¹²²

Conclusion

The most salient features of the international position of the Palestinian issue in 2010 can be identified as follows:

1. Strategic American-Israeli relations remain unshakable, especially in light of the lack of any Arab pressures on the US administration. On the contrary, there seems to be both Arab and American willingness to pressure the leadership of the PLO and the PA in Ramallah instead, to facilitate the settlement of the conflict. This is confirmed by President Obama’s backtracking on the majority of his pledges, whether to the Palestinians or Muslims. It must be noted here that the PA, and its security cooperation with the Israelis, do not make it susceptible to any more Arab pressure to go forward in the peace process, simply because the PA expresses a ceiling of demands that is in many cases lower than the Arab one.

Despite the fact that Turkish and Iranian efforts are restricting and undermining Israel’s movements in the region, and in spite of the fact that the US is undergoing a period of economic, military and political exhaustion, both at the regional and international levels, official Arab and Palestinian policies in general do not seem to be attempting to take advantage of these important shifts in 2011.

2. The Americans are very much worried about implications of the “Arab Spring” on their influence in the Arab world. With the fall, or the shaky position, of the “moderate” traditional allies of the US, it has to deal with the rising of the Islamist, the change of the strategic space around Israel and the emergence of a new map of the region, dominated by a supporting environment to the Palestinian issue and unfriendly to the American policies in the Middle East.

However, no signs of change on the political stance of the US toward the Palestinian issue, were seen in 2011 till writing this report.

3. Trends within the EU, and the policies of several other states such as Russia, China and certain Latin American countries (in particular those who declared their recognition of the Palestinian state in late 2010 such as Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador and Argentina, and later Uruguay), show that the option of the de facto state, adopted by the PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in light of the continued occupation, is the most likely future focus of European-American international efforts. This also means that Israel will further be encouraged to accelerate its settlement activity, in particular with the collapse of the idea of achieving a freeze on settlement activity, even if this freeze were to be temporary.
4. The growing negative image of Israel dictates that a great deal of care be given to the long-term effects of this shift. Due to misinformation in the media intended to improve Israel's image, no Israeli effort will be spared to attempt to continue to distort the image of the Palestinians.



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Chapter Six

The Land and the Holy Sites

The Land and the Holy Sites

Introduction

The Israeli occupation continues to implement its settlement and Judaization plans, particularly in the Jerusalem area. Through these plans, it seeks to seal Jerusalem's identity and future before reaching the end of any peace settlement negotiations with the Palestinian side. During 2010, Israel continued to implement its agenda and refused to stop settlement activities, even when these acts led to a breakdown in the peace process.

This chapter attempts to present a view of the status of the land and holy sites under occupation, Jerusalem in particular. It also tries to shed light on settlement plans, expropriation of lands, house demolitions, the Separation Wall, exhaustion of water resources and other crucial matters. It brings into view the extent of the suffering endured by Palestinians under occupation and how far the Israeli side has gone in subduing them and denying them their rights, in addition to brushing aside all international conventions and resolutions. Simultaneously, it shows the extent of the Palestinians' perseverance and steadfastness in their land, in spite of the multiple difficulties and challenges that they face.

First: Islamic and Christian Holy Sites

During 2010, attacks on Islamic and Christian holy sites increased, their expected success based on gains realized during past systematic attacks; thus reaping the fruits of some strategies instituted during the previous five years. Regarding *al-Aqsa* Mosque, it has become clear that the Israeli government is endeavoring to realize a permanent division in the mosque, between Muslims and Jews; furthermore it became clear that the Israelis had made all the necessary preparations to achieve their goal; only waiting for a favorable political opportunity. As for excavations, they have increased in number and size, and in an unprecedented fashion. The interference of Israeli authorities in the mosque's administration has become a fait accompli in many areas. As for the area surrounding the mosque, the year 2010



witnessed the opening of the Hurva Synagogue, the biggest and most prominent landmark in the Old City to date. The mosques and cemeteries of the WB and the territories occupied in 1948 were subjected to a methodical campaign of arson and assault. Regarding Christian holy sites, the repercussions of the deals concluded by the deposed Patriarch Irineos I continue to be revealed. It seems that a long time may pass before we will be able to know all their details.

1. *Al-Aqsa* Mosque

a. Changes in the Political and Religious Stances Toward *al-Aqsa* Mosque

Continuous American pressures during 2010, in addition to the fact that the Israeli government realized that it had pushed the limits of the tension caused, prevented any escalation in the official political stances. 2009 had witnessed an incident in which the *al-Aqsa* Mosque was stormed, ordered by Public Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch. 2010 witnessed conspicuous governmental silence, along with providing encouragement and cover for a number of storming incidents by MKs, among them, Moshe Feiglin, the head of Likud, who intruded on the mosque on 1/7/2010, and declared upon leaving that they cannot allow the status quo to continue in which Muslims are allowed to enter in their thousands, while religious Jews enter in small groups. He added that The Islamic Endowment Department that administers *al-Aqsa* Mosque does not own *al-Aqsa* Mosque, rather it is the property of the Israeli people.¹

Such statements and intrusion continued throughout the year. On a religious level, 2010 witnessed the largest storming of *al-Aqsa* since its occupation in 1967, when, on 10/5/2010, a group of 43 rabbis broke into the mosque, protected by Israeli police.² What was most striking in 2010 was the state of absolute indifference on the part of the Palestinian negotiator and Arab governments that gave Israel cover during the negotiations. They agreed to start indirect talks on 3/3/2010, at a time when confrontations were taking place at *al-Aqsa* Mosque, under an unprecedented siege of the mosque. This direction was consolidated on 8/3/2010, by a statement made by Nimr Hammad, an advisor to the Palestinian president, which coincided with the rising in Jerusalem against the opening of the Hurva Synagogue, in which he said that the PA will not allow a third *Intifadah*.³ Clamping down on demonstrations and protests in the entire WB during this period prompted Fatah member, Hatim 'Abd al-Qadir, advisor to the PA president on

Jerusalem affairs, to declare that Jerusalemites should appeal to Arabs for help and support, while at the same time the people in WB were in a state of suppression from the same PA.⁴

b. Excavations and Constructions Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Periphery

The number of excavations under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in its periphery rose from 25 by 21/8/2009 to 34 by 21/8/2010, i.e., an increase of 9, see the table below:

Table 1/6: Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Periphery, 21/8/2010⁵

Direction		Southern side	Western side	Northern side	Total
Type of excavations	Completed	4	9	-	13
	Active	11	8	2	21
Total		15	17	2	34

Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Periphery, 21/8/2010

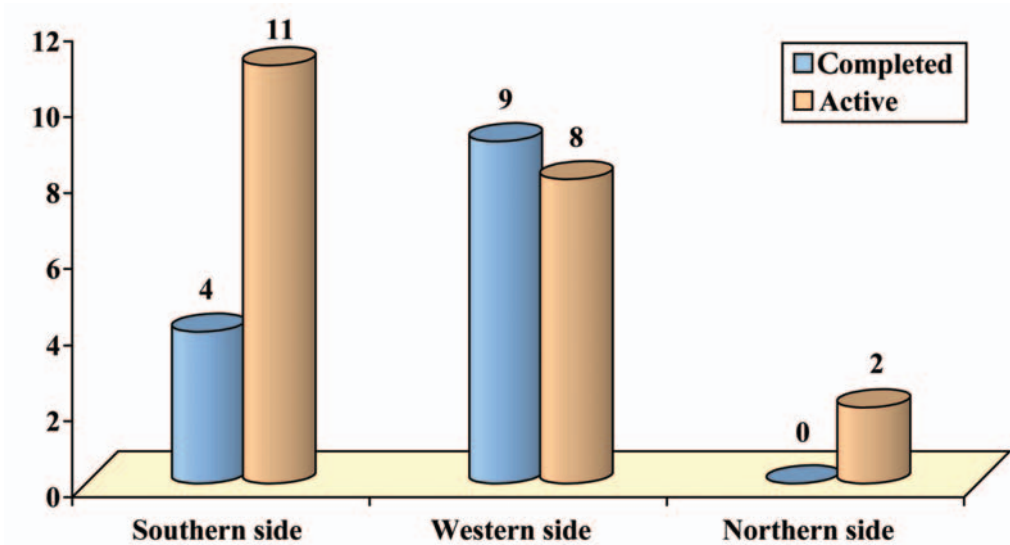
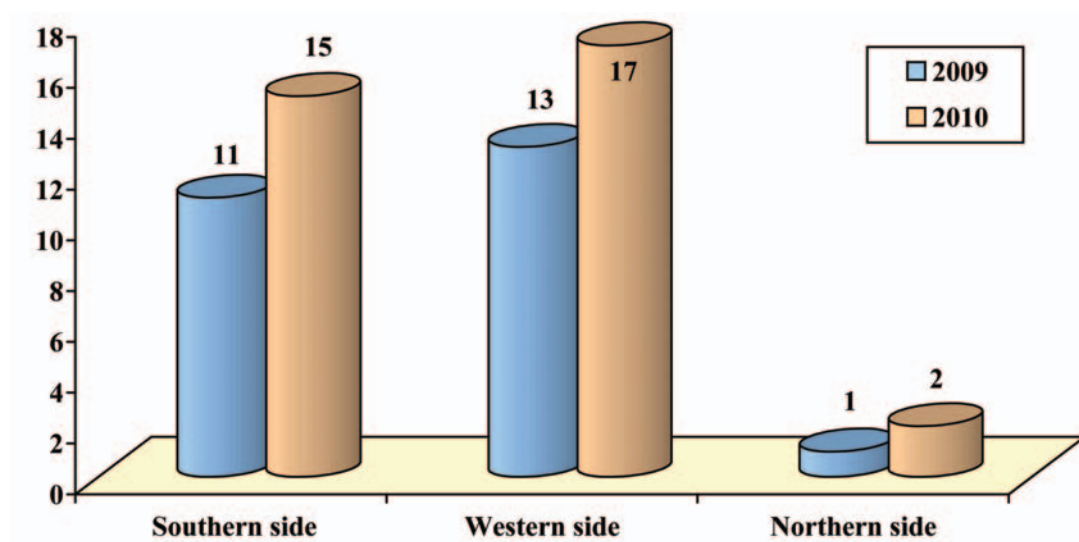


Table 2/6: The Rise in the Number of Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Periphery, 21/8/2009–21/8/2010⁶

Direction of excavations	21/8/2009	21/8/2010
Southern side	11	15
Western side	13	17
Northern side	1	2
Total	25	34

The Rise in the Number of Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Periphery, 21/8/2009–21/8/2010



Counting the number of excavations is no more than an indicator that sheds light on the size and extent of these excavations. Yet on the ground, these excavations have become more like a connected city with many entrances and exits; for the number of completed excavations that are open to visitors has reached 13; while a great many of active excavations are on their way to being open to the public. These excavations have caused a number of cave-ins and cracks inside the mosque

and in its periphery. They led, on 18/1/2010, to the collapse of a part of the Wadi Hilwah Street, south of *al-Aqsa*,⁷ and exposed, on 15/2/2010, cracks and corrosion in the walls and columns of the Marwani Prayer Hall.⁸ On 14/11/2010, a deep cave-in was discovered in the earthen region besides the *Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Mastabah*, southwest of the mosque. This cave-in indicates that the excavations have extended in the direction of The Cup ablution fountain (*al-Ka's*), facing al-Qibli Mosque gates.⁹

The year 2010 also witnessed the opening of the biggest Jewish landmark in the Old City, the Hurva Synagogue, in the presence of a number of senior rabbis and Israeli government ministers. One *Haaretz* journalist published a projection by a historical Jewish rabbi called Vilna Gaon; which states that the auspicious day of the third temple will coincide with the third completion of the Hurva Synagogue in Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter.¹⁰ This was considered an indication of an imminent attempt to demolish *al-Aqsa* Mosque on 16/3/2010. This led to confrontations in the city of Jerusalem and across the territories occupied in 1948, in which 150 people were injured.¹¹ Shortly after the inauguration of the Hurva Synagogue, some Jewish groups announced that they are working on building a taller synagogue, nearer to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, to be named the Tiferet Yisrael Synagogue which they expected to be opened in 2011.¹²

“Renovation of the Wailing Wall” Project

A media outlet reported that, in February 2007, one of the Jerusalem Municipality engineers, Yoram Zamosh, proposed an ambitious plan that aims at gathering and organizing efforts to renovate the Jewish Quarter and the area surrounding the mosque. This plan was called *Kedem Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem first). In spite of the fact that this plan was not officially approved by the occupation's municipality, it has become tantamount to a road map guiding Israeli institutions working in this domain.¹³ On 4/10/2010, it was announced that the Jerusalem Local Planning and Building Committee has approved a comprehensive plan to renovate the entire Western Wall Plaza. The new plan calls for a large underground plaza to replace the current main entrance, located at Dung Gate. A new visitor's center will replace the current police building, with areas for educational programming, additional bathrooms, an auditorium, lecture halls, and an exhibition space for archeological discoveries made in the area. Thus, it will be necessary to demolish part of the wall.

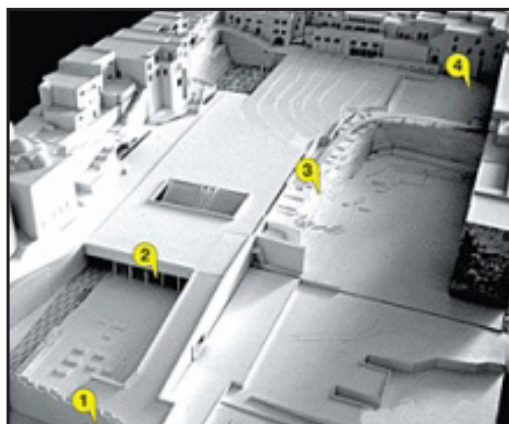


The area for excavations proposed by the plan were almost seven thousand square meters in width. The plan proposed the construction of eight different Jewish buildings in the periphery of the Western Wall Plaza. These buildings have a total area of approximately 7,500 square meters. The plan includes expanding the Jewish center known as *Beit Moreshet HaKotel* currently located on the side facing the Western Wall. The plan proposes the expansion of the present center so that its area would increase to 2,384 square meters above ground and 1,320 square meters below ground. The plan also proposed the merger of the Umayyad corridors in the plaza with its proposed entrance, so that these corridors would be on the same level as the Western Wall Square.¹⁴

It must be noted that a group of archaeologists had previously petitioned Jerusalem's District Planning Council and said that the new building of *Beit Moreshet HaKotel* would damage an ancient Roman road, flanked by rare and elaborate columns, that runs beneath the planned construction. In response to the petition, Shmuel Rabinovitch, the Western Wall's rabbi, said the new building would be essential in providing services to the increasing number of visitors to the site, thus rejecting the petition.¹⁵

The renovation of the Western Wall area took another major step forward on 21/11/2010, when the Israeli government approved a budget of \$23 million for its completion, over a period of five years, starting on the date of its approval.¹⁶ It is worth mentioning that the project's objectives include expanding tourism to that sight; a decade ago, the number of visitors was two million; in 2009, the number grew to eight million. It is expected to have in the future room enough for about 15 million visitors per annum.¹⁷

Western Wall Plan as Approved



A Drawing of the Proposed Lower and Upper Levels of the Western Wall Plaza, According to the Jerusalem's Municipality's New Plan



c. Jewish Presence Inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque and Interference in Its Administration

During the period 22/8/2009–21/8/2010, *al-Aqsa* Mosque witnessed 6 incidents of storming by officials, 34 by Jewish extremists under Israeli police protection, and 15 by Israeli security forces. This brought the total to 55 such incidents by 21/8/2010, compared to 43 during the period 22/8/2008–21/8/2009.¹⁸

It has become clear that the intensive storming incidents called for by extremist Jews at the end of 2009 and the beginning of 2010 were aimed at consecrating the site of the “Temple Mount” as a center of Jewish religious life. For they let no religious holiday or a day of remembrance pass without calling on people to storm the mosque; starting with *Yom Kippur* Holiday (Day of Atonement) on 28/9/2009, *Sukkot* (Feast of Booths) on 3/10/2009, the anniversary of Moshe Ben Maimon’s ascent to the “Temple Mount” on 25/10/2009, Purim Holiday on 28/2/2010, and the anniversary of the destruction of the temple (*Tisha B’Av*) on 20/7/2010.

All of these incidents were conducted under the watch of the Israeli police. This fact confirmed that, by 2010, their main task had reached completion, namely

its transformation from being responsible for preventing the Jews from entering the mosque, according to the orders given before 2000, to securing the Jews' entrance into the mosque, individually and in groups. To this end, they formed a special force known as "The Temple Mount Force," now in possession of a comprehensive database of the mosque through break-ins that involved repeated photography and surveillance since 2005. Now it has a system of cameras and heat sensors that monitor carefully the mosque and its periphery.¹⁹ This force has conducted a series of experimental and live maneuvers,²⁰ which intensified during 2009 and 2010. Most significant among these is that observed by the al-Aqsa Foundation for Endowment and Heritage on 21/7/2010, when its cameras photographed this force conducting a maneuver quelling a demonstration in the mosque, using a miniature maquette of the mosque in a wooded area in the forests of Ben Shemen, northern Israel.²¹

A Picture of Training Exercises Conducted by Israeli Forces on a Small Maquette of *al-Aqsa* Mosque



Moreover, Jerusalem's municipality, in cooperation with extremist Jewish organizations, tried to consecrate the walls and outer gates of *al-Aqsa* as spaces for celebrations. Indeed these spaces witnessed loud protests as well as sound and light shows seven times between November 2009 and October 2010.²²

2. Jerusalem's Islamic Holy Sites

In addition to its attacks on *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the Israelis concentrated their attacks on Islamic holy sites on two elements:

- a. The Mamilla Cemetery: razing and construction operations continued there for the benefit of establishing the Center for Human Dignity–Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem (MOTJ), which is being built by the Israeli authorities on parts of the cemetery. In June 2010, Israeli authorities began accelerating plans to build a courthouse complex on the Mamilla Cemetery.²³ On 10/8/2010, bulldozers unearthed 200 graves in preparation for constructing this complex. A spokesman for the Israeli police mentioned that the destruction will later affect 150 graves.²⁴
- b. Expanding the scope of excavations: generally, the excavations have concentrated on the area surrounding *al-Aqsa* Mosque, specifically its southern and western sides. What was new during 2010 was that the expansion of these excavations westwards along two tracks was revealed: the first track reaches the farthest point west in the Old City under the Jaffa Gate. It is believed that part of it passes under the Church of the Holy Sepulcher or under its periphery.²⁵ As for the second track, an elevator was proposed by the Company for the Reconstruction and Development of the Jewish Quarter, to connect the Jewish Quarter to the Western Wall Plaza. The elevator would connect to a new tunnel under the Aish HaTorah building and was financed by the American Jewish millionaire Baruch Klein.²⁶

3. Jerusalem's Christian Holy Sites

By the end of 2010, information was published revealing the extent of the threat that the Christian presence in Jerusalem is facing. The Christian holy sites in Jerusalem were subjected to numerous attacks during 2010, including:

- a. Setting the Jerusalem Alliance Church in West Jerusalem on fire: on Friday 29/10/2010, theology students in this church, located in the Street of Prophets in Jerusalem were awakened by a fire that was set to their church by Jewish extremists.²⁷ This type of attacks has been carried out against several churches in West Jerusalem. These attacks express the rejection by Jewish extremists of the presence of these churches in Jerusalem.



- b. The repercussions of the deals made by the deposed Patriarch Irineos I continue: after making public the Jaffa Gate deal, on 18/3/2005, the grave circumstances accompanying this deal were then revealed. It came to light that this patriarch had granted the church's financial manager at the time, Nicholas Papadimas, power of attorney for all the church's properties. After the deal was revealed, Papadimas absconded. No party was able to keep count of the deals and contracts that were concluded during the period of his authorization over several years. One of these deals was that of al-Talbieh, known in the media as the "Mar Elias Monastery Deal," according to which the deposed patriarch granted, on 14/12/2007, the right to develop 71 donums in the al-Talbieh area, on the road connecting Jerusalem with Bethlehem, parallel to the Green Line, to the Israeli settlement company B.A.R.A. On 9/8/2009, Palestinian sources revealed that the new Patriarch Theophilos III had signed a new contract for the development of the same land to the benefit of the Talpiot Hahadasha co. owned by the leftist Israeli Shruga Biran. The patriarch and his legal counsel insisted that this was the only solution available to them to regain the land. Although he introduced a new Israeli company, the terms of its contract are better for the church. This will cause a dispute between the two companies, from which the church will benefit.²⁸ However, the outcome in both cases is that an Israeli company won a contract to develop the area. So this deal remains highly controversial.²⁹ There is a real dread that the coming years will reveal more deals signed during the reign of Patriarch Irineos I and Papadimas, and that this dossier will remain open for many years to come.
- c. The ratio of Christian residents of Jerusalem continued its drop from 20% of the city's population in 1948 to 2.9% in 1988; while in 2009, it became only 1.9%, as their total fell to 14,500. This trend is expected to continue or even worsen, as the median age of Christian Arab residents is 34.6 years, compared to 25.1 years for Jews and 19.4 years for Muslims;³⁰ a rate not seen in Jerusalem for centuries. It portends the extinction of Christianity in the city.

4. Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in the Rest of Historic Palestine

a. The Territories Occupied in 1948

The attacks recorded in 2010 varied between transgressions against endowment properties and the selling of them at auction to arson against mosques and offensive graffiti on their walls (see table 3/6). In addition the Israelis incorporated an unknown number of mosques and religious shrines in the list of Jewish heritage sites announced on 21/2/2010, which includes 150 Palestinian sites, not all of them revealed.

Table 3/6: Most Notable Attacks on the Holy Sites in the 1948 Occupied Territories 2010

Location	Nature of attack	Date
Acre	Sale of endowment properties (250 properties and sites in various areas) ³¹	16/2/2010
Sarafand Mosque	Storming and offensive graffiti on its walls ³²	22/5/2010
Abtan Mosque near Haifa	Storming and offensive graffiti on its walls ³³	9/6/2010
Kfar Saba	Vandalizing a prayer room and erasing Qur'anic verses ³⁴	22/6/2010
Jaffa	Burning the western gate of Hasan Beik Mosque ³⁵	20/7/2010
Negev	Demolishing a mosque in the town of Rahat ³⁶	7/11/2010

b. The WB

Anyone who looks closely at Israeli aggression against Palestinian Islamic holy sites cannot miss the presence of a systematic campaign of attack and arson against mosques throughout historic Palestine. Furthermore, it is clear that the groups that carry out these attacks are linked, leaving the same signature in every mosque that they attack. For example, they sign the burned-out mosques with the phrase “burning done [followed by a serial number].” The last mosque carrying such a signature in 2010 was al-Anbiya’ Mosque (The Prophets Mosque) in the town of Beit Fajjar, south of Bethlehem, on which it was written “burning done 18” (see table 4/6).



Table 4/6: Most Notable Attacks on the Holy Sites in the WB 2010

Location	Nature of attack	Date
Nablus	Attack on the seventy Sheikhs and Mufadel shrines in 'Awarta, writing offensive graffiti on their walls, and throwing liquor bottles inside. A similar attack on the town's cemetery ³⁷	20/1/2010
Nablus	Notification to stop the construction of the mosque of Salman the Persian in Burin village ³⁸	27/1/2010
Palestine in general	Announcing the Jewish heritage sites list (which includes 150 sites; among them, the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim in Nablus, the Twins Cave west of Jerusalem, the town of Silwan in Jerusalem, and others) ³⁹	21/2/2010
Nablus	Attack on Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque (Rachel's Tomb) in the town of Huwwara. Writing offensive phrases and drawing Israeli six-pointed stars on the mosque's walls ⁴⁰	16/4/2010
South of Nablus	Arson attack on the main mosque in the village of Lubban al-Sharqiya ⁴¹	4/5/2010
Hebron	Building a road that connects the Kiryat Arba' settlement directly with the Ibrahimi Mosque ⁴²	25/5/2010
Nablus	300 settlers protected by 30 army vehicles break into Joseph's Tomb ⁴³	14/6/2010
Nablus	500 settlers break into Joseph's Tomb ⁴⁴	5/8/2010
Salfit	Notification of demolishing a mosque in Qarawat Bani Hassan ⁴⁵	5/8/2010
Nablus, Ramallah	The military governor orders the demolition of two mosques in Burin and al-Jalazun, claiming that they lack permits ⁴⁶	23/8/2010
Bethlehem	Arson against al-Anbiya' Mosque in the town of Beit Fajjar, throwing copies of the Holy Qur'an on the floor, and writing offensive graffiti on its walls ⁴⁷	4/10/2010
Tubas	Demolishing a mosque in Khirbet Yarza ⁴⁸	25/11/2010
Hebron	Leveling a cemetery designated for the burial of newborn babies, at the entrance of the town of Beit Ummar ⁴⁹	22/12/2010
Hebron	Repeatedly forbidding the <i>Athan</i> (Muslim call to prayer) at the Ibrahimi Mosque ⁵⁰	Intermittent periods throughout the year

c. The GS

Attacks against the GS holy sites during 2010 can be summed up by the following two items:

1. Continuing to forbid the restoration of demolished mosques; as during the aggression against the GS, the Israeli forces destroyed totally 45 mosques. Concerned parties were not able to rebuild them due to the continuous siege of GS. They also partially damaged 107 other mosques; some of which were restored during the period 2009–2010.
2. Leveling a mosque in the border area of al-Duhniyah, east of Rafah, on 4/5/2010.⁵¹

Second: The Population Under Occupation

The Jerusalemites' success in altering the demographic equation in their favor, in spite of the fact that they are the party under occupation that suffers from restrictions in all areas of their lives, was a source of worry for the Israeli decision-maker. Indeed in 2000, he appeared alarmed when numbers indicated a steady rise in the Palestinian population, in spite of all the control mechanisms devised by Israeli planners. At the end of 2000, they charged Hebrew University distinguished demographer Sergio Della Pergola with preparing a study that would predict the ratios of Jerusalem's inhabitants in 2020. From this study, he came to the conclusion that, by that date, Arabs would constitute 40.2% of the population of the city, with its two parts. This would pose a threat to the city's Judaization programs and Jewish character. Hence, it should be stressed that a reading of the battle for existence in Jerusalem must depart from a study of the demographic balance; keeping in mind that the most remarkable point of strength that preserved what remained of Jerusalem's Arab Islamic identity is the Jerusalemites' ability to persist and continue, and even grow.⁵²



1. The Demographic Battle's Reality⁵³

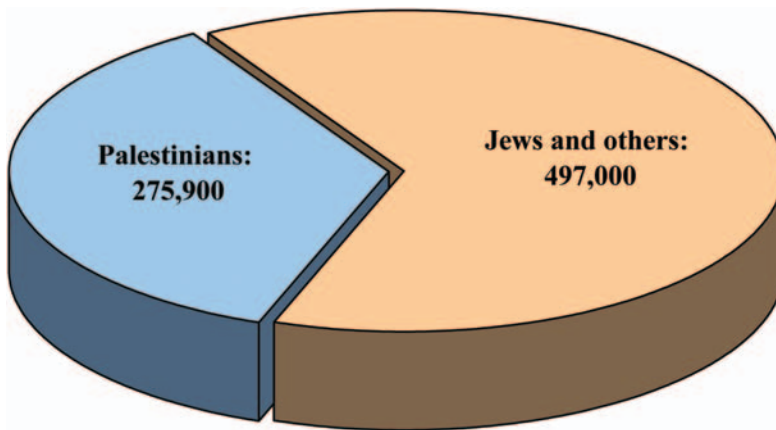
Published data indicates that the demographic make up of Jerusalem was as follows:

Table 5/6: Number of Jerusalem's Residents 2008–2009⁵⁴

Group	Year	Population	% Annual growth	% of the total population
Palestinians	2008	268,600	3.1	35.2
	2009	275,900	2.7	35.7
Jews and others*	2008	495,000	1.6	64.8
	2009	497,000	0.4	64.3

*There are about 12,300, i.e., about 1.6% of Jerusalemites, registered in 2009 under "others." Statistically, they are usually added to the Jews. These are mostly immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia who are not recognized as Jews, non-Arab Christians, or those who refuse to register themselves as Jews.

Number of Jerusalem's Residents at the End of 2009



After careful reading of Israeli statistics, we have come to the following conclusions:

- There is a decline in the Palestinian population's growth in Jerusalem. After this growth had reached 3.7% annually in 2004, it dropped to 2.7% in 2009.⁵⁵ Israel bears much of the responsibility for that.
- Israel had partial success in raising the annual rate of increase of Jewish residents from 1% in 2004 to 1.6% in 2008,⁵⁶ in order for it to correspond to that of the general Jewish population in the state of Israel for the first time since 1992.

It seems that the special policies adopted by the government and Jerusalem's municipality toward Jewish residents made it the city that witnessed the highest rate of Jewish population growth among the main urban centers in the state; e.g., Tel Aviv (0.5%), and Haifa (−0.3%).⁵⁷ However, this ratio dropped once again in 2009 to 0.4%.

- c. Israel succeeded in lowering negative net internal migration to 4,900 Jewish residents in 2008, after it had reached 6,400 in 2007 and the lowest figure since 1995.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, this type of migration rose again to 8,200 persons in 2009, indicating that the success in 2008 was partial and temporary.⁵⁹
- d. The annual increase in the Jewish population in the settlements of East Jerusalem varied greatly. Most settlements continued to fail to attract more settlers. This increase varies between −0.6% in Gilo, −0.4% in East Talpilot, 0.6% in Pisgat Ze'ev, and 0.8% in Neve Yakov. However, the biggest breakthrough and the almost unique success case occurred in Har Homa (Jabal Abu Ghneim), which witnessed an increase in population at the high rate of 27.4% in 2008.⁶⁰
- e. According to the numbers released by The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS), Palestinian residents continued to be the majority in East Jerusalem. Of a total population of 456,300 persons in 2008, there were 195,500 (43%) Jews and 260,800 (57%) Palestinians.⁶¹
- f. There has been a decline in the number of Christians in Jerusalem, as previously mentioned.⁶²
- g. With the decline in the number of Jews coming to the state of Israel in general, the number of Jewish immigrants coming to Jerusalem from abroad has plateaued at 2,500 between 2002 and 2007, and did not exceed 2,100 immigrants in 2008.⁶³ Most of the Jewish immigrants arriving in Jerusalem immigrate for religious reasons. 51% of them arrive from the US and France; countries whose Jewish citizens seldom immigrate to Israel.⁶⁴
- h. The proportion defining themselves as Ultra Orthodox Jews, i.e., Haredim, (29%) is the highest of all the large cities in Israel, and is almost four times the proportion of Haredim in Israel as a whole (8%). This indicates a rise in religious migration to Jerusalem by Haredim, a rate that is likely to continue to increase. The proportion of Jerusalem's residents that were Haredim was 26% between 2003–2005, and rose to 29% during the years 2006–2008.⁶⁵
- i. The proportion of Haredim in Jerusalem's population is expected to rise as the average fertility rate of Haredi women is 7.7 children, compared to 4.1 for the



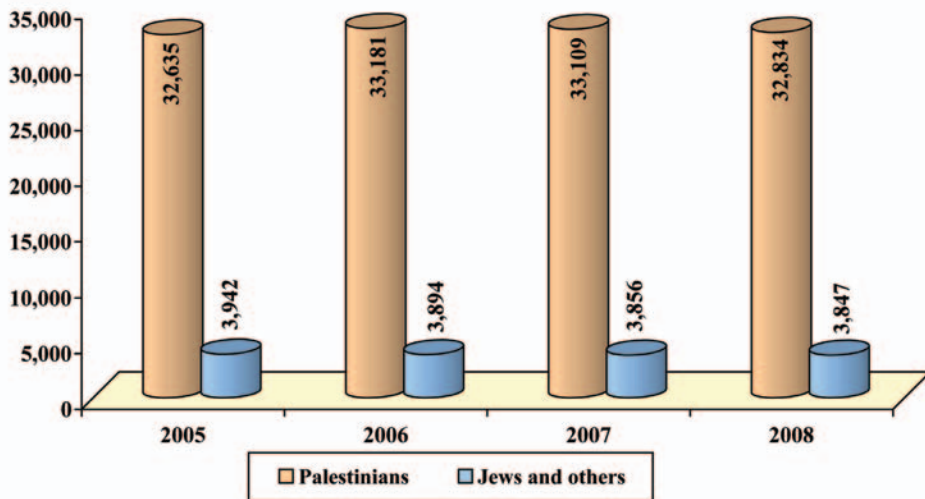
city's Arab women.⁶⁶ In addition, the ratio of children less than 14 years old among the Haridim is 43%, compared to 25% for the rest of Jews, and 41% for Jerusalemite Palestinians.⁶⁷

- j. As a consequence of the increase in the proportion of religious Jews, internal migration has become largely confined to Jerusalem and the WB settlements. 31% of the Jews who had left the city in 2008 took up residence in the WB settlements; while those who came from the settlements to reside in Jerusalem constituted 24% of the Jews who moved into the city in 2008.⁶⁸
- k. In Jerusalem's Old City, the number of residents evolved in the manner shown in the following table:

Table 6/6: Number of the Old City's Residents 2005–2008⁶⁹

Group	2005	2006	2007	2008
Palestinians	32,635	33,181	33,109	32,834
Jews and others	3,942	3,894	3,856	3,847
Total	36,577	37,075	36,965	36,681

Number of the Old City's Residents 2005–2008



The Jewish population in the Old City has been in decline since 2003. The Palestinian population increased until 2006. It started to decrease in 2007 for the first time since 1970s; and it continued to decrease in 2008. It looks as if Israeli policies have succeeded in expelling Palestinians from the Old City; a direction that is being reinforced year upon year.

It is worth pointing out here that Israel's efficiency in marketing Jerusalem as an international tourist destination has improved. The number of nights spent by foreign tourists in Jerusalem's hotels in 2000 was 2,923,200 nights, dropping to 600,000 nights during the Palestinian *Intifadah* of 2002. It has recovered and increased to reach 2,895,900 nights in 2007 and 3,527,000 nights in 2008.⁷⁰

2. Attempts to Expel the Palestinians

The policy of expelling Palestinian residents runs along two tracks; the first is harassing them and surrounding them with harsh living conditions, in order to push them toward "voluntary" migration; while the second is stripping them of their right to reside in the city, using various pretexts.

- a. Harassing the Jerusalemites: Jerusalem's development and infrastructure policies were designed to exclude the Arabs from the largest possible number of projects and services; and to collect from them the highest possible rate of taxation. The policy resulted in a huge discrepancy in poverty rates between Palestinian and Jewish residents of the city. 23% of Jewish families lived in poverty,⁷¹ while the poverty rate of Palestinians jumped to 60% of families. In addition, 74% of non-Jewish children in Jerusalem belong to families living under the poverty line.⁷² Unemployment reached 8% of the Jewish workforce and 13% among Palestinian residents.⁷³

Placing restrictions on housing remains one of the means of putting pressure on Jerusalemites. Statistics show that the number of residential apartments in all of Jerusalem in 2008 was 191 thousands. Of these, 79% are located in Jewish neighborhoods, in spite of the fact that Jews make up 64.8% of the city's inhabitants; while 21% of them are in Palestinian neighborhoods, in spite of the fact that the Palestinians constitute 35.2% of the city's population.⁷⁴ This reflects the number of rooms designated for each individual. In the Jewish population, there is one person per room; while in the Palestinian population, there are 1.9 persons per room.⁷⁵ The average housing density in Jewish neighborhoods was 24 square meters per person, dropping to 12 square meters per person in Palestinian neighborhoods.⁷⁶

During 2010, 39 residences in Jerusalem were demolished, resulting in the displacement of 280 people. 90 agricultural and commercial structures in Jerusalem were destroyed;⁷⁷ while the number of building permits approved by Jerusalem's municipality during 2009 did not exceed 18.⁷⁸



Table 7/6: Demolished Houses in Jerusalem 2010⁷⁹

Location	Area (m ²)	Residences	Rooms	Family members	Children (under 18)
Al-Tur	176	4	9	26	14
Silwan	400	5	13	38	24
Jaba'	210	3	10	25	12
Old City	100	3	4	28	16
Al-'Isawiyyah	720	6	27	43	22
Beit Hanina	70	1	3	6	2
Jabal al-Mukabber	338	4	13	34	13
Sur Baher	680	9	23	51	33
Sheikh Jarrah	80	1	3	9	6
Al-Thawri	96	1	3	6	2
Kafr 'Aqab	120	1	3	7	5
Al Nu'man	170	1	6	7	4
Total	3,160	39	117	280	153

Note: These data were collected from 1/1/2010 to 31/12/2010.

- b. Revocation of the right to reside in Jerusalem: The figure above regarding Jerusalemites' numbers represents those who carry Blue ID Cards, which allow them to reside within Jerusalem's municipal limits and pass through the crossings built in the Separation Wall that surrounds the city. These figures are from the Israeli Ministry of Interior. However, all the sources, including Israeli sources, that publish these figures, agree that not all of the Blue ID residents reside within the Separation Wall's limits. Rather, a large number of Jerusalemites who carry the Blue ID cards reside in neighborhoods that in the past were physically connected to the city and are now isolated from it by the Wall, such as al-'Eizariya, Abu Dis, 'Anata and al-Ram. Sources differ on the numbers of such Jerusalemites. The Jerusalem Center for Social & Economic Rights (JCSER) estimates their numbers at 125 thousands,⁸⁰ while other Palestinian sources estimate it at 100 thousands.⁸¹ As for Israeli sources, they failed to publish any clear estimates of the figures.

Removal of such a large number of Jerusalemites from the city's total population was one of the main objectives behind the Separation Wall's construction. Today, with 95% of the Wall's construction completed, Israel has

set about revoking the ID cards of those residents who have become isolated outside the Wall, on the pretext that they live in “a foreign country.”⁸² These measures began to be applied gradually in some of Jerusalem’s neighborhoods, among them, al-Ram (estimated population 58 thousands),⁸³ and al-‘Eizariya (estimated population 17,600).⁸⁴ This explains the big jump in the number of those stripped of their residency rights, between 2007 when they numbered 229 persons and 2008 when their numbers reached 4,672 persons.⁸⁵

3. Attempt to Promote Jerusalem as a Jewish Residential Center

The Israeli authorities continued to work hard to try to persuade large numbers of Jewish citizens to move to Jerusalem. This requires overcoming a number of obstacles that had made Jerusalem less attractive to Jewish residents in previous years. One important obstacle is the fact that Jerusalem is isolated from the state’s Jewish center, and the eastern settlements in Jerusalem are far from the Jewish trade center in the west of the city. The municipality proposed the light rail system project, which connects various eastern settlements to Jerusalem’s west as its primary weapon in overcoming this obstacle. 2010 witnessed intensive work on the infrastructure of Jerusalem Light Rail (JLR) in Beit Hanina, Shu‘fat, Wadi al-Joz and Mamilla.⁸⁶ Work progressed to the point of conducting test runs of the train on some of the completed portions of its track.⁸⁷

Another obstacle was the high price of housing, a deterrent to those who would otherwise be in favor of increasing the Jewish population of the city. On 13/6/2010, Mayor of Jerusalem Nir Barakat unveiled a plan to facilitate the purchase of affordable houses by young families, offering a discount of 20% on the market value.⁸⁸

Third: The Settlement and Judaization Process in Jerusalem

The Israeli authorities employ two parallel policies to consolidate their control of Jerusalem’s lands. On the one hand, they work at emptying Palestinian neighborhoods, focusing on those that embrace the Old City, in order to control geographically and demographically the city center. In parallel, they work on expanding settlement blocs in order to bring about a geographic connection between them and to change the status quo in the



eastern part of the city. The aim is to change Jerusalem from a Palestinian city, in which settlement outposts are scattered, to a city of connected settlement blocs with scattered Palestinian neighborhoods between them. To bolster this trend, on 23/10/2010, the Ministerial Committee on Legislative Affairs has approved a bill, defining Jerusalem as a “national priority area.” This paved the way for an increase in official support and care for the city, and an implementation of the settlement expansions.⁸⁹

1. Taking over Palestinian Neighborhoods

a. Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood

During 2010 and in the beginning of 2011, Israel worked at sealing the fate of the Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood. On 17/2/2010, they confiscated land belonging to Kamal ‘Ubeidat as part of a long-standing plan to increase parking for the nearby Shimon HaTzadik Tomb.⁹⁰ The land is adjacent to the housing and where Um Kamal al-Kurd erected her protest tent when she was expelled from her house in October 2008. The Israeli Supreme Court decreed on 26/9/2010 that the lands of Sheikh Jarrah housing belong to the settlement company Nahalat Shimon International, paving the way for the expulsion of the neighborhood’s residents from what remains of the properties, such as the families of al-Kurd, al-Ghawi and Hanun.⁹¹ In addition, The Jerusalem municipal committee for commemorating “terror victims” has authorized the construction of a new headquarters for Zaka, a voluntary rescue organization, in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. The planned headquarters will include facilities for storing thousands of bodies and a museum for “commemorating terror victims.”⁹² It also decided in April 2010 to change the name of this neighborhood to the Shimon Hatzadik Neighborhood.⁹³ On 7/4/2010, settler groups pushed to evict two more Palestinian families from the same neighborhood, as a part of a wider program to demolish Palestinian homes in the area to make way for 200 housing units designated solely for Jews.⁹⁴ Israeli authorities plan to build 250 settlement units at Karm al-Mufti and 90 at the Shepherd Hotel.⁹⁵ Soon after, on 9/1/2011, they demolished the Shepherd Hotel⁹⁶ in order to build settlement units. The completion of these steps will mean that Israel has succeeded in completely Judaizing the Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood and linking the Jewish areas west of Jerusalem with the Hebrew University and the French Hill settlement to the east.

A Picture of the Demolition of the Shepherd Hotel in Jerusalem



b. Al-Bustan Neighborhood

In al-Bustan Neighborhood, where the number of properties threatened with demolition totaled 88 and where 1,500 Palestinians reside, Israel employed a different strategy, one of “taming” this neighborhood’s residents, through a series of break-ins and arrests that affected every house in the neighborhood.⁹⁷

Some reports have stated that Israeli forces arrested 750 Jerusalemites during 2010, accusing them of throwing stones. Most of these were from Silwan and al-‘Isawiyyah neighborhoods and most of them were minors.⁹⁸ They placed some of the neighborhood children under house arrest in houses other than those of their parents. Jerusalem’s mayor realized that the gradual demolition of these properties would be a slow and ultimately unsuccessful process and so he tried more than once to push for implementing a mass demolition of all the threatened properties; to that end, he divided the roles between himself and settlement societies. Thus, after the Israeli Supreme Court issued an order to demolish the settlement outpost erected in the neighborhood, known as “Beit Yonatan” because it was built without a permit; Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barakat declared on 2/3/2010 that if he was asked to execute this order, he would demolish the whole neighborhood, including 88 Palestinian homes. The mayor attempted



to trade settlement building for Palestinian homes in the neighborhood. This compelled the prime minister to interfere and ask for postponement of the demolition operation.⁹⁹ The neighborhood's inhabitants presented an expensive, self-funded organizational plan to the municipality on 1/5/2010 in an attempt to stop the demolition of their homes.¹⁰⁰ However, the mayor responded by proposing on 18/6/2010¹⁰¹ to the Local Planning and Construction Committee in the municipality a settlement to the effect that the Palestinians themselves should demolish 22 of these properties and in exchange the remaining properties would be legally recognized. According to this settlement, the municipality does not owe any compensation to the owners of the 22 properties; rather it asks them to share the remaining 66 properties with their neighbors.¹⁰² On 21/6/2010, the committee approved this proposal.¹⁰³

c. Other Neighborhoods

In Jerusalem, there are many areas threatened with evacuation or mass demolition, such as al-‘Abbasiyah Neighborhood, adjacent to al-Bustan Neighborhood in Silwan. On 24/2/2010, the Israeli police handed out demolition orders for 11 properties in the al-‘Abbasiyah and Wadi Hilwah areas.¹⁰⁴ On 16/6/2010 they demolished three animal sheds and a nursery in the same neighborhood under the pretext that they lack building permits.¹⁰⁵ During January 2010, other neighborhoods were added to those threatened, when the Israeli forces handed evacuation notices to the residents of 26 properties in al-‘Isawiyyah.¹⁰⁶ During the same month they issued a ruling that turned 660 donums of al-‘Isawiyyah lands into a national park.¹⁰⁷

These demolition notices extended to the area surrounding the city from the north, where once again, on 10/2/2010, the Israeli authorities renewed evacuation orders to the owners of five shops directly facing the Damascus Gate,¹⁰⁸ after they had previously handed them demolition notices on 22/7/2009. On 9/2/2010, a new neighborhood joined the threatened, when Israeli courts issued 42 eviction and demolition orders against two buildings in the Beit Hanina area, on the pretext that they had been built without construction permits.¹⁰⁹

2. Settlement Expansion in Jerusalem

On 25/11/2009, PM Benjamin Netanyahu announced that Israel would impose a 10-month freeze on the construction in WB settlements, but there would be no freeze implemented in predominantly Arab East Jerusalem.¹¹⁰ During this freeze period, the Israeli government and municipality accelerated settlement building measures in the city. Through these measures, it can be presumed that the Israeli government was trying to compensate for the nominal freeze on settlements in the WB. Israel timed the announcement of some of its biggest expansions to coincide with visits by American officials in order to emphasize that Jerusalem is not a subject for negotiations. On 9/3/2010 the Israeli Ministry of the Interior approved the building of 1,600 new homes in the settlement of Ramat Shlomo in the north of East Jerusalem, timing the announcement to coincide with the arrival of the American Vice President, Joe Biden.¹¹¹ This embarrassed the Israeli government and made it announce a postponement of implementing this decision. However, the Interior Ministry's Jerusalem District Planning and Construction Committee did not have to wait long and on 15/6/2010, it ratified the expansion.¹¹² During the "freeze" period, the number of constructed residential units in Jerusalem, and those that were under construction, reached 700; contracts for 392 units were prepared for implementation; and plans to build 3,010 residential units in the city were approved.¹¹³ On 12/9/2010, the Peace Now Movement announced that there are approximately "37,684 housing units in plans that were approved in the past but were never built. Most of those units require further approval of the government for the allocation and marketing of the lands."¹¹⁴ Among these, 12,050 units are in Jerusalem.¹¹⁵

The most notable settlement developments during 2010 can be divided in to two types: the first is the announcement of new settlements in Jerusalem; and the second is the announcement of great expansions in existing settlements; in addition to limited "routine" expansions to various settlements in the city.

One of the most significant new settlements is Ma'ale David. In January 2010, the Construction and Planning Committee began reviewing the blueprint of this settlement which was to be built on an 11 donums of land, 300 meters from the Ma'aleh Hazeitim settlement.¹¹⁶ On 9/5/2010, it was announced that renovation work has begun for the construction of the first 14 housing units, to rise to include 104 units.¹¹⁷ This settlement is established in the area connecting the Mount of



Olives to Ras al-‘Amoud. It is located above the main police headquarters, built during Jordanian rule and vacated by the Israeli police in September 2008 after the construction of its headquarters in area E1 had been completed. In November 2010, 66 Jewish families moved to reside in Ma‘aleh Hazeitim, which is located on a land purchased by the American Jewish millionaire Irving Moskowitz.¹¹⁸ This settlement is expected to house 110 families.¹¹⁹

Plans for the Givat Hamatos settlement were further discussed in 2010. It is to be built on the land of the town of Beit Safafa, south of the city. The number of residential units planned to be built in this settlement is 3,699, in addition to 1,100 hotel rooms.¹²⁰

There are also plans to establish a third settlement called Givat Yael on an area of more than 2,500 donums of the lands of Walaja village southwest of Jerusalem. This settlement will consolidate the southern settlement belt in the city, which is currently made up of the existing Har Homa and Gilo settlements. By adding the settlement of Givat Hamatos, planned to be established on the lands of Beit Safafa, the southern line of Jewish population density which is connected directly to the west of Jerusalem would be complete.¹²¹

As for the second track, the biggest expansions were concentrated on specific points; most prominent among them was the Ramat Shlomo settlement to the north. Its expansion will yield 1,600 residential units, extending in the direction of West Jerusalem; in the hope of attracting more Jews to live in this settlement.¹²² Another expansion was approved, linking the two settlements Pisgat Ze’ev and Neve Yaakov, with 198 housing units to be constructed in the former and 377 in the latter.¹²³ Southern settlements had their share of expansion as, on 29/11/2010, a request to change the designation of a plot allocated for a hotel in favor of 130 housing units near Gilo Settlement was approved.¹²⁴ In addition there were plans, most of them submitted by the Israel Lands Authority, to expand Gilo by another three thousand housing units.¹²⁵ It was decided also to add 1,025 housing units to the Har Homa settlement, the fastest growing residential complex in the east of Jerusalem; 983 of them will be in Har Homa C and 42 in Har Homa B.¹²⁶ The following is a table of settlement developments, the execution of which were announced from 27/10/2010.



Table 8/6: Expansions Planned for After the End of the “Settlement Freeze” Period¹²⁷

Location	Settlement	No. of units	Current status	Remarks
Shu‘fat	Shu‘fat Hill “Ramat Shlomo”	1,600	Approved	
Beit Hanina, al-Ram, Hizma, Shu‘fat	Mir Forest-Neve Yaakov	377	Approved	The area of the Mir Forest is to be used to celebrate the memory of the victims of the Holocaust. The plan raised strong objections for fear of harming the Jerusalem Wildflower Sanctuary there and consequently the number of units was reduced to 400. Construction is already underway.
Shu‘fat	Kantri Ramout	700	Approved	Efforts to speed up the marketing of the residence are underway.
Bethlehem, Sur Baher, Beit Sahour, Beit Safafa	Jabal Abu Ghneim Har Homa	1,025	In process	Over the last few years, construction there has been continuous. 42 units will be built in Har Homa B, and 983 in Har Homa C.
Beit Safafa	Givat Hamatos	3,699	In process	The project continued for many years without being certified by the relevant Israeli authorities due to the presence of Palestinian landowners in the area.
Jabal al-Mukabber	The Governor’s Palace Armon HaNatziv	450	Under construction	Leveling the plot of land adjacent to Eliyahu Street. The move represents an attempt to rejuvenate the Armon HaNatziv neighborhood, which is moving progressively beyond the preliminary stages of construction.
Jabal al-Mukabber	Ramat Rachel	850	In process of being authorized	Unorganized land designated for agricultural use. The land was converted for the use of expanding the Talpote residential neighborhood.
Beit Safafa, Bethlehem, al-Walaja	Gilo	3,000	In process of zoning	A Master plan is in place. No objections were made.
Total of settlement units		11,701		

Fourth: The Struggle over Jerusalem's Cultural Identity

1. Judaizing Names and Landmarks

During 2009, Israel launched a campaign to change the names of landmarks, neighborhoods, and streets in Jerusalem. 2010 witnessed a continuation of this campaign, focusing on the areas of Jaffa Gate,¹²⁸ Wadi Hilwah in the south of the Old City, and Wadi al-Joz to its north.¹²⁹ The Jerusalem Municipality told store owners in East Jerusalem neighborhoods “to change the language of their store signs into Hebrew, and informed the owners that, unless they do so, their stores will not be licensed and they will have to be shut down.”¹³⁰

2. The Jewish Heritage List

On 21/2/2010, the occupation government announced a Jewish heritage list that included 150 religious and heritage sites; among them mosques and Islamic sites, such as the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem, the Old City's walls, the town of Silwan, Jerusalem's hills, the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim in Nablus, Marj Ibn 'Amer (Meadow of Amr's Son) in northern Palestine, and the Twins Cave west of Jerusalem.¹³¹ Not all the landmarks in the list were revealed; but it is clear that this list was an attempt to present the religious and historical landmarks in Palestine in a new light through a fabricated Jewish narrative.

3. The Project to Renovate the Walls and Gates of Jerusalem's Old City

Early in 2010, the Israeli authorities closed Damascus Gate north of the Old City, as part of a plan to renovate the Old City's gates and walls, according to which Jerusalem's municipality is allowed to alter the architectural style of the walls and gates, introduce sculptures and stones that carry menorahs and the six-pointed star of David and other forms in an attempt to impose an artificial Jewish identity to the walls. Some sources declared that the Israelis intended to lengthen the period of renovation of the Damascus Gate and to join to it the New Gate; a step towards the turning of the Jaffa Gate, which directly overlooks Jerusalem's west, into the Old City's main gate. This is confirmed by the restoration and renovation work underway on the squares that one sees upon entering the Old City sees from the Jaffa Gate.¹³²



Fifth: Israeli Settlement Expansion

In spite of the fact that Israeli governments recognize that establishing and expanding settlements is in clear and flagrant violation of international law and of the agreements that they had signed with their Palestinian counterparts, supporting and encouraging the settlement agenda in the occupied WB territories continued.

Statistics indicate that the number of settlers in WB has multiplied more than 40 times between 1972 and 2010. Those settlers live in 144 settlements; of them, 26 are in the Jerusalem Governorate alone. Data shows that most settlers are concentrated in the Jerusalem Governorate, where there are as many as 262,493 of them. Among them, 196,178 settlers live in that part of the Jerusalem governorate (J1), that Israel had forcibly annexed shortly after its occupation of the WB in 1967. In the Ramallah and al-Bireh governorates there are approximately 96,400 settlers; in Bethlehem Governorate, 56,200; and in the Salfit Governorate 33,200 settlers.¹³³

The announcement on 25/11/2009 that settlement construction in the WB was to be frozen for 10 months stirred indignation among Israelis and Palestinians alike. The Palestinians expressed their rejection of this decision issued by the Israeli government because it did not include the 18 Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem or the settlement plans that were approved before the announcement of the settlement construction freeze.¹³⁴ The heads of the regional councils of WB settlements as well as many official parties in the Israeli government have criticized their government's decision to freeze settlement construction in the WB and threatened to fight the government's decision and invite settlement tenders and settlement plans to continue construction. Based on the Israeli decision to freeze this construction that excluded Jerusalem, the Jerusalem municipality continued to deposit settlement plans successively, as a tactical step that would ensure a continuation of settlement construction in Jerusalem.

The American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton welcomed Netanyahu's decision to freeze settlement activity. She said that this announcement "helps move forward toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."¹³⁵ Thus, she contradicted her administration's view of complete cessation of settlement building in the WB, including Jerusalem and "natural growth." However, Israel shrugged off every US proposal, and deposited new settlement plans with the Interior Ministry's Jerusalem

District Planning and Construction Committee. These plans include the building of 942 new settlement units in Gilo Settlement, which were approved on 5/4/2011. The plans also included building 1,600 new residential units in the Ramat Shlomo Settlement, announced during the visit of American Vice President Joe Biden, and then ratified by the committee on 15/6/2010.¹³⁶

Israel remained obstinate after Obama and Netanyahu met in July 2010; the latter refusing to give any statement related to extending the period of the settlement freeze. Netanyahu wanted to avoid the fall of his government as a result of incurring the wrath of the settlers who had announced, prior to his meeting with Obama, that they were ready to build 2,700 residential units without approval from any party.¹³⁷

On 12/9/2010, the Israeli Peace Now Movement published a report that stated that there are approximately “37,684 housing units in plans that were approved in the past but were never built. Most of those units require further approval of the government for the allocation and marketing of the lands.”¹³⁸ Thus, these plans would continue as soon as the period of settlement construction freeze in the WB Israeli settlements ends on 27/9/2010.

An analysis of the Israeli Peace Now Movement report conducted by The Applied Research Institute—Jerusalem (ARIJ) showed that the settlements designated for expansion immediately after the end of the freeze period and those to be expanded in the near future are mostly concentrated in 52 settlements in the western isolation area between the Green Line (Armistice Line) and the Separation Wall. They include 28,319 settlement units, representing a ratio of 75.2%.¹³⁹

On 30/8/2010, Israeli army radio indicated that thousands of residential units in Israeli settlements obtained the necessary licenses to start building them as of 27/9/2010 in 57 Israeli settlements in the WB. The official extension of the settlement freeze was the sole means of stopping these construction projects.¹⁴⁰ The Israeli response to the post-freeze period has taken different forms, as the spiritual leader of the right-wing Shas Movement, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, showered the Palestinians with a barrage of curses, wishing that they “perish from this world,” and describing them as the “evil, bitter enemies of Israel.”¹⁴¹

Netanyahu stressed that Israel, in any peace settlement with the Palestinians, would retain the Ariel Settlement, saying “Anyone who understands the geography of the Land of Israel knows how important Ariel is.”¹⁴²



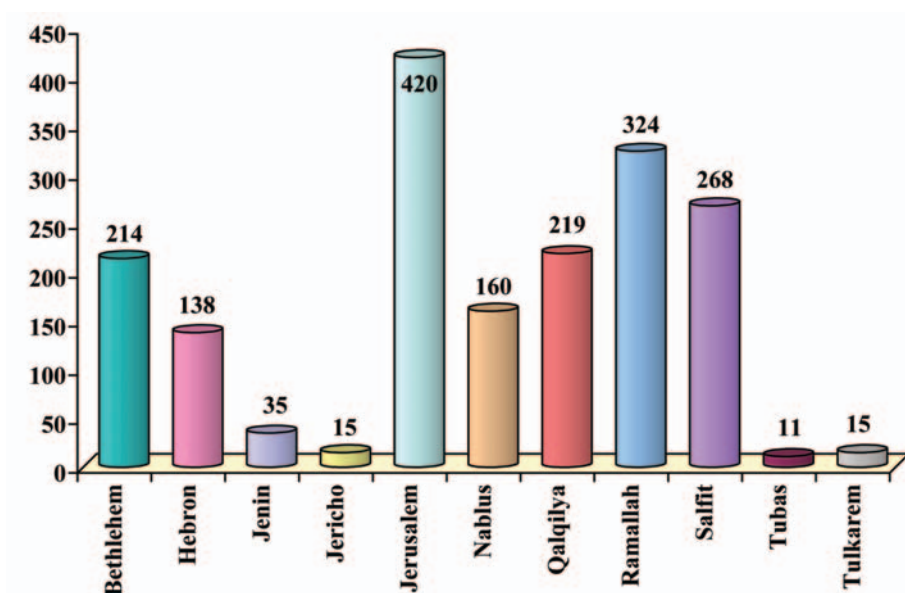
An analysis of high precision aerial photos (0.5x0.5 meters) conducted by ARIJ, revealed that, during 2010, settlement construction was substantial; as Israel built 1,819 buildings/apartments in 133 settlements all over the WB, including Jerusalem; in addition to 1,433 mobile homes (caravans).

Table 9/6: Number of Buildings Added to Israeli Settlements in WB During 2010¹⁴³

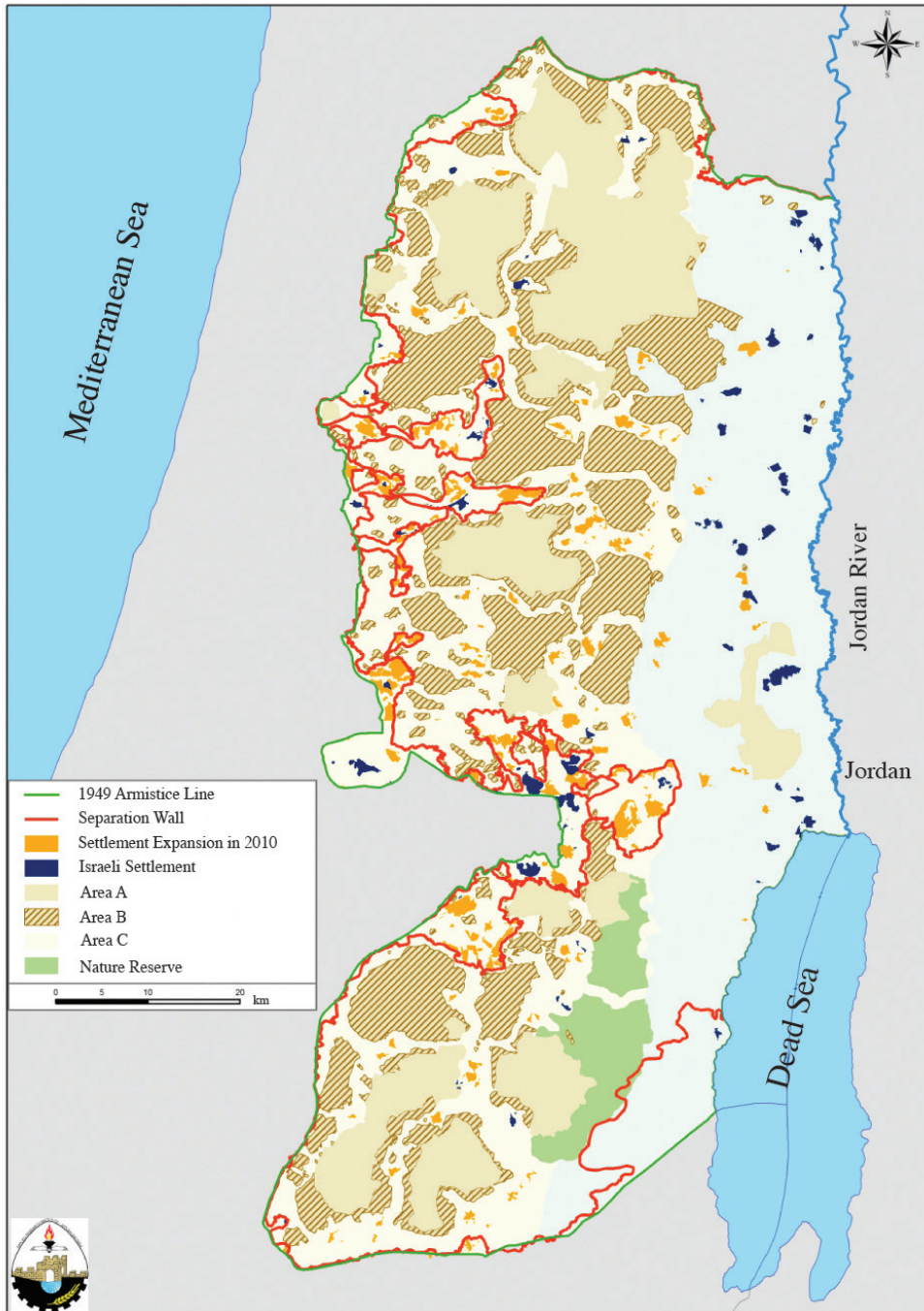
Governorate	No. of Buildings	% of total
Bethlehem	214	11.8
Hebron	138	7.6
Jenin	35	1.9
Jericho	15	0.8
Jerusalem	420	23.1
Nablus	160	8.8
Qalqilya	219	12
Ramallah	324	17.8
Salfit	268	14.7
Tubas	11	0.6
Tulkarem	15	0.8
Total	1,819	100

Source: Geographic Information System (GIS) Unit in ARIJ, 2011.

Number of Buildings Added to Israeli Settlements in WB During 2010



Map 2/6: The Settlements That Underwent Expansion During 2010 in WB



Note: Translated into English by al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations.



When the following picture taken in 2009 is compared with the next picture taken in 2010, the comparison reveals the changes in construction in parts of the Modi'in Illit Settlement made during 2010.

Modi'in Illit 2009



Modi'in Illit 2010



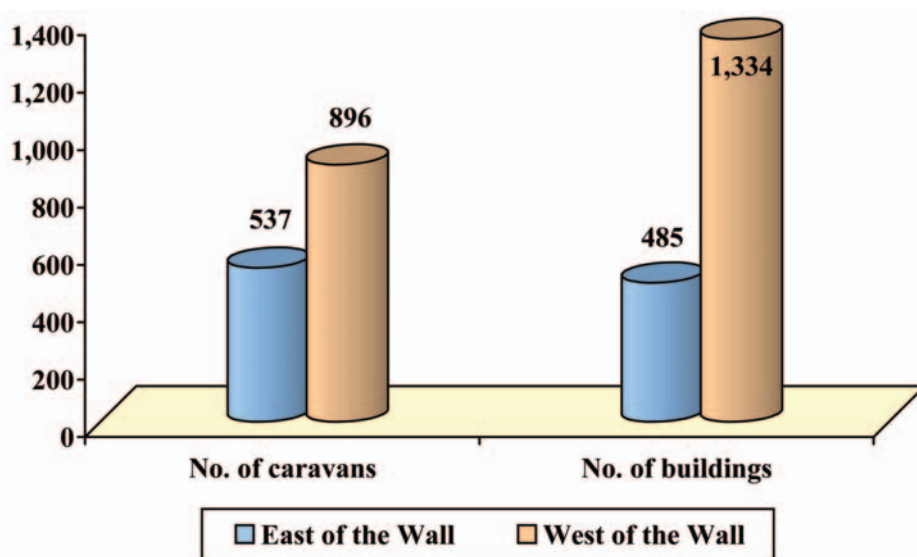
It is worth mentioning here that, in the above settlements, 1,819 buildings translates into 7,276 residential units, plus an additional construction area estimated at more than 902 thousand square meters. It is noticed that most of the construction is concentrated in the Jerusalem Governorate, a ratio of 24%, then 18% in the Ramallah Governorate.

During 2010, settlement construction was concentrated in the settlements located west of the Separation Wall (the area between the Wall and the Green Line). This is in keeping with the final Israeli plan of declaring the Wall the eastern borders of the Israeli state. Construction operations in the settlements situated east of the Wall are considered limited to an area of 203.81 donums, or 26.7% of the total construction done during 2010; construction and development operations in the settlements west of the Wall constitute an area of 698.56 donums, or 73.3% of total construction (see table 10/6).¹⁴⁴

Table 10/6: Expansion in the Israeli Settlements Located East and West of the Separation Wall 2010

Location	No. of caravans	%	No. of buildings	%
East of the Wall	537	37.5	485	26.7
West of the Wall	896	62.5	1,334	73.3
Total	1,433	100	1,819	100

Expansion in the Israeli Settlements Located East and West of the Separation Wall 2010





There is a major disparity between the sources of information regarding the statistics on settlement units that were built or began to be built in 2010. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) indicates that more than 6,764 residential units were built in 2010 in the Israeli settlements on the WB, compared with 1,703 in 2009 and 2,107 in 2008; while the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) says that only 1,492 residential units were built in 2010, compared with 2,071 in 2009. CBS claimed that there were only 541 housing units that started to be built in 2010. This contradicts what the Peace Now movement has said; that since the resumption of settlement construction on 26/9/2010 up until mid-November 2010, the settlers laid foundations for 1,126 homes.¹⁴⁵ The above raises a question mark over whether Israeli officials are purposely hiding facts and providing low figures, in order to avoid being subjected to more Palestinian and international objection and pressure.

On 29/12/2010, the Israeli Knesset approved the government's 2011–2012 budget, which allocated more than 2 billion shekels (\$535.76 million), to settlements, their services and security. The 2011 budget approved the marketing of 200 housing units in the Ma'ale Adumim Settlement and 500 others in the Har Homa Settlement. In addition, it allocated 89 million shekels (\$23.84 million) to the development of Ma'ale Adumim in 2011 and 2012. It also allocated 238 million shekels (\$63.75 million) for the development of Har Homa in the same two years. Sums of more than 405 million shekels (\$108.49 million) were allocated for the development of the infrastructure of WB settlements, such as roads. An allocation of 786 million shekels (\$210.55 million) went to boost settlement security; while more than 22 million shekels (\$5.89 million) went to compensate exporters operating from Israeli settlements "for the loss of sales to the European Union, which no longer recognizes settlement produce as Israeli produce under the terms of its free trade agreement."¹⁴⁶

Many Israeli leaders continued to encourage settlement expansion by residing in the WB settlements; which boosted a trend already set in motion with the rise in the political influence of settlers and their settlement councils. The following table lists the names of a group of Israeli Knesset members who reside in WB Israeli settlements:¹⁴⁷

Table 11/6: Group of Knesset Members and the Names of the Settlements in Which They Reside

Knesset member		Party	Settlement
	Yuval Steinitz	Likud	Mevasseret Tzion
	Nachman Shai	Kadima	Mevasseret Tzion
	Otniel Schneller	Kadima	Maaleh Michmas
	David Rotem	Yisrael Beitenu	Efrat
	Uri Orbach	Habayit Hayehudi-The New National Religious Party (NRP) (Jewish Home)	Modi'in
	Alex Miller	Yisrael Beitenu	Ariel
	Avigdor Lieberman	Yisrael Beitenu	Nokdim
	Yariv Levin	Likud	Modi'in
	Yaakov Katz	National Union (HaIhud HaLeumi)	Beit El
	Arie Elad	HaIhud HaLeumi	Kfar Adumim
	Yuli Edelstein	Likud	Alon Shvut
	Michael Ben-Ari	HaIhud HaLeumi	Karnei Shomron
	Uri Ariel	HaIhud HaLeumi	Kfar Adumim
	Rachel Adatto	Kadima	Mevasseret Tzion
	Zeev Elkin	Likud	Alon Shvut*
	Benjamin Netanyahu	Likud	Mamilla, Jerusalem

* On the official website of the Knesset it is mentioned that Zeev Elkin lives in Jerusalem.



In response to Israeli intransigence and refusal to halt settlement construction, the Palestinians have launched a far-reaching and popular boycott of Israeli settlement products, which was endorsed and observed by all public and governmental institutions. This campaign has added to pressure placed on international companies operating in Israeli settlements, forcing some of them to halt production there and move their factories elsewhere; while some other factories were completely shut down due to a drop in revenue as a result of the boycott.

The impact of this popular action became evident when the Yesha Council described this popular campaign as a “hostile act” and “economic terrorism.” The Council called on the Israeli government to immediately announce that it would not participate in the proximity talks with someone—PM Fayyad—who “conducts economic terrorism against Israel as a strategic policy.” It said, “Israel must use the money of the PA it holds in order to compensate the owners of the boycotted industries,” and called for the closure of “Israeli ports to Palestinian exports until the boycott is lifted.”¹⁴⁸

During the Arab League summit in Sirte, Libya, in October 2010, Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas declared that the fact that Israel continues with its obstinacy and refusal to stop settlement activities will force him to resign his post as president of the PA. He also said that the Palestinians have other options, all peaceful, for declaring a Palestinian state. Among them are asking the US to recognize the state’s borders as inclusive of all the territories occupied in 1967, and having the UN supervise this state until Israel withdraws completely from it.

Some prominent Europeans expressed sympathy with the cause of the Palestinians on the issue of settlements, when 26 ex-EU leaders addressed a letter to EU Foreign Affairs Chief, Catherine Ashton, urging the EU to impose sanctions on Israel for continuing to build settlements in the WB.¹⁴⁹

Sixth: Palestinian House Demolitions

Israel’s systematic policy of demolishing Palestinian homes is considered to be in grave violation of the Palestinian right to have a home, and a form of illegal collective punishment, as cited in Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. During 2010, the Israeli army and Jerusalem municipality demolished 194 Palestinian houses, 44 in the Jerusalem Governorate, and most for lack of

permits. This took place specifically in Beit Hanina, al-Tur, al-Za'im, Silwan, Jabal al-Mukabber, Beit Safafa, Sur Baher, al-'Isawiyyah, Sheikh Jarrah, the Old City, and al-Thawri.

WB governorates such as Qalqilya, Tulkarem, Nablus, and Hebron also suffered this Israeli attack against Palestinian construction, again under the pretext of lack of permits; as these houses are located in area C, over which Israel has total civil and security authority. Furthermore, during 2010, Israeli occupation forces sent notices to the owners of 1,393 Palestinian homes (119 of them in Jerusalem) telling them to stop construction and/or evacuate and demolish their home.

Seventh: Confiscation and Destruction of Palestinian Agricultural Lands

During 2010, Israel confiscated and destroyed 13,149 donums of Palestinian lands in the WB, primarily for the purpose of building the Separation Wall. Israel claims that confiscations are executed for military reasons, summed up in the military orders regarding building bypass roads and military towers, expanding military bases and Israeli settlements, among other objectives. A study done by ARIJ showed that most of the confiscated land was agricultural, the sole source of income for many Palestinian families who had lost their jobs inside Israel. The biggest share of these confiscated lands were in the Hebron and Ramallah governorates, where work on building the Separation Wall is underway, with the aim of fulfilling the Israeli vision of isolating the Jerusalem Governorate from the rest of the WB governorates.

Eighth: Uprooting Palestinian Trees

The Israeli army systematically targets trees and since the beginning of the Israeli occupation in 1967, 2.5 million trees have been uprooted, 10,364 in 2010.

Attacks on olive trees, through their destruction or burning, have become a widespread phenomenon, in particular in the villages surrounding the city of Nablus. These attacks are carried out by settlers, particularly at the start of the annual olive-picking season, in an attempt to scare away Palestinian farmers and



keep them from reaching their agricultural lands. These attacks have become a source of concern to Palestinians worried about suffering economic loss, the olive season being a good source of income for many Palestinian families in all parts of the WB.

Table 12/6: Israeli Violations in the WB, Including Jerusalem, During 2010, and on a Monthly Basis¹⁵⁰

Type of violation	Confiscated lands		Uprooted trees		Demolished homes		Homes threatened with demolition	
Month	WB	Jerusalem	WB	Jerusalem	WB	Jerusalem	WB	Jerusalem
January	305	660	2,340	0	15	8	26	8
February	1,742	0	1,205	0	10	1	31	31
March	257	0	607	0	0	0	27	8
April	2	0	935	0	6	0	9	4
May	30	0	1,265	150	2	0	86	5
June	40	0	340	0	1	4	74	11
July	64	0	25	60	48	7	24	0
August	0	0	220	0	34	2	851	31
September	611	0	130	50	0	0	42	1
October	7,155	50	1,612	0	5	0	30	15
November	350	3	825	60	15	11	42	5
December	1,880	0	410	130	14	11	32	0
Total	12,436	713	9,914	450	150	44	1,274	119
Grand total	13,149		10,364		194		1,393	

Ninth: The Separation Wall

Geographically, the Separation Wall did not witness any noticeable change during 2010. However, the Israeli army has extended the validity of previous military orders to seize certain Palestinian lands in order to build parts of the Wall on them. In the past, the army had issued orders to that effect, but building on them did not take place. Work on building the Wall resumed in various locations in the WB, among them Beit Jala, Bil'in, Jerusalem, and south of Hebron.

The Israeli army has finished building 473 km (61%) of the Wall. Work is underway on another 54 km (7%). There remains 247 km (32%) in the planning stage.¹⁵¹ Most of the remainder is located in the periphery of the Jerusalem Governorate, where Israel is trying to redefine the city's borders through the Separation Wall within the plan that it calls "Greater Jerusalem," which will impose three great settlement blocs, Givat Ze'ev, to the north of Jerusalem; Ma'ale Adumim, to its east; and Gush Etzion, to its southwest.

According to the PCBS, the isolated and confiscated area between the Wall and the Green Line amounted to almost 733 km², according to 2010 estimates, that is 13% of the WB area. Of these, 348 km² are agricultural lands, 110 km² are Israeli settlements and military bases, and 250 km² are forest and open space areas, in addition to 25 km², which are Palestinian residential areas.¹⁵²

Tenth: The Water Situation

Israeli restrictions on Palestinian use of water resources remained in effect throughout 2010. Obstacles remain that are blocking efforts to improve the status of water distribution networks infrastructure; specifically in the Area C over which Israel has total civil and security authority, and which constitutes 60% of the WB. Moreover, and in spite of the fact that the Palestinian communities present in Area C are classified by Israel as first rate development areas, Israeli Civil Administration control over these areas had the greatest impact on executing private development projects in the water sector in those areas, exclusively for the benefit of Israeli settlements. Whereas the Water and Sanitation Hygiene Monitoring Program (WaSH MP) in the occupied Palestinian territories pointed out the urgent need for implementing 15 projects in order to fulfill the pressing water needs of about 52 thousand Palestinians in 17 Area C communities.¹⁵³

Severe water shortages in a number of Palestinian communities in Area C in the south of the WB, has caused deficiency in the supply of water for drinking and sanitation purposes for more than 15 thousand Palestinians. These were classified as being in dire need, where the water available per person per day was less than 30 liters. This situation prompted the UN Human Rights Committee, in its session convened between 12–30/7/2010, to address the subject of denial of access to water. It was "concerned at water shortages disproportionately affecting the Palestinian



population of the West Bank.” The Committee said that Israel “should ensure that all residents of the West Bank have equal access to water, in accordance with the World Health Organization quality and quantity standards.”¹⁵⁴

It should be noted that different indicators were used to describe the water situation in the most affected WB and GS communities. Domestic water consumption and water prices were essential indicators in defining the status of water in WB; while quality of water and the reach of water networks to various communities were the indicators that defined the status of water in GS.

Deficiency in water quantities forces the Palestinians to buy water from Mekorot, Israel National Water Company. And in reference to the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) which stated that the average Palestinian person’s consumption of water in the WB was 73 liters, the deficiency in water supply is 34.6 million cubic meters (MCM). The available supply in the area is 88.6 MCM, while the quantity needed is 123.2 MCM.¹⁵⁵

According to WaSH MP statistics, there are 313 thousand people living in 113 communities in the WB, most of them in the Hebron, Jenin and Nablus governorates, who are not connected to the water system. The unconnected households pay between 15 and 20% of their income for water, as the price of a cubic meter of water reached \$14.2.¹⁵⁶

Further, WaSH MP indicated that, in the WB, there are 441 Palestinian communities unable to obtain more than 60 liters of water per person per day.¹⁵⁷ This figure represents 60% of what the WHO recommends, which is 100 liters per person per day.¹⁵⁸

According to statistics issued by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian Territory (OCHA-oPT), 194 Palestinian communities in Area C in the WB do not receive adequate supplies of water. These statistics state that:

- In the north of the WB: 86% of 64 communities present in Area C are in urgent need of water supplies. In addition, the residents of 22 other communities pay more than \$5.6 for every cubic meter of water.
- In the central WB: 90% of the communities in Area C are not connected to the water system. In addition, 30% of residents there pay more than \$5.6 for every cubic meter of water.

- In the south of the WB: there are 30 thousand Palestinians unconnected to the water system; the scarcity of water has kept residents from improving many facets of their lives, and they are compelled to spend 25–30% of their monthly income on water.

Conclusion

If the “Jewishness of the state” is the concept that today dominates Israeli political thought, the battle to settle Jerusalem’s identity is the foremost manifestation of this concept. There is a challenge to the Israeli plan for Jerusalem; as 35% of its population remains Palestinian. The city’s horizon clearly reflects its Arab identity, with its Islamic and Christian holy sites, in spite of the fact that 44 years have passed since its occupation became complete. *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, the imposing Islamic landmark, continues to dominate the city’s sky line, and is even used in the posters put out by the Israeli tourist board. This challenge is a stark example of what Israel faces today, as it finds its Jewish identity threatened, and its citizens face becoming a minority in historic Palestine. It has failed to create for itself a dominant culture to replace the indigenous culture of this land’s people. Israel was not able to abrogate the historic Arab names of places and landmarks, in spite of its systematic and persistent efforts. It was not able to find for itself an architectural style, which it could claim to be its and its people’s own, to the exclusion of all others.

Israel benefited from the weakness of the Palestinians, as well as the Arab and Islamic governments, to expand its settlement programs and further Judaize Jerusalem. It rejected the idea of freezing settlement activities as a condition for continuing the peace talks. It continued its operations of demolishing houses, revoking Jerusalemites’ IDs, and taking control of the Palestinian water resources. The Separation wall has become a main tool in confiscating the lands of Palestinians; ruining their economy, destroying their social fabric and hindering their freedom to move and work. Under its extremist right-wing government, it does not seem that Israel will suspend its programs as long as Palestinian and Arab weakness, incapacity and schism remain. However, the promising signs of change in the Arab world may, in the medium and long term, force the Israelis to reassess their calculations.



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To follow the annual development of these measures, see the series of reports “‘Ayn ‘ala al-Aqsa (Eye on Al-Aqsa)” published by Al Quds International Institution, which has been covering events since the beginning of 2005.

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Chapter Seven

The Palestinian Demographic Indicators

The Palestinian Demographic Indicators

Introduction

The Palestinian people continue to suffer from the bitterness of displacement and dispossession, and from a torn social fabric as a result of the Israeli occupation, and the massacres and deliberate expulsions of the Palestinians. Around 5.75 million Palestinians abroad and 1.8 million Palestinian refugees in the WB and the GS continue to be denied their right of return to their lands, as a result of Israeli intransigence and the negligence of the international community, and also because of the failure of the peace process to secure their rights

Nevertheless, the Palestinians are a youthful population, and enjoy a high natural population growth rate. In a few years, the Palestinian population will exceed the Jewish population in historic Palestine. Furthermore, the Palestinians in the Diaspora grow more determined every day to secure their right of return. Their activities, events, and campaigns in support of this right are increasing day by day.

First: The Palestinian Population Worldwide

The estimated number of Palestinians around the world, at the end of 2010, was around 11.14 million, compared to around 10.88 million at the end of 2009, i.e., an annual growth rate of about 2.4%. Table 1/7 presents the estimates of the worldwide Palestinian population according to their place of residence, at the end of 2010.

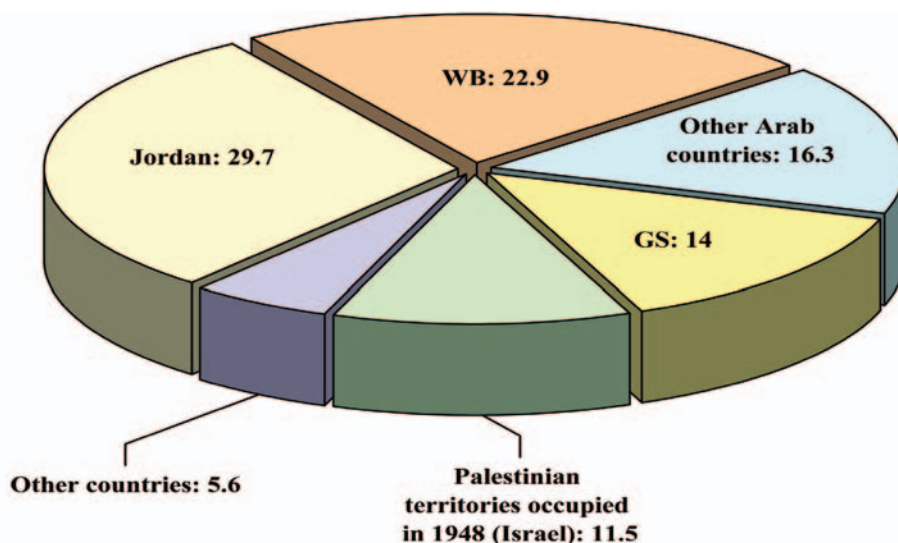
The Palestinians are divided, according to their place of residence. There are Palestinians living in historic Palestine, which comprises the territories occupied in 1948 and 1967. They are estimated at 5.39 million, i.e., 48.4% of the total Palestinian population, of which 4.11 million are in the 1967 occupied Palestinian territories, i.e., 36.9% of the worldwide Palestinian population, while 1.28 million are in the 1948 occupied Palestinian territories (Israel), i.e., 11.5% of the worldwide Palestinian population.

Table 1/7: Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate According to Their Place of Residence at the End of 2010¹

Place of residence		Population estimate (thousands)	Percentage (%)
Palestinian territories occupied in 1967	WB	2,547	22.9
	GS	1,562	14
Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)*		1,277	11.5
Jordan		3,311	29.7
Other Arab countries		1,812	16.3
Other countries		626	5.6
Total		11,135	100

* For the Palestinian population in the territories occupied in 1948, the number does not include the population in the territories occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem Governorate, and does not include also the Arab Syrians, Lebanese, non-Arab Christians, or the "Others" category. It is calculated on the basis of the annual growth rate cited in the Israeli census of Arabs, which is equal to 2.4%.²

Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate According to Their Place of Residence at the End of 2010 (%)



The Palestinians in the Diaspora meanwhile, are estimated at 5.75 million, i.e., 51.6% of the Palestinians in the world. The majority of these are mostly concentrated in the neighboring Arab countries, especially Jordan. The number of Palestinians at the end of 2010 in Jordan was approximately 3.31 million, i.e., 29.7% of the worldwide Palestinian population. As for the Palestinians living in other Arab countries, they are estimated at 1.81 million, i.e., 16.3% of the total Palestinian population. They are concentrated mostly in the neighboring Arab countries; Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and the Arab Gulf states. In the foreign countries, there are around 626 thousand Palestinians, i.e., 5.6% of the worldwide Palestinian population.

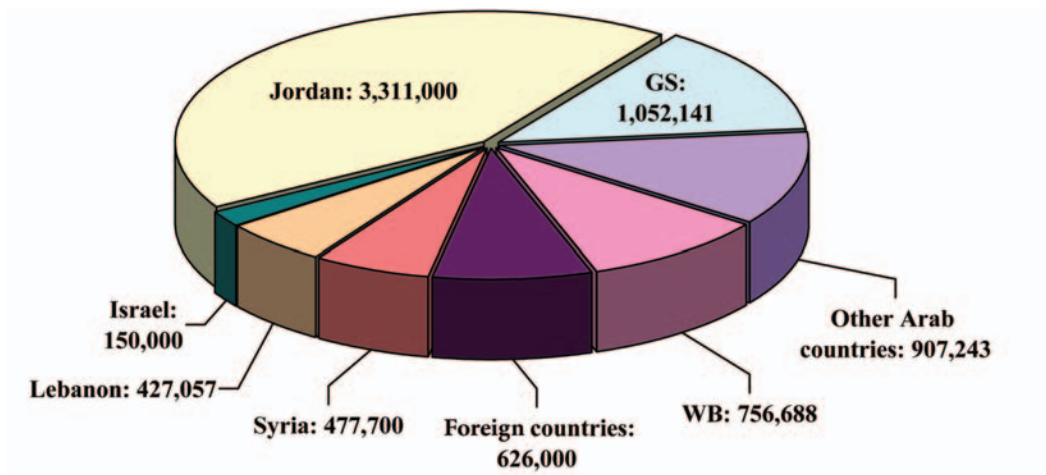
It should be noted that the Palestinian refugees are not exclusively defined as those who are residing outside of Palestine. There are about 1.8 million Palestinian refugees residing in the 1967 Palestinian territories, in addition to 150 thousand refugees who were expelled from their lands, but who continue to reside in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel). Subsequently, the total number of Palestinian refugees amounts to about 7.71 million, representing 69.2% of the Palestinian people.

There may be some redundancy in the calculation of certain numbers, due to the relocation of the refugee from the place where he/she is registered or from the country he/she is a citizen, to a different place of work or residence. However, this has only slight effect due to the large number of refugees.

Table 2/7: Palestinian Refugees Worldwide Population Estimates of 2010

Country	WB	GS	Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)	Jordan	Lebanon	Syria	Other Arab countries	Foreign countries	Total
Population estimate (thousands)	756,688	1,052,141	150,000	3,311,000	427,057	477,700	907,243	626,000	7,707,829

Palestinian Refugees Worldwide Population Estimates of 2010



Second: The Demographic Characteristics of Palestinians

1. The WB and GS

The population in the WB and GS was estimated at around 4.109 million, at the end of 2010, of which around 2.547 million people in the WB, i.e., 62%, and 1.562 million people in GS, i.e., 38%. As for the distribution of the Palestinian population in the governorates, data indicate that Hebron is the governorate with the largest population, which reached 14.9% of the total population in the WB and GS. The next largest governorate is Gaza where it reached 13.2% of the total population in the WB and GS, whereas the population in Jerusalem governorate reached 9.4%. Data indicate also that Jericho and al-Aghwar governorates registered the smallest population, at the end of 2010, where it was approximately 1.1% of the population in the WB and GS.

The 2010 estimates indicate that 44% of the Palestinians of the WB and GS population are refugees, numbering approximately 1.809 million refugees at the end of 2010. They reached approximately 757 thousand in the WB, i.e., 29.7% of the total WB population, and 1.052 million refugees in GS, i.e., 67.4% of the total GS population.

Table 3/7: Comparing the Palestinian Total and Refugee Population in the WB and GS 2010

Place of residence	Total population		Refugee population	
	Estimate	Percentage (%)	Estimate	Percentage (%)
WB	2,546,725	62	756,688	29.7
GS	1,561,906	38	1,052,141	67.4
WB & GS	4,108,631	100	1,808,829	44

The Palestinian population in the WB and GS is predominantly a young one, where the percentage of individuals under 15 years of age, at the end of 2010, was estimated at 41.1% with a significant difference between the WB and GS, as the percentage in the WB was 39.2% compared to 44.2% in GS. This is while the segment of the elderly population constituted only a minor fraction of the Palestinian population. In mid 2010, the elderly population (above 60 years of age) was estimated at 4.4% of the total population, with 4.9% in the WB and 3.7% in GS. This is while bearing in mind that the percentage of elderly in the developed countries as a whole amounts to 16% of the total population of those countries, while the percentage of elderly in developing countries as a whole amounts to 6% only of the population at large.

Despite the absolute increase in the number of elderly in the WB and GS in the coming years, their percentage of the total population is expected to remain steady and would not exceed 4.5% in the next 10 years. This is while it is possible for this percentage to begin increasing further after 2020. The unaltered percentage of elderly among the general population in the coming years is due to the high fertility rates in the Palestinian society, especially in GS.

The percentage of males aged 60 years or above in the WB and GS in 2010 amounted to 3.8%, compared to 5% of females, with a sex ratio of 79 males per 100 females. The higher proportion of females as compared to males in the elderly population is basically due to biological and health reasons which increase the life expectancy for females compared to males in most countries of the world.

The age distribution of the population reveals a wide-based population pyramid with a pointed narrow tip. Hence, in the upcoming years the Palestinians will remain influenced by the relatively high natural population growth despite the decrease in the natural population growth rate and the fertility rate in the past years.

The estimated number of males at the end of 2010 in the WB and GS was approximately 2.086 million, compared to 2.023 million females, with a sex ratio of 103.1 males per 100 females. As for the WB, the number of males was 1.293 million compared to 1.254 million females, while in GS, the number of males was 793 thousand compared to 769 thousand females, meaning that both the WB and GS kept the same sex ratio of 103.1 males per 100 females.

Data indicate that the dependency ratio in the WB and GS had dropped from 101.3 in 1997 to 78.7 in 2010. At the regional level, it is noted that there is a significant difference in the dependency ratio for both the WB and GS. In the former, this ratio dropped from 94.7 in 1997 to 73.7 in 2010, while in GS it dropped from 114.5 in 1997 to 87.4 in 2010.

The WB and GS have witnessed a clear improvement in life expectancy rates at birth during the last two decades, averaging 70.8 years for males and 73.6 years for females in 2010. These rates are expected to further increase in the coming years, reaching about 72.2 years for males and 75 years for females in 2015. In fact, these rates differ between the WB and GS. In the former, the life expectancy rate at birth in 2010 was 72.6; 71.2 for males and 74 for females, while in GS it was 71.6; 70.2 for males and 72.9 for females. These increases are the result of the improvement of healthcare and gradual decrease in infant mortality rates.

The available data show a slight increase in the median age in the WB and GS, from 16.4 years in 1997 to 18.5 years in 2010. When comparing the data of the WB and GS separately, for the period of 1997–2010, a difference in the median age can be noticed. It increased in the WB from 17.4 years in 1997 to 19.4 in 2010, whereas it increased in GS from 14.8 years in 1997 to 17.2 in 2010.

Meanwhile, population projections indicate that the Crude Birth Rate (CBR) in the WB and GS will drop from 32.8 births per one thousand inhabitants in 2010 to 31.9 in 2015. At the regional level, we note that there is a difference in the CBR between the WB and GS. In the WB, the CBR in 2010 was 30.1, while it was estimated at 37.1 in GS.

The data available also indicates that the Crude Death Rates (CDR) are relatively low, compared to the rates prevailing in other Arab countries. The estimated CDR expected to drop slightly in the WB and GS from 4.1 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2010 to 3.6 in 2015. At the regional level, we notice that there is a slight difference in the CDR between the WB and GS. In WB, the CDR is expected to drop from 4.2 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2010, to 3.8 in 2015. Whereas in GS, the CDR is expected to drop from 4 per one thousand inhabitants in 2010 to 3.5 in 2015. This indicates an improving quality of life, better access to medical services, as well as improved health awareness among the population.

The natural population growth rate in the WB and GS has reached 2.9% in the mid of 2010, with 2.7% in the WB and 3.3% in GS. The growth rates are expected to remain unchanged for the next five years, as the low level of death rates and high level of fertility rates, despite their relative decline, will result in an increase in the natural population growth rates. In truth, this is the only option available to the Palestinian people to maintain balance in the demographic struggle with Israel, which relies on attracting Jewish immigrants from abroad, and encouraging the Jewish people to procreate. This is while Israel pursues a state policy of forced displacement of the Palestinians, in addition to the killings, arrests and the construction of the Separation Wall, while imposing blockades and closures in addition to myriad restrictions on the Palestinian economy.

Fertility rates in the WB and GS are considered high relative to current fertility rates in other countries. High fertility rates are mainly due to early marriage especially among females, and the desire to procreate as well as customs and traditions prevailing in the Palestinian society, but there are indications which confirm that fertility has started to decline during the last decade of the last century. Based on the final results of the Population, Housing and Establishment Census 2007 (PHC-2007), total fertility rate in the WB and GS has fallen, from 6 in 1997 to 4.6 in 2007. When considering each area separately, one can notice that the total fertility rate in GS was higher than in the WB during the period 1997–2007, reaching 4.1 births in the WB in 2007 compared to 5.6 births in 1997, whereas in GS, it was 5.3 births in 2007 compared to 6.9 births in 1997. Also, the average number of children born to married women in the WB and GS in 2006 was about 4.7 children; where in the WB it was 4.6 children and in the GS it was 5 children.

In terms of household size, data point out that there was a decline in the average household size in the WB and GS, where the average household size declined from 6.4 persons according to 1997 population census to 5.8 persons according to 2007 population census then it declined to 5.5 in 2010. The average declined in the WB from 6.1 persons in 1997 to 5.8 in 2007 then it declined to 5.3 in 2010, while it declined in GS from 6.9 persons to 6.5 in 2007 then it declined to 5.8 in 2010.³

With regard to the prevalence of illiteracy, results show that illiteracy rates among adults in the WB and GS are among the lowest rates in the world, where the illiteracy rate among individuals aged 15 years and above, was 5.4% in 2009 with 2.6% males and 8.3% females, compared to 5.9% in 2008 with 2.9% males and 9.1% females, noting that an illiterate person is defined as a person who cannot read or write a simple sentence about his daily life.

Previous results indicate a significant drop in the illiteracy rate since 1997. The worldwide illiteracy rate among individuals aged 15 and above is 16.6%, and the number of the illiterate population worldwide in the years 2005–2008 amounted to approximately 796.2 million, including 510.6 million females. Illiteracy among males worldwide stood at 11.8% in the same period, and 21.1% among females. In the Arab world, around 60.2 million are illiterate, including 39.3 million females, at a ratio of 36.9% for females compared to 18.8% among males.⁴

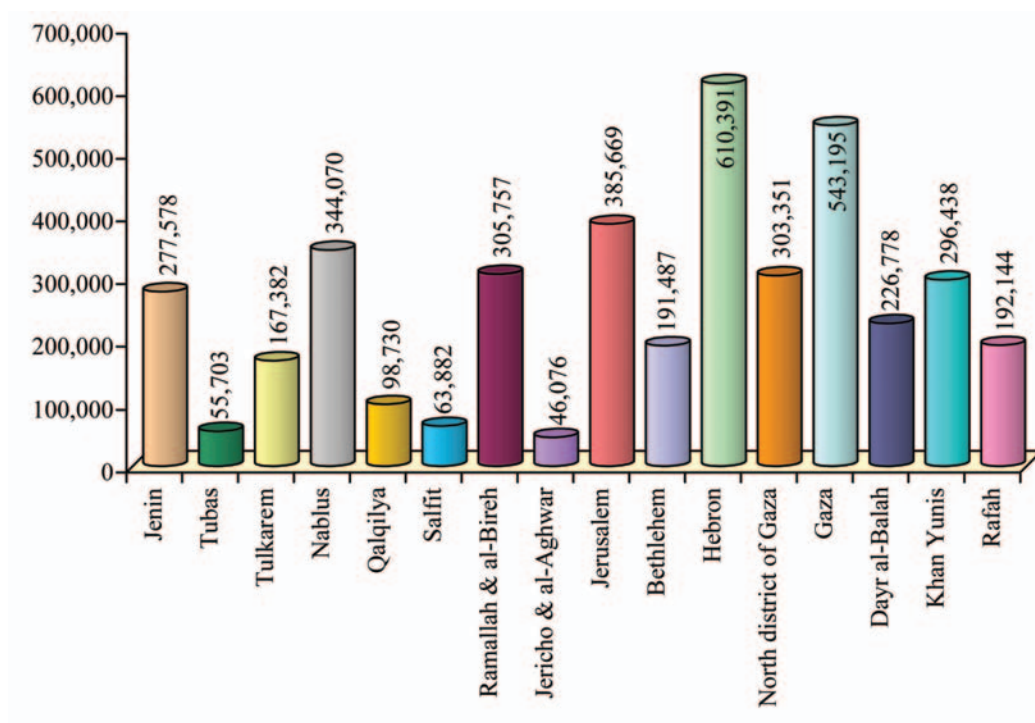
In addition, the average housing density (number of individuals per room) in the WB and GS amounted to 1.6 persons per room in 2010. The average for the WB is 1.5 compared to an average of 1.8 persons per room in GS. Around 10% of households in the WB and GS live in housing units with three persons or more per room. The average number of rooms in the housing unit in the WB and GS was 3.6 in 2010. About 15% of the households in the WB and GS live in housing units with 1–2 rooms.⁵

The following table is the distribution of the population according to the estimates of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), in the governorates of the WB and the GS.

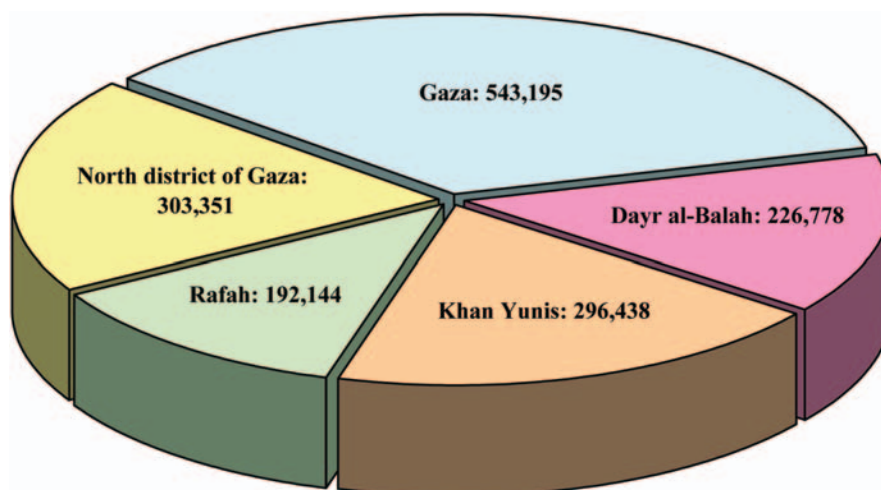
Table 4/7: Estimated Population Count by Governorate, 2007 & 2010⁶

Governorate	2007	2010	Annual growth rate 2007–2010
WB	2,345,107	2,546,725	2.7
Jenin	256,212	277,578	2.7
Tubas	48,771	55,703	4.4
Tulkarem	158,213	167,382	1.9
Nablus	321,493	344,070	2.3
Qalqilya	91,046	98,730	2.7
Salfit	59,464	63,882	2.4
Ramallah & al-Bireh	278,018	305,757	3.2
Jericho & al-Aghwar	41,724	46,076	3.3
Jerusalem	362,521	385,669	2.1
Bethlehem	176,515	191,487	2.7
Hebron	551,130	610,391	3.4
GS	1,416,539	1,561,906	3.3
North district of Gaza	270,245	303,351	3.9
Gaza	496,410	543,195	3
Dayr al-Balah	205,534	226,778	3.3
Khan Yunis	270,979	296,438	3
Rafah	173,371	192,144	3.4
Total (WB & GS)	3,761,646	4,108,631	2.9

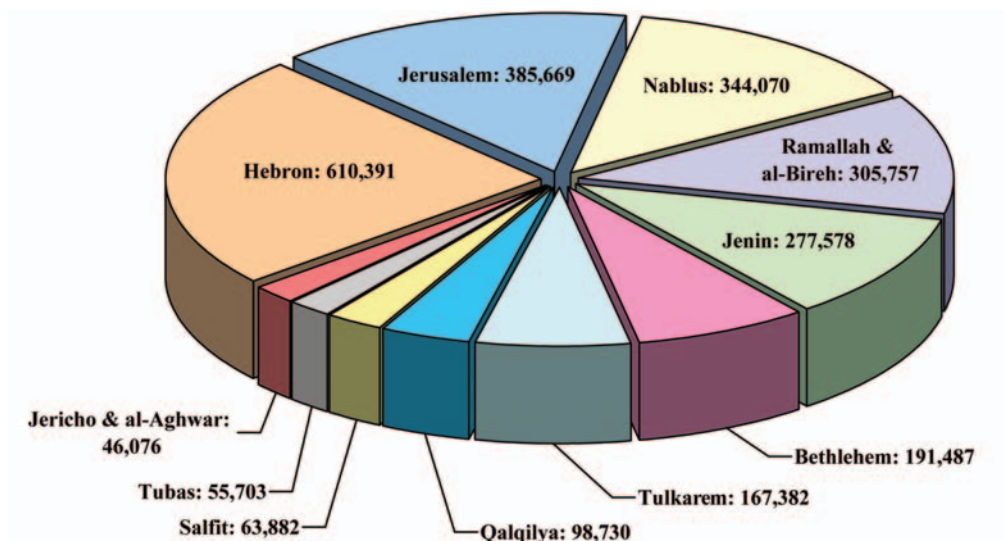
Estimated Population Count by Governorate 2010



Estimated Population Count in GS Governorates 2010



Estimated Population Count in WB Governorates 2010



The population is distributed into 16 governorates, including 5 in GS and 11 in the WB, where Hebron is the largest governorate in terms of population, with an estimated population of 610 thousand, at the end of 2010. Hebron is followed by the Gaza governorate with 543 thousand, and then the Jerusalem governorate with 386 thousand.

The least populated governorates are Jericho, Tubas, Salfit, and Qalqilya, where the population is estimated to be 46 thousand, 56 thousand, 64 thousand, and 99 thousand people respectively.

The annual population growth rate, meanwhile, stood at 2.9% over the past three years, broken into 2.7% in the WB, and 3.3% in the GS.

In terms of the annual population growth rates in the governorates, it is noted that the highest of such rates were recorded in the governorates of the GS, where the rates were 3% and above. The North Gaza governorate was the highest, i.e., 3.9%. In the WB, all growth rates were below 3% with the exception of Tubas, Hebron, Jericho and Ramallah governorates, they were 4.4%, 3.4%, 3.3%, and 3.2% respectively. The governorates with the least growth rates in the WB and GS were Tulkarem and Jerusalem, i.e., 1.9% and 2.1% respectively.

Internal Migration in the WB and GS

Internal migration is the movement of a person or a household from one locality to another or from one governorate to another, provided that he/she crosses the boundaries of that locality or governorate for the purpose of establishing a new residence for one year or more. The results of the Migration's Survey in the Palestinian Territory, 2010, conducted by the PCBS for the first time in December 2010, showed the extent of internal migrations whether within the same governorate or from one governorate to another.

The results clearly show that the internal movement of Palestinians between the WB and GS is extremely limited. A very limited percentage of Palestinians living now in GS had previous place of residence in the WB and vice versa. This is largely due to the geographical separation and the policies of Israeli occupation. The results also show that the majority of internal migration takes place within the same governorate, and to nearby ones. In the Tubas governorate, 23.9% of persons were previously residing in Jenin. Similarly in the province of Salfit, 37.8% of persons were previously residing in Ramallah and al-Bireh. In addition, 20% of persons moved to Jericho and Al-Aghwar governorate were previously residing in Jerusalem and 22% came from Bethlehem.

About 50% of internal migration between and within governorates had occurred 10 years ago or more. Further, there is also a noticeable movement during the past five years towards and within a number of Palestinian governorates, specifically Jerusalem, Ramallah, al-Bireh and Nablus.

In addition, the results have shown that 36.4% of persons changed their place of residence in the WB and GS for marriage purposes compared to 32.9% for accompanying. It is natural that a wife would accompany her husband or the children would accompany their parents. This is while other causes of internal migration, such as work, studying, etc., account for a notably low number of cases.

Furthermore, regarding the age distribution of persons who changed their place of residence within the WB and GS, 33.4% of them fall in the age group 15–29 years and 30% in the age group 30–44 years. This is due to the fact that these groups have the most mobility, given that the primary causes of migration are marriage and accompanying, in addition to the fact that some internal migrations may have occurred years before the survey was conducted.⁷

2. The Palestinian Territories Occupied in 1948 (Israel)

At the end of 2010, the estimated number of Palestinians in Israel was around 1.28 million, compared to 1.25 million at the end of 2009. The data available on the number of Palestinians residing in Israel in 2009 indicate the Palestinian population there is predominantly a young one. The percentage of males aged under 15 was 38% and of females 37.2%, while the percentage of males aged 65 and over was 3.6% and of females 4%.

The total fertility rate of the Palestinians in Israel has reached 3.5 births per woman in 2009, compared to 3.62 births per woman in 2007. This is a relatively high rate compared to the fertility rate in Israel. Moreover, the data indicate that the average Palestinian household size has reached 4.8 members per family in 2009 compared to 5 in 2007. The CBR for the year 2009 has reached approximately 26.2 births per one thousand inhabitants, while the infant mortality rate for the same period was 6.8 deaths per one thousand live births. This is while bearing in mind that the sex ratio in 2009 was 102.2 males per 100 females, while the illiteracy rate among Palestinians aged 15 and over was 6.1%. In addition, 26.2% of Palestinian families in Israel live in housing units with a housing density between two individuals and more. These data do not include the Arab population in the Syrian Golan Heights nor does it include the population in J1 of Jerusalem as well as the Lebanese who have moved for a temporary residence in Israel. While Israel takes into consideration all of these groups within its population and within Arab population as a whole.⁸

3. Jordan

The number of Palestinians in Jordan at the end of 2010 was estimated at about 3.31 million, compared to 3.24 million at the end of 2009, as per the estimates of the researcher (see table 1/7). There is no up-to-date information on the characteristics of the Palestinian population in Jordan, where the 2007 data show that the Palestinian population in Jordan is predominantly a young one, where 35.9% are aged below 15 years and 5.2% are elderly.

In 2000, the Palestinians aged 15 years and over in Jordan were distributed according to their marital status with a proportion of 50.2% males classified as never married as opposed to 37.4% females. It can be noticed that the highest percentage of those who never married is in the age group 15–19 years with 99.2% males

and 87.9% females. A high proportion of Palestinian female widows can be noticed in Jordan as it has reached 2.6% for females compared to 0.6% male widowers.

The total fertility rate among Palestinian women in Jordan in 2007 was around 3.3 births per woman, with women in the age group 25–29 years contributing most to this rate, which reached 173.6 births per one thousand women. The fertility rate for women in the age group 30–34 years was 149.2 births per one thousand women in 2007. The average household size was 5.1 members in 2007.

The infant mortality rate in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan was 22.5 per one thousand live births in 2004, while the infant mortality rate of children under five was 25.1 deaths per one thousand live births for the same year.⁹

According to the statistics of the UNRWA, there are about 2,004,795 Registered Palestinian Refugees (RPRs), as of 30/6/2010, compared to 1,570,192 RPR as of 30/6/2000. This means that the annual population growth rate of the RPR in Jordan alone is around 2.5% (see table 6/7).

4. Syria

The number of UNRWA-RPRs in Syria, as of 30/6/2010, was about 477,700 people, compared to 383,199 as of 30/6/2000, i.e., an estimated annual population growth rate of 2.2%. The estimated sex ratio was 100.4 males per 100 females in 2009 (see table 6/7).

Palestinian refugees in Syria constitute around 117,806 families of whom around 27.1% live in refugee camps; noting that the aforementioned refugee number does not include the Palestinians who were displaced to Syria in 1967 and 1970, since the majority of them are not registered in UNRWA's records (see table 7/7).

There is no updated data available on the Palestinians in Syria. The available data on the Palestinians residing in Syria in 2007 indicate that 33.1% of the population was aged below 15 years, and that the average Palestinian household size was 4.9 members. On the other hand, the total fertility rate in 2007 among Palestinians in Syria was 3.6 births per woman with women in the age group 25–29 years contributing mostly in this rate which reached 216.1 births per one thousand women in the same age group. The total fertility rate for women in the age group 30–34 years was 184 births per one thousand women. As for the CBR, it has reached 29.3 births per one thousand of the population. The infant mortality rate in 2006 among Palestinians in Syria was 25 deaths per one thousand

live births, whereas the average mortality rate among children below five years of age was 30 deaths per one thousand live births for the same period.

Palestinians aged 15 years and over residing in Syria in 2007 were distributed according to their marital status with a proportion of 48.3% males classified as never married and 40.8% females. It can be noticed that the highest percentage of those who never married is in the age group 15–19 years with 100% males and 92.7% females. Also noteworthy is the high proportion of Palestinian female widows in Syria as it has reached 4.2% females compared to 0.5% male widowers.¹⁰

5. Lebanon

The number of UNRWA-RPRs in Lebanon, as of 30/6/2010, was about 427,057 people, compared to 376,472 people as of 30/6/2000, i.e., an estimated annual population growth rate of 1.3%. The refugees in Lebanon constitute 113,594 families, 53.1% of which live in refugee camps (see tables 6/7 and 7/7).

The available data on the Palestinians residing in Lebanon in 2010 indicate that 30.4% of the population was aged below 15 years, whereas the percentage aged 65 years and over was 5%. The sex ratio was 102.5 males per 100 females in 2010. The proportion of Palestinian population in Lebanon who are above 12 years of age and who have never married was 45.8% with 49.4% males and 42% females. The proportion of those who have been married was 48.2% with 48.4% males and 47.9% females. The proportion of divorced was 1.3% with 0.8% males and 1.8% females and the proportion of widows among Palestinians residing in Lebanon was around 4.5% with 1.3% male widowers and 7.9% female widows, those figures being for the year 2010.

The proportion of Palestinian population in Lebanon who are above 15 years of age and who are uneducated was 28.3%, with 27.4% males and 29.3% females. On the other hand, 51.8% have completed elementary or preparatory school, with 51.1% males and 52.5 females, while 19.9% have high school diplomas or higher, with 21.6% males and 18.3% females in 2010.

Data also indicate that the average Palestinian household size was 4.4 persons in 2007. On the other hand, the total fertility rate was 3 births per woman in 2007, and the CBR was 21.8 births per one thousand of the population in the same year. The infant mortality rate in 2004 among Palestinian living in Lebanon was 19.2 deaths per one thousand live births, Whereas the mortality rate of children below 5 years of age was 20.2 deaths per one thousand live births in 2004.¹¹

The Palestinians in Lebanon continue to be denied several civil rights, including the right to own property and to work in many professions. In addition, the Lebanese political and legal environment is repelling when it comes to the Palestinians under the guise of preventing their naturalization in Lebanon.

With regard to the conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, UNRWA, in collaboration with the American University of Beirut (AUB), has conducted a socio-economic survey on a representative sample of 2,600 Palestine refugee households in Lebanon, in the summer of 2010. The goal of the survey, which was funded by the European Union, describes the living conditions and welfare status of Palestine refugees in Lebanon.

The results of the survey indicated that the number of Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon ranges between 260 and 280 thousand people, and that half of the population is under the age of 25. The results showed that the average household size was 4.5, and that 53% of the refugees are women. Two-thirds of the Palestinians live in refugee camps, while a third of them live in gatherings (mainly in camps vicinity). Half of the Palestinians live in South Lebanon (Tyre and Sidon), while a fifth live in Beirut, another fifth lives in the North, and 4% of the Palestinian population lives in the Beqa' Valley.

In terms of living standards, the results of the survey indicated that 6.6% of the Palestinians suffer from extreme poverty, i.e., they cannot meet their essential daily food needs, compared to 1.7% among Lebanese; 66.4% of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon were also found poor, i.e., they cannot meet their basic food and non-food needs, compared to 35% among Lebanese. The results showed that poverty is higher among refugees living inside camps than those in gatherings, and that more than 81% of all extremely poor refugees are in Sidon and Tyre, where one-third of all poor live in Tyre area.

In terms of employment, the results of the survey show that 56% of the Palestinians are jobless, and that 38% of the working age population are employed, while two thirds of Palestinians employed in elementary occupations (like street vendors, work in construction, agriculture) are poor. Employment has a small impact on reducing poverty but a large impact on reducing extreme poverty.

As regards education, the results of the survey show that half of young people of secondary school age (16–18 years old) are enrolled in schools or vocational training centers. The survey also shows that the high dropout rates and insufficient skills combined with significant labor market restrictions hamper refugees' ability

to find adequate jobs. Further, educational attainment is a good predictor for household socio-economic status and food security. Poverty incidence drops to 60.5% when the household head has an above primary educational attainment, and extreme poverty is almost divided by two. Moreover, it was found that 6% of the Palestinians hold a university degree, compared to 20% for the Lebanese.

In terms of housing and living conditions, the survey results indicate that 66% of houses suffer from dampness and leakage thus resulting in psychological and chronic illnesses. Bad housing is concentrated in the south of Lebanon. Furthermore, 8% of households live in shelters where the roof and/or walls are made of corrugated iron, wood or asbestos, while another 8% of families live in overcrowded conditions (more than three people in one room).¹²

6. General Comparisons Among Palestinians

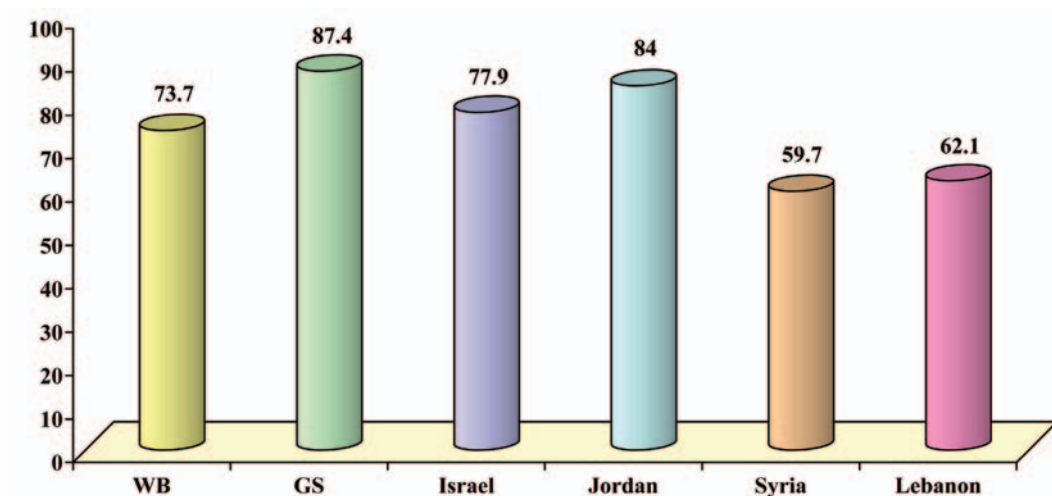
The following comparative table represents a summary of the most important comparisons of some demographic indicators of the Palestinian population, in 2007 and 2010 (unless otherwise indicated between parentheses).

Table 5/7: Selected Demographic Indicators of Palestinians by Residence¹³

Indicator	WB 2010	GS 2010	WB & GS 2010	Israel 2009	Jordan 2007	Syria 2007	Lebanon 2010
% of individuals 15 years or less	39.2	44.2	41.1	40 (2008)	35.9	33.1	30.4
% of individuals 65 years or over	3.2	2.4	2.9	3.1 (2008)	5.2	4.3	5
Dependency rate (per 100 individuals 15–64 years)	73.7	87.4	78.7	77.9 (2007)	84	59.7	62.1 (2007)
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	103.1	103.1	103.1	102.2	(...)	100.4 (2009)	102.5
CBR (births per 1,000 inhabitants)	30.1	37.1	32.8	26.2	(...)	29.3	21.8 (2007)
CDR (deaths per 1,000 inhabitants)	4.2	4	4.1	2.7	(...)	2.8 (2006)	(...)
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	4.1 (2007)	5.3 (2007)	4.6 (2007)	3.5	3.3	3.6	3 (2007)
Natural population growth rate	2.7	3.3	2.9	2.4	(...)	2.65	(...)
Average household size (individuals per house)	5.3	5.8	5.5	4.8	5.1	4.9	4.5

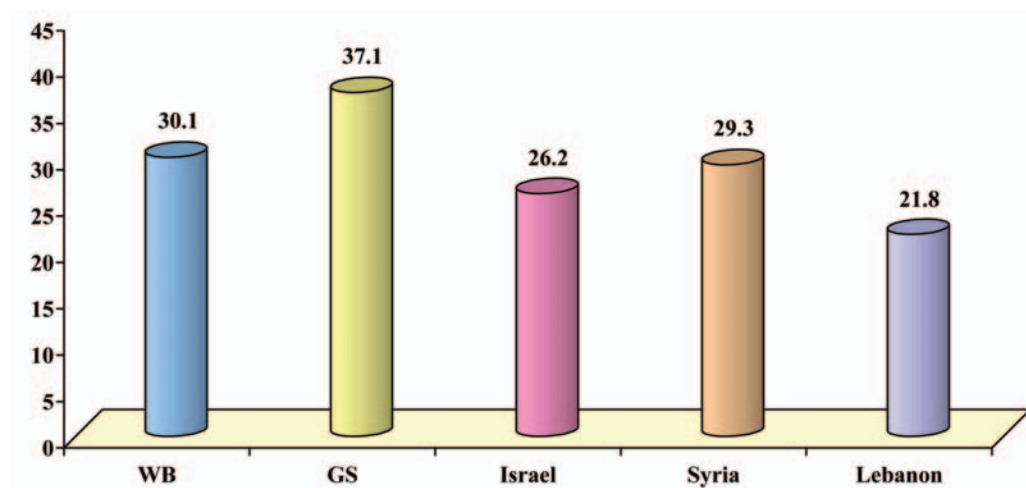
Note: (...) means data is not available.

Dependency Rates of Palestinians by Residence (%)



Note: The dependency rates in the WB and GS are those of 2010, while those in Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon are those of 2007.

CBR of Palestinians by Residence



Note: The CBRs in the WB and GS are in 2010, in Israel 2009, and in Syria and Lebanon 2007.

From the previous table, we note the following:

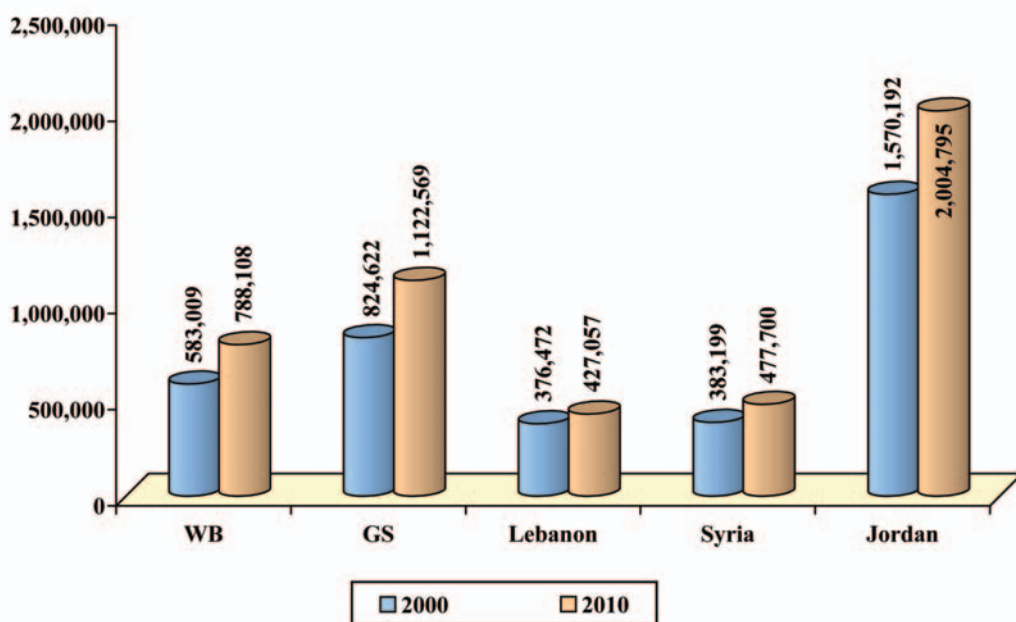
- The percentage of Palestinians aged less than 15 years is highest in GS and lowest in Lebanon.
- The dependency rate in GS is highest, followed by that of the Palestinian population in Jordan, then Israel and then the WB. This is while the dependency rates in Syria and Lebanon are the lowest. This goes hand in hand with the fact that the highest percentage of elderly, i.e., 65 years and over, was recorded in Jordan, followed by Lebanon, while the lowest is in GS.
- The CBRs are highest in GS and the WB, and the lowest are in Lebanon and Israel. Thus, there are demographic pressures, particularly in the GS.
- It is noted that the CDRs remain high in the WB and GS, reaching 4.1 in 2010, thus it increased more than the 3.9 of 2006. This is mainly due to the Israeli measures and policies over the decades, especially the killings it has carried out.
- It is noted that the natural population growth rate (the difference between the birth rate and the death rate) has remained unchanged throughout the areas controlled by the PA, while remaining high in GS compared to the WB.
- There is a constant decrease of the average household size in the WB and GS compared with the previous years, but this average remains the highest in the GS, with 5.8 members per house compared to only 5.3 in the WB. The lowest average household size is in Lebanon.

Third: The Palestinian Refugees

According to UNRWA records, the number of refugees registered as of 30/6/2010 is as per the following table. UNRWA notes that these figures “are based on UNRWA records, which are regularly updated; however, registration with the Agency is voluntary and these figures do not represent an accurate population record.” Until the preparation of the Arabic report, there was no updating of the numbers of Palestinian refugees after 30/9/2009, except for those registered (see tables 6/7 and 7/7).

Table 6/7: UNRWA-RPRs, 2000 & 2010¹⁴

Region	RPRs as of 30/6/2000	RPRs as of 30/6/2010	Annual increase in RPRs (%)
WB	583,009	788,108	3.1
GS	824,622	1,122,569	3.1
Lebanon	376,472	427,057	1.3
Syria	383,199	477,700	2.2
Jordan	1,570,192	2,004,795	2.5
Total	3,737,494	4,820,229	2.6

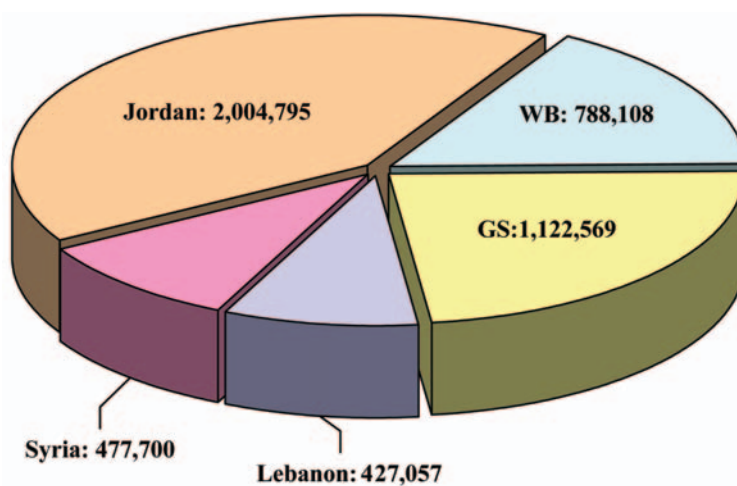
UNRWA-RPRs, 2000 & 2010

From the previous table, we note that during the period 2000–2010, the RPRs increased by about 1.1 million, at an annual growth rate of 2.6%. We also note that the highest annual growth rate of RPRs was in the WB and GS (3.1% annually), while the lowest was in Lebanon (1.3%).

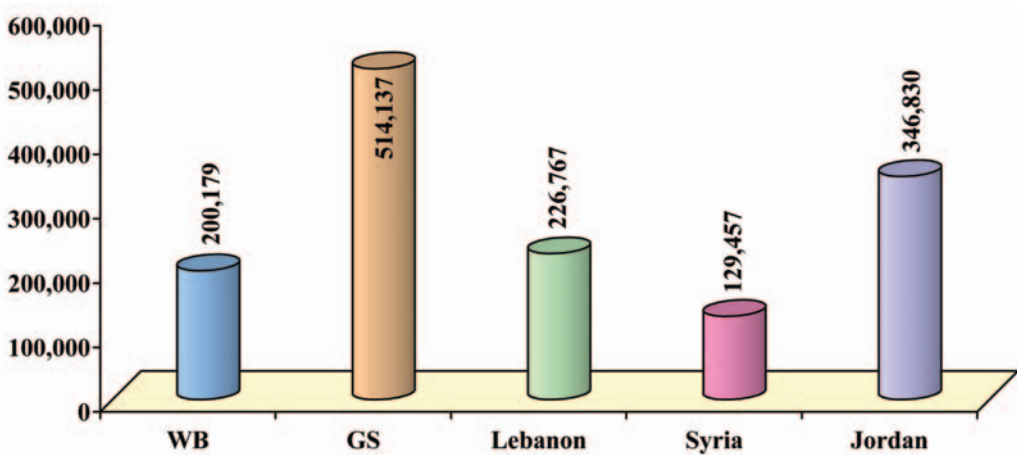
The following table summarizes the most important other characteristics of RPRs in Palestine and the Diaspora.

Table 7/7: UNRWA-RPRs, Their Births and Families by Region¹⁵

Region	WB	GS	Lebanon	Syria	Jordan	Total
RPRs (30/6/2010)	788,108	1,122,569	427,057	477,700	2,004,795	4,820,229
Births (30/9/2009)	7,309	23,710	3,539	7,892	18,744	61,149
Average family size 2006	4	4.6	3.9	4.2	5.1	4.6
Average family size (30/9/2009)	3.79	4.43	3.73	3.99	4.87	4.35
Families (30/9/2009)	204,674	248,057	113,594	117,806	405,666	1,089,797
Refugee camps (30/6/2010)	19	8	12	9	10	58
RPRs in Registered Refugee Camps (RRCs) (30/6/2010)	200,179	514,137	226,767	129,457	346,830	1,417,370
RRCs as % of RPRs 2006	25.8	47	52.9	26.6	17.7	29.8
RRCs as % of RPRs 2010	25.4	45.8	53.1	27.1	17.3	29.4

UNRWA-RPRs by Region as of 30/6/2010


UNRWA-RRCs by Region as of 30/6/2010



We can note from the previous table that the number of RPRs in UNRWA's five fields of operation as of 30/6/2010 is about 4.82 million; 41.6% live in Jordan, 39.6% in the 1967 occupied Palestinian territories (23.3% in GS and 16.4% in the WB), and the rest 18.8% live in Syria and Lebanon.

The RRCs as percentage of RPRs in 2010 amounted to 29.4% compared to 29.3% in 2009. Moreover, the RRCs as percentage of RPRs in Lebanon and GS is highest relative to the other regions.

The average family size here does not actually represent the reality of households (the extended family which lives together in one place), but rather the nuclear family which obtains an independent family card. Hence, it is not unusual that the average size of the nuclear family is less than the average household size. This average decreases with time, for it is noted that in all the regions where refugees are found that the average family size slightly decreased. The general average decreased from 4.6 members per family in 2006 to 4.35 members in 2009.

If we look at the number of RPRs in 40 years (1970–2010), we find that their number was 1,425,219 in the middle of 1970, and reached 4,820,229 as of 30/6/2010. The average annual growth rate of RPRs in the aforementioned period was thus found to be 3.1%. Based on this rate, and assuming it is stable in the future as it is calculated over a long period, the number of RPRs will double in about 22.7 years. And since the annual growth rate is constant, the annual average of 3.1% can be relied upon as a measure of the growth of the Palestinian refugee population worldwide.

Fourth: Demographic Growth Trends

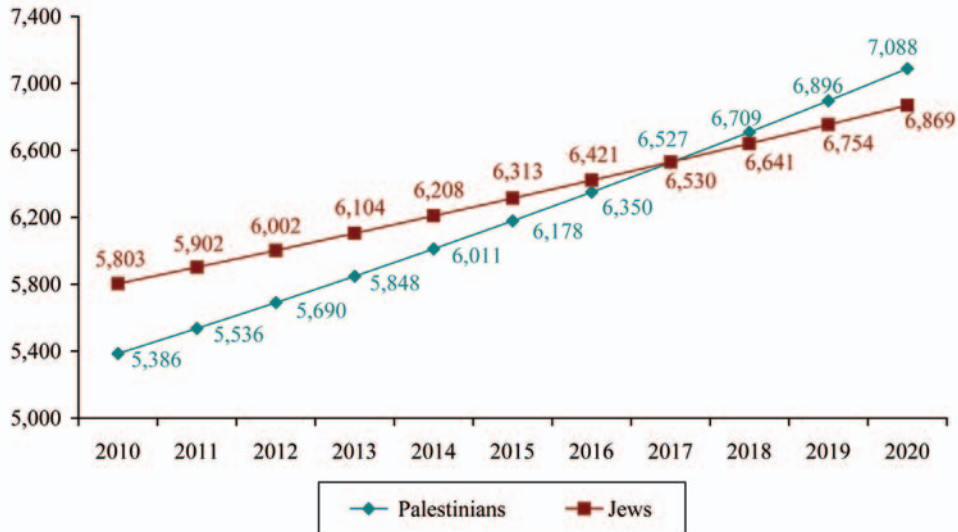
Despite the relative decrease of the natural growth rate of the Palestinian people, it remains high compared to other populations, and compared to Israelis, too.

With reference to the number of Palestinians in historic Palestine, according to the estimates of the PCBS, there were about 5.39 million people at the end of 2010, while the number of Jews amounted to 5.8 million according to the estimates of the CBS. Based on current annual growth rates (2010), which are 2.9% for the Palestinians living in the WB and GS, 2.4% for the Palestinians living in the territories occupied in 1948 (Israel) and 1.7% for the Jews there, the number of Palestinians and Jews in historic Palestine will become on par during 2017, when each population will be around 6.53 million. This is assuming that growth rates will remain the same. By the end of 2020, only 49.2% of the population will be Jews, as their number will reach 6.87 million as opposed to 7.09 million Palestinians.

Table 8/7: Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2010–2020 (thousands)¹⁶

Year	Palestinians			Jews
	WB & GS	Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)	Historic Palestine	
2010	4,109	1,277	5,386	5,803
2011	4,228	1,308	5,536	5,902
2012	4,351	1,339	5,690	6,002
2013	4,477	1,371	5,848	6,104
2014	4,607	1,404	6,011	6,208
2015	4,740	1,438	6,178	6,313
2016	4,878	1,472	6,350	6,421
2017	5,019	1,508	6,527	6,530
2018	5,165	1,544	6,709	6,641
2019	5,315	1,581	6,896	6,754
2020	5,469	1,619	7,088	6,869

Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2010–2020 (thousands)



Fifth: Israeli Measures to Influence the Palestinian Demographics

The year 2010 witnessed an unprecedented frenzied campaign in the demographic conflict in the Palestinian land, especially in Jerusalem and its suburbs. The number of Palestinian inhabitants represents what is known as the demographic threat, and is used as a double pretext by Israel; one to confirm that the Palestinians are a minority, and hence they either accept the majority or face exile (transfer) or genocide, and the second to claim that the Palestinians are a demographic time bomb whose explosion cannot be awaited. Hence, all the means are used to displace, imprison, and kill the Palestinians and tighten their economic and social life conditions. Therefore, both trends have the same objective.

There is an outcry in Israel and the world regarding what is known as “the Jewishness of Israel.” It has become customary to raise issues concerning the final status and the role of the Arab minority in Israel, and the insinuations by some Israeli leaders that the Palestinians may be expelled to PA territories.

This is in addition to persistent attempts to expel the Palestinians, confiscate their lands, and prevent them from building over their lands. Israel also pursues a policy of systemic house demolition under the pretext that they are unlicensed, in addition to marginalizing the Palestinians and isolating them from their brethren and their Arab and Islamic nation, while putting all kinds of pressure and measures to influence the demographic reality of the Palestinians living within the Green Line.

Jerusalem and the Triangle region in Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 represent a real and serious demographic battlefield. Specialists expect a continued increase in the number of Palestinians for the coming years. Therefore Israel will continue taking measures to curb this growth by expelling Palestinians and bringing in more Jews. It will continue to encourage higher fertility rate among Jewish women, while supporting family planning programs for Palestinian women.

According to the JIIS, the most important Israeli think tank on the issue of Jerusalem, “there has been an evident decline in the proportionate size of Jerusalem’s Jewish population,” over the years, with a concomitant increase in the proportion of the Palestinian population. The proportion of the Jewish population fell from 74% in 1967 to 72% in 1980, and 65% in 2008. Conversely, the Palestinian population rose from 26% in 1967 to 28% in 1980, and 35% in 2008. This is attributable to the fact that the Palestinian population increase in 2008 was twice the Jewish population increase, with the Palestinian growth rate amounting to 3.1%.

According to the study, at the end of 2008 there were about 191 thousand residential apartments in Jerusalem; 150,700 apartments in Jewish neighborhoods (including the settlements established in East Jerusalem) and 40,100 apartments in the Arab neighborhoods. This is while the average housing density (square meters per person) in the Jewish neighborhoods is significantly lower than in Arab neighborhoods. Among the Jewish population, this was 24 square meters per person, where in the neighborhoods with a majority Haredi population, the figure was 16 square meters per person, while in neighborhoods with a majority “general” population (secular, traditional, and religious) it was 29 square meters. In Arab neighborhoods, housing density was 12 square meters per person. Average housing density in Jerusalem was 19 square meters per person.¹⁷



Sixth: The Palestinian Emigration and Brain Drain

1. Emigration¹⁸

The results of the Migration's Survey in the Palestinian Territory, 2010, indicate that more than seven thousand people emigrate every year, and that 32,848 persons emigrated from WB and GS during 2005–2009, excluding the families who had emigrated in their entirety.

The results have also shown that around 60% of emigrants were males, while the percentage of female emigrants was 40%. It was also shown that 33% of the emigrants are youths (15–29 years), and that 25.6% are of the age group (30–44 years). In addition, the findings of the survey showed similarities in the age structure of emigrants by sex, while the percentage of male emigrants is higher than female ones with sex ratio 152.2 males per 100 female.

The survey also showed that Jordan, the Gulf States, and the United States are the primary destination for the emigrants, where 23.5% of emigrants left to Jordan, 20.4% to the Gulf States, and 21.6% to the US. Regarding reasons or motives behind emigration, the findings indicated that 34.4% of total emigrants left for education, 14.6% for improving living conditions, while 13.7% left because of the lack of job opportunities.

The survey shows that the desire to emigrate in 2010 was lower than in 2009, where the results showed that 13.3% of persons aged 15–59 years desire to emigrate, with 13.4% in WB and 12.4% in GS, despite the difficult conditions in the latter. This is while a survey of the Palestinian public opinion conducted by the Near East Consulting team showed that 23% of Palestinians are considering emigration, with 17% in WB and 30% in GS.

The results also show that of the persons aged 15–59 years who desire to emigrate 23.1% favored the Gulf countries as a destination, 15.1% preferred America, and 27.8% other foreign countries. This is while 17.5% were undecided regarding the country of destination.

The results indicated that 39.3% wish to emigrate to improve their living conditions, 15.2% due to the lack of job opportunities, and 18.7% for education. The significant difference in the distribution of main reasons behind the desire to emigrate between persons in the WB and GS is the lack of security (13.8% in the GS compared to 5.6% in the WB).

However, 75% of the age group 15–59 years who do not wish to emigrate have said that the reason behind their decision is the fact that Palestine is a holy land and that they feel comfortable only at home.

2. Return Migration¹⁹

The results of the Migration's Survey in the Palestinian Territory, 2010, showed that more than a quarter of the returnees returned prior to 1990, while a third returned during the period 1995–1999; a period that witnessed the return of a large number of Palestinians from abroad as a result of the peace agreements and the establishment of the PA. The number of returnees then declined during the period 2000–2009, as a result of the second Palestinian *Intifadah* (*al-Aqsa Intifadah*) and the large scale Israeli incursions. Meanwhile, for the past five years (2005–2009), around 5–7 thousand people returned to the WB and GS, with an annual average of 6,100 people.

According to the survey's results, 36.7% of the returnees were youths from the age group 15–29 years, while the percentage of the returnees aged 60 years and above was 8.9%. The percentage of the returnees below 15 years of age was 6% of the total number of returnees, and these percentages are roughly equal between the WB and the GS.

The results showed that 36.1% of the returnees came from Jordan. This group represented 42.7% of the total number of returnees to the WB and 6.5% of the total number of returnees to GS. The returnees from the Gulf States constituted 29% of the total number of returnees, and represented 28.1% of the total number of returnees to the WB and 33.2% of the total number of returnees to GS.

Seventh: The Palestinians Outside Palestine and the Right of Return

Throughout the year, there were a number of activities and events calling for the implementation of the right of return and for the promotion of public education on this right whether among the Palestinians in the Diaspora or in refugee camps. As usual in the month of *Nakba* anniversary, the Eights Palestinians in Europe Conference convened in the German capital, Berlin. Thousands from across Europe participated in the event, and prominent



Palestinians including leaders such as Sheikh Ra'id Salah, head of the Islamic Movement in the Green Line, took part in the conference, as well.

The conference was attended by three generations of Palestinians in Europe, who proclaimed during the conference that they “hold fast to their rights to resist Israeli occupation by all means guaranteed by all humanitarian laws and charters.” They announced that their right of return to their land and home “is an inalienable human right guaranteed under international law,” and vowed that they “will never stop until Palestine is liberated.” The conference’s theme was “Return is Inevitable & Freedom for our Prisoners.” During the event, a number of speakers gave accounts of their participation in the Freedom Flotilla. Those speakers included ‘Adel ‘Abdullah, secretary general of Palestinians in Europe Conference, Majed al-Zeer, the conference’s president, and Munir Shafiq, representing the Arab National Congress, the National Islamic Congress and the Arab Parties Congress, in addition to ‘Abdul Ghani al-Tamimi, the head of Palestinian Scholars Abroad. The speakers at the conference also included Bilal al-Hassan, the spokesperson for the National Committee for the Protection of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, Shakib Bin Makhlof, head of the Union of Islamic Organizations in Europe, and Fadwa Barghouti, wife of the imprisoned Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti, in addition to many Palestinian personalities, politicians, writers, thinkers, journalists, academics and others.²⁰

On 13–19/1/2010, the Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) in London held its Palestine Memorial Week for the purpose of marking the first anniversary of Israeli onslaught on GS. The event included seminars, speeches, the launch of the biggest parliamentary delegation to GS, film screening and visual protests, where some hundred activists played dead for a few minutes in remembrance of civilians killed in GS by Israel.²¹ In addition, PRC led and participated in a number of European delegations that visited GS in solidarity with the blockaded people there. It visited the Palestinians stranded in refugee camps on the Iraqi borders, and also followed up the conditions of refugees in Cyprus, Brazil, India and Europe. The European delegations also visited the Palestinian refugee camps in Syria and Lebanon, in particular the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp and the mass graves of the victims of the Sabra and Shatila massacres.

In Syria, the Palestinian Return Community (Wajeb), based in Damascus, continued to hold the Palestinian Village Day events, which exceeded twenty. In January 2010, Wajeb organized the Tira Village Festival in Ein el-Tal (Hindrat) refugee camp in Aleppo, which was attended by the camp's refugees and refugees from Tira itself.²² Then, the Jish Village Festival was held in March 2010 in the Neirab refugee camp east of Aleppo.²³

In Lebanon, on 30/6/2010, Thabit Organization For The Right of Return launched the first part of its project A Story of a Village in Palestine in the Burj Barajneh refugee camp, which focused on the village of Kuwaykat.²⁴ In November 2010, Thabit held the Festival of al-Hula Plain Villages.

Regarding panel discussions and seminars, Wajeb held a panel discussion on the conditions of Palestinian refugees in Syria, on 29/4/2010, at the Damascene Hall in The National Museum of Damascus.²⁵ While on 16/9/2010, Thabit Organization For The Right of Return held in Beirut a law and media seminar on the occasion of the 28th anniversary of the massacre of Sabra and Shatila. The seminar was entitled Where has the Legal Proceedings for the Sabra and Shatila Massacre Reached?, and was attended by researchers, legal experts, journalists and academicians.²⁶ On 22/12/2010, a panel discussion entitled Palestinian NGOs in Lebanon and Their Role in Supporting the Civil Cases Filed by Refugees and the Right of Return, was held in the Lebanese capital Beirut.²⁷

Another significant addition to the events of 2010 is the official launching of the National Project for the Preservation of Palestinian Family Roots—Howiyya. It is a specialized project aimed at documenting the history of Palestinian families and their genealogy, complete with photographs, news and narrations pertaining to all Palestinian families. The project also launched its website (www.howiyya.com) which provides an opportunity for Palestinian generations to trace the history of their families and participate in documenting it. It makes it easy for them to build their family tree by using the latest programs. The website collects hundreds of family trees, and hosts a large number of photos and documents in the families' pages. Moreover, the website covers and documents all Palestinian cities and villages.

On 5–11/12/2010, and under the motto “our right to return to our homeland is inalienable and cannot to be nullified by a statute of limitations,” the Global Palestine Right of Return Coalition conducted its 10th meeting in Beirut. It was



hosted by the Center for the Rights of Refugees (Aidoun) and the Coordination Forum of NGOs Working in the Palestinian Refugee Communities in Lebanon, with the participation of a number of guests, observers and experts interested in the issue of refugees and their right of return. On 6/12/2010, the official meeting commenced at the UNESCO Palace under the auspices of Lebanese Minister of Information Dr. Tarek Mitri and in the presence of representatives of the Embassy of Palestine as well as of the various Palestinian factions and a number of Lebanese parties. In a speech on behalf of the Coalition, Jaber Suleiman, stressed that it will uphold the refugees right of return. He also reviewed the Coalition's activities and efforts during the previous year, as well as the challenges facing the refugee issue. Furthermore, he said that granting Palestinian refugees in Lebanon basic human rights does not conflict with or negate their right of return. Dr. Salman Abu Sitta also gave a historic overview of the Zionist settlement, occupation and usurpation of Palestinian territories.

The participants then made a final statement which said that the Palestinian people have the right to return to their homes from which they were expelled in 1948 and to gain restitution of their property; they also have the right to material and moral compensation for their losses. The participants then called for unifying the refugee issue within the context of the unity of the land and the people in Mandatory Palestine and in exile, and stressed the need to consolidate the discourse on the right of return and elevate it to a level which harnesses and unifies the energies of the Palestinian people and all its committees. The participants also called for the rejection of any settlement to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict which is not anchored on the basis of national inalienable rights, international law and the resolutions of the international community. They also called upon all Palestinian parties of different persuasions to work hard to ensure immediate reconciliation between the warring Palestinian factions, in order to restore national unity. They proclaimed that the return of the Palestinian people to their original homes is a right not to be nullified by a statute of limitations, and is not up for a referendum vote, as it is an inalienable individual and collective right which cannot be bartered with any other right.²⁸

Conclusion

The indicators show that the Palestinian people are young, vibrant and enjoy high natural growth rates compared to other peoples around the world, despite the gradual decrease of this rate in recent years. This growth rate will enable the Palestinian people, by the end of 2017, to exceed the Jewish population in historic Palestine. This is in addition to the 5.75 million Palestinians or so in the Diaspora, who grow more determined every day to secure their right of return.

On the other hand, Israeli efforts to affirm the “Jewishness” of the state are growing more sinister, in conjunction with denying the Palestinians their rights in their own homeland, and enforcing expulsion and “transfer” programs. This happens while placing the Palestinians under cruel economic, social, and security conditions that force them to emigrate, not to mention the risks of reaching a peaceful settlement that leads to the forfeiture of their right of return.

The Palestinian people are thus required to thwart the Israeli schemes, and to uphold their right of return and all their rights to their lands, freedom and independence. The Palestinian people must reaffirm their commitment to their inalienable rights, which are their common denominator, on the basis of which national unity projects are established, and the Palestinian political house is put in order.



Endnotes

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- ³ PCBS, *al-Filastiniyyun fi Nihayat 'Am 2010*. See also PCBS, On the Eve of International Population Day 11/7/2009, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/population_dE.pdf
- ⁴ http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Illiteracy_2010A.pdf; and http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Illiteracy_2010E.pdf. See also Adult and Youth Literacy: Global Trends in Gender Parity, site of UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), UIS Fact Sheet, no. 3, September 2010, http://www.uis.unesco.org/FactSheets/Documents/Fact_Sheet_2010_Lit_EN.pdf
- ⁵ PCBS, Press Release by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) on the Occasion of Arab Housing Day, 2/10/2011, http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/HousingDy_2011E.pdf
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- ⁷ PCBS, *Migration's Survey in the Palestinian Territory 2010: Press Release* (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2010), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Migration_e.pdf
- ⁸ See PCBS, *al-Filastiniyyun fi Nihayat 'Am 2010*; and PCBS, *Kitab Filastin al-Ihsa'i al-Sanawi Raqm "11"* (Statistical Abstract of Palestine No. (11)) (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2010), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book1724.pdf
- ⁹ PCBS, *al-Filastiniyyun fi Nihayat 'Am 2010*.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² See UNRWA-AUB Socio-Economic Survey of Palestine Refugees in Lebanon, 15/12/2010, <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=865>
- ¹³ The table is assembled by the researcher. See Mohsen M. Saleh (editor), *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10* (Beirut: al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations, January 2011), p. 405; and PCBS, *al-Filastiniyyun fi Nihayat 'Am 2010*.

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For further information see <http://jiis.org/?cmd=statistic.293>
- ¹⁸ See PCBS, *Migration's Survey in the Palestinian Territory 2010: Press Release*; and Near East Consulting: 23% Think of Immigrating & 70% are Peace Advocates, site of Near East Consulting, January 2010, <http://www.neareastconsulting.com/press/2010/pppJan-pressrelease-2010Arabic.pdf> (in Arabic)
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- ²² Site of Palestinian Return Community (Wajeb), http://www.wajeb.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2894&Itemid=324
- ²³ Site of Wajeb, http://www.wajeb.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3256&Itemid=324
- ²⁴ Thabit Organization for The Right of Return, <http://www.thabit-lb.org/ar/Default.asp?ContentID=192&menuID=19>
- ²⁵ Wajeb, http://www.wajeb.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4536&Itemid=334
- ²⁶ Thabit, <http://www.thabit-lb.org/ar/default.asp?menuID=26&contentID=193>
- ²⁷ Thabit, <http://www.thabit-lb.org/ar/Default.asp?ContentID=12&menuID=19>
- ²⁸ Final Statement: Global Palestine Right of Return Coalition-10th Annual Meeting-Beirut 5–11 December 2010, Badil Resource Center for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, 11/12/2010, <http://www.badil.org/en/press-releases/135-2010/2863-press-eng-32>; and see the final statement of the tenth meeting of the Global Palestine Right of Return Coalition, Beirut, 5–11/12/2010, <http://www.rorcoalition.org/meetings/10th-01.htm> (in Arabic)

Chapter Eight

*The Economic Situation in the
WB and GS*

The Economic Situation in the WB and GS

Introduction

While the reasons of the economic crises around the world have much to do with problems emanating from rising prices, inflation, the discrepancy between supply and demand, scarcity of resources, volatility of stock and bond markets, unemployment and poverty, the essence of the problems faced by the Palestinian economy is the Israeli occupation. Indeed, it is a brutal occupation seeking to destroy the infrastructure, agricultural wealth and factories, and to disrupt trade, confiscate property, besiege people and create repellent environment which suppresses the promising potentials of the Palestinian economy.

This chapter tries to provide an overview of the Palestinian economy in the WB and the GS during 2010 while trying to explore its future prospects. Even if the economy has achieved some positive results, as we shall see, its development depends on a number of factors the most notable of which are ending the occupation, achieving security and political stability besides the full investment of material and human resources in a free, transparent environment which fights corruption.

First: Indicators of Economic Development

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is considered an important indicator of national economic growth which reflects the changes in production activity in a specific year compared to previous years. Thus, it facilitates the assessment of the overall economic performance and the scope of its progress or decline.

Despite the criticism directed at this indicator, it is still considered one of the most important progress criteria worldwide together with GDP per capita.

1. GDP Growth

Generally speaking, the year 2010 showed an increase of 9.3% in the GDP in the WB and GS, excluding those parts of Jerusalem which were annexed by Israel in 1967, as compared to 7.4% in 2009. The GDP increased from \$5,241.3 million

to \$5,728 million. The growth achieved in the first half of the year was relatively high amounting to an average of 5.5% as compared to 3.8% in the second half of the same year (see table 1/8).¹ These results are consistent with the expectations of the World Bank and the IMF regarding the continued growth, yet at less frequency.²

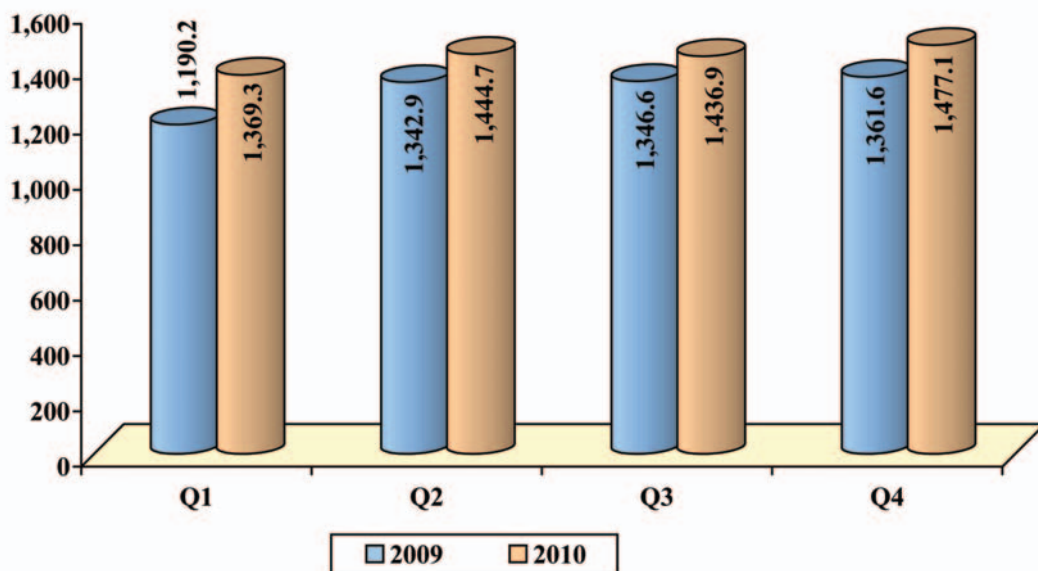
Table 1/8: Quarterly and Annual GDP Growth in the WB and GS 2009–2010 at Constant Prices: Base Year 2004 (\$ million)

Quarter (Q)	2009	2010*	Annual and quarterly growth rate (%)
Q1	1,190.2	1,369.3	3.6
Q2	1,342.9	1,444.7	1.9
Q3	1,346.6	1,436.9	1.7
Q4	1,361.6	1,477.1	2.1
Total	5,241.3	5,728	9.3

Note: The data excludes those parts of Jerusalem which were annexed by Israel in 1967, and this will be applied to all tables in this chapter.

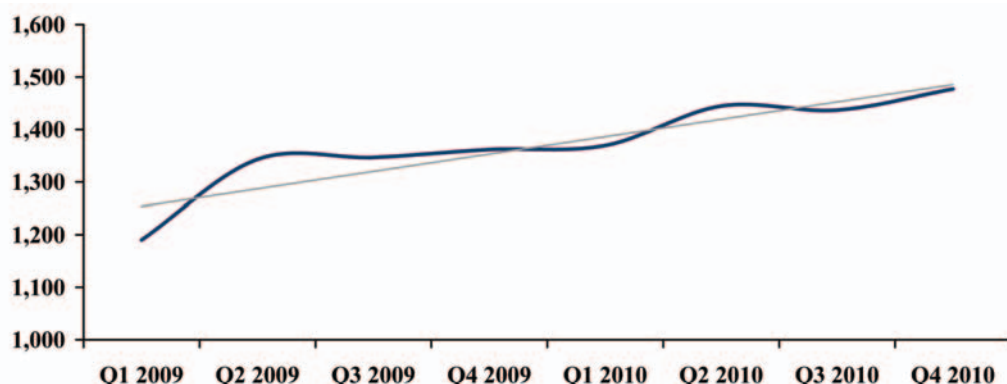
* Figures of the first three Qs are second revision while those of Q4 are flash estimates.

Quarterly GDP in the WB and GS 2009–2010 (\$ million)



Tracing the quarterly growth of the GDP in 2009 and 2010 shows a growth estimated at 3.1%. Thus, the general track of the growth tended to increase despite its fluctuation where an increase amounting to \$33.1 million was achieved every quarter year starting from \$1,222.2 as shown in the following chart.

General Trend of the Quarterly GDP Growth 2009–2010 (\$ million)



Tracing the growth of the GDP over a period of time extending from 1999 to 2010 shows that an average annual growth has been achieved at 2.2%, i.e., the GDP tends to increase albeit slightly (see table 2/8).

Table 2/8: GDP in the WB and GS 1999–2010 at Constant Prices* (\$ million)³

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
GDP	4,511.7	4,118.5	3,765.2	3,264.1	3,749.6	4,198.4
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	+8.8	– 8.7	– 8.6	– 13.3	+14.9	+12

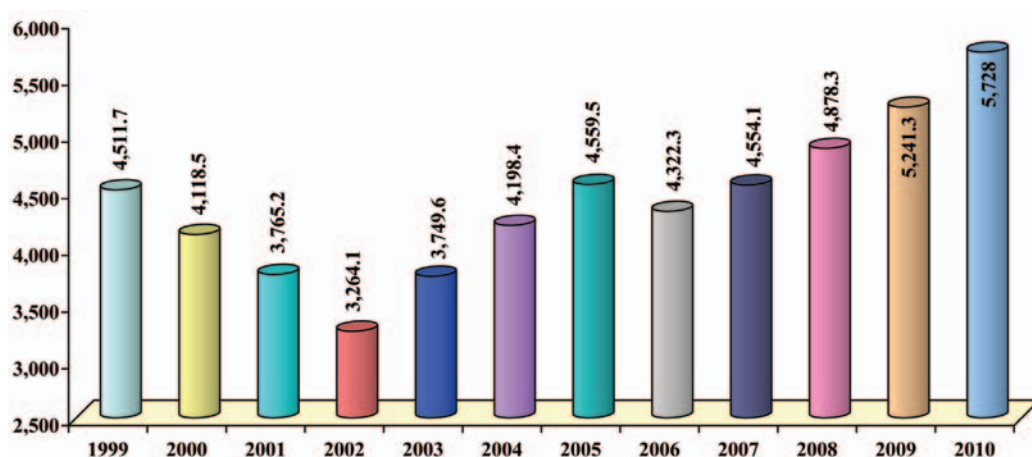
Year	2005	2006	2007	2008**	2009**	2010***
GDP	4,559.5	4,322.3	4,554.1	4,878.3	5,241.3	5,728
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	+8.6	– 5.2	+5.4	+7.1	+7.4	+9.3

*Base year for the period 1999–2003 is 1997 and for the period 2004–2010 is 2004. This should apply to all tables.

** First revision.

*** Flash estimates.

GDP in the WB and GS 1999–2010 (\$ million)



Comparing the figures in the above two tables, shows that the GDPs in 2009 and 2010 are the best as compared to 1999–2010 period.

On the other hand, tracking the Israeli GDP which amounted to \$195,377 million in 2009 and \$217,134 million in 2010, we notice that it is 38 folds higher than the Palestinian GDP (3,791%). This discrepancy shows the dire impact of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian economy and the repercussions of preventing the Palestinians from using their potentials freely and efficiently.

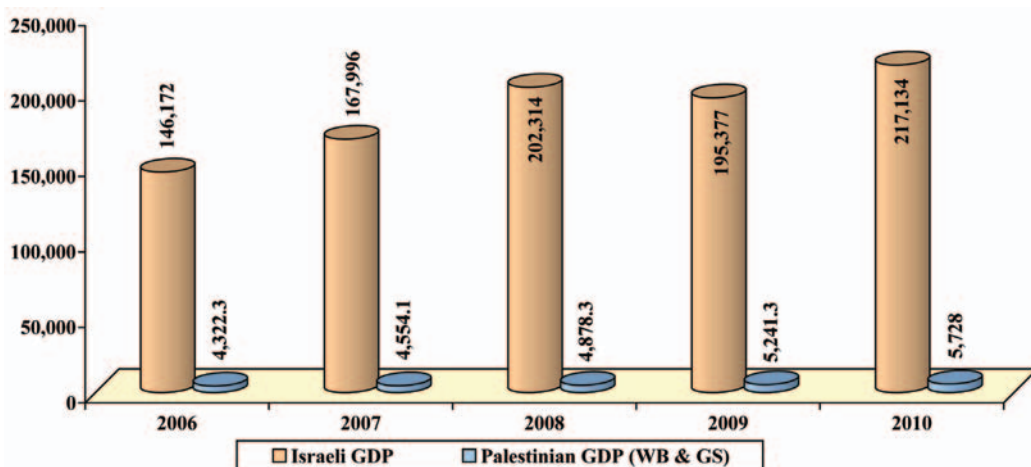
Table 3/8: Comparing the Israeli and Palestinian GDP 2006–2010
(\$ million)⁴

Year	Israeli GDP	Palestinian GDP (WB & GS)
2006	146,172	4,322.3
2007	167,996	4,554.1
2008	202,314	4,878.3*
2009	195,377	5,241.3*
2010	217,134	5,728**

* First revision.

** Flash estimates.

Comparing the Israeli and Palestinian GDP 2006–2010 (\$ million)



The GDP of the WB represented the greater part of the GDP in the WB and GS as it amounted to 76.5% in 2010 compared to 23.5% in the GS. This means that the GS share in the GDP is low especially when compared to the total population in the WB and GS. The population in the latter reached 1.56 million in 2010, i.e., 38% of the total Palestinian population in the WB and GS.⁵ The difference in the GDPs of the WB and GS dates back to before 1967 and is due to many factors, mainly the large disparity in the population size between the two, their workforce, land and natural resources. The following table displays the quarterly GDP growth in the WB and GS in 2010.

Table 4/8: Quarterly GDP Growth in the WB and GS 2010
at Constant Prices (\$ million)⁶

Quarter	WB		GS		WB & GS	
	GDP	%	GDP	%	GDP	%
Q1*	1,046.7	(...)	322.6	(...)	1,369.3	(...)
Q2*	1,118.9	+6.9	325.8	+1	1,444.7	+5.5
Q3*	1,078.4	– 3.6	358.5	+10	1,436.9	– 0.5
Q4**	1,137.4	+5.5	339.7	– 5.2	1,477.1	+2.8
Total	4,381.4	(...)	1,346.6	(...)	5,728	(...)

Note: (...) means unavailable data and this should apply to all tables.

* Second revision.

** Flash estimates.

The General Trend of the Quarterly GDP Growth in the WB and GS 2010 (\$ million)

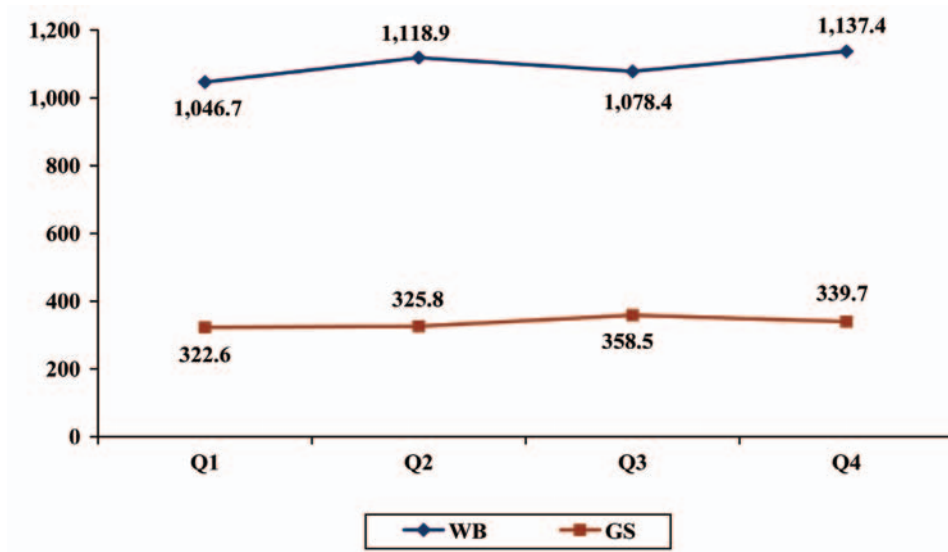


Table 4/8 shows the clear disparity in the quarterly GDP growth rates in the WB and GS. Thus, a positive 5.5% growth was achieved in Q4 2010 in the WB compared to Q3 2010, while a negative 5.2% growth was achieved in the GS over the same period.

It is striking that a negative growth rate of 3.6% was recorded in Q3 2010 in the WB as compared to that of Q2 2010, while the growth rate increased by 10% in the GS over the same period. Despite the siege, high growth was achieved after Israel was forced to take additional measures to ease the access restrictions that it had imposed on GS, in a partial or limited way. These measures followed Israel's attack on the Freedom Flotilla in late May 2010 and led to an increase in the number of truckloads entering GS from 2,425 on a monthly average in the first half of 2010 to 4,167 truckloads in the second half, i.e., a 71.8% increase. Consequently, this increase was reflected on the level of production and economic growth in Q3 and Q4. However, this level remained low compared to the January 2005–May 2007 monthly average of 10,400 truckloads.⁷ Thus it could be said that the GDP growth in the WB and GS varied from one period of time to another.

The disparity between the economic situation of the WB and GS was further enhanced by the Israeli siege and the consequent measures in addition to the current state of Palestinian division. Indeed, it has attracted the attention of research centers concerned with studying economic issues in the WB and GS.⁸

It is worth mentioning that the growth was partly achieved because of the international support for the PA, which amounted to \$1,763.1 billion in 2008 and continued in 2009 with slight deterioration as it amounted to \$1,401.7 billion. In 2010, this support decreased to around \$1,277 billion.⁹

Gross National Disposable Income (GNDI)

On another hand, it is possible to benefit from the indicators of the GNDI measures available income of residents, which can be spent on consumption of goods and services (locally produced or imported goods and services) or for savings. GNDI can be measured by adding the following components: Gross National Income (GNI), current payable current taxes on income and wealth and others payable to residents, residents social security contributions and revenues, net insurance premiums and claims other than life insurance payable to residents, local different transactions, current transactions of non-residents (which can take any of the aforementioned forms), less the same articles above on payments side.

GNDI can also be measured in a simplified way by adding the net transactions from non residents to the GNI.

Table 5/8: GNI and GNDI 2008–2010 at Constant Prices (\$ million)¹⁰

Year	Indicator	WB		GS		WB & GS	
		Value	%	Value	%	Value	%
2008	GNI	4,159.4	76.9	1,250.4	23.1	5,409.8	100
	GNDI	5,897.3	71	2,411.2	29	8,308.5	100
2009	GNI	4,467.2	78.1	1,249.5	21.9	5,716.7	100
	GNDI	5,643.7	73.5	2,038.9	26.5	7,682.6	100
2010*	GNI	4,797.7	79.4	1,243.3	20.6	6,041	100
	GNDI	5,041	71	2,062	29	7,103.8	100

* The figures of 2010 are estimated data based on the growth rates of 2008 and 2009.

2. The GDP per Capita Growth

This measure is considered one of the most widespread indicators reflecting the average per capita income owing to the ease of calculation and the possibility of comparing it on the domestic and international levels. However, it does not reflect the distribution of income among citizens and thus remains a general normative indicator.

In addition, the calculation of the GDP per capita comes in response to the increase in the Palestinian population size, whether from one quarter year to another or from one year to another; where this change is continuously increasing in spite of the natural population decline.

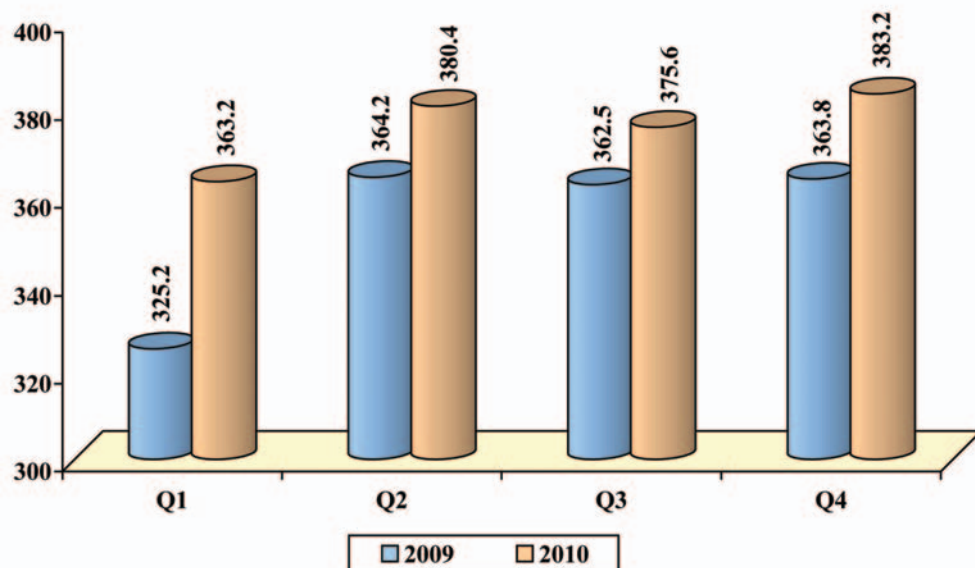
The natural population growth rate in the WB and GS has reached 2.9% in the mid of 2010, with 2.7% in the WB and 3.3% in GS.¹¹ This means that to keep the GDP per capita without any decrease then it is important to maintain a minimum of 2.9% of GDP growth at constant prices.

Since the society's aspirations require the achievement of a further increase of GDP which leads to improving the standards of living of the population, the efforts should always be directed at achieving a GDP growth higher than the natural population increase. This is what actually happened in 2010 and what is expected to happen in the coming years.

The GDP per capita in 2010 has increased to \$1,502.4 compared to \$1,415.7 in 2009 thus achieving a growth estimated at 6.1%. Table 6/8 displays the evolution of the quarterly GDP per capita in 2009 and 2010.

**Table 6/8: Quarterly Evolution of GDP per Capita in the WB and GS
2009–2010 at Constant Prices (\$) ¹²**

Quarter	2009		2010	
	GDP per capita	Quarterly growth (%)	GDP per capita	Quarterly growth (%)
Q1	325.2	(...)	363.2	– 0.2
Q2	364.2	+12	380.4	+4.7
Q3	362.5	– 0.5	375.6	– 1.3
Q4	363.8	+0.4	383.2	+2
Total	1,415.7	(...)	1,502.4	(...)

GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 2009–2010 (\$)

Comparing the GDP in the WB and GS on one hand versus the GDP per capita on another hand, we notice that the GDP per capita remains always lower than the growth of the GDP given that there is a population growth to be taken into account.

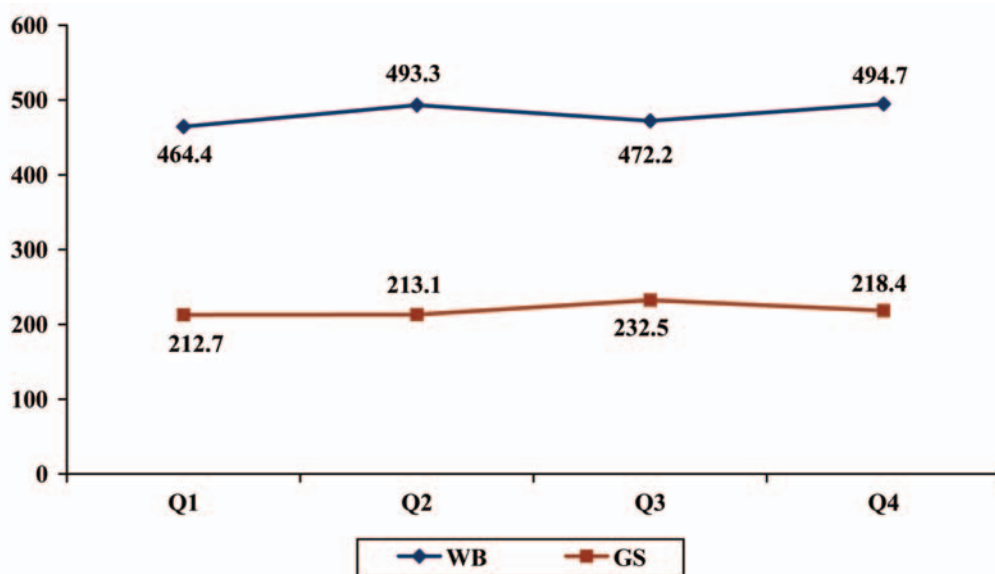
However, if we compare the 2010 GDP per capita in the WB with that in GS, we notice a discrepancy between the two sides and a higher level in the WB. In the WB, the per capita has achieved a positive growth of 4.8% in Q4 2010 compared to the Q3 of the same year, while GS achieved a negative growth of 6.1% over the same period (see table 7/8).

It is striking that a negative growth rate of 4.3% was recorded in Q3 2010 in the WB as compared to that of Q2 2010, while the growth rate increased by 9.1% in the GS over the same period. This increase is an outcome of the Israeli measures to ease the access restrictions that it had imposed on GS. It had positively reflected on the GDP and consequently on the GDP per capita. In this respect, the value added by construction sector in the GS GDP increased from \$27 million in Q2 2010 to \$46.2 million in Q3 2010. However, it decreased in the WB from \$110.7 million to \$100.9 million over the same period.

Table 7/8: Quarterly Evolution of GDP per Capita in the WB and GS
2010 at Constant Prices (\$) ¹³

Quarter	WB		GS		WB & GS	
	GDP per capita	Quarterly growth (%)	GDP per capita	Quarterly growth (%)	GDP per capita	Quarterly growth (%)
Q1	464.4	(...)	212.7	(...)	363.2	(...)
Q2	493.3	+ 6.2	213.1	+ 0.2	380.4	+ 4.7
Q3	472.2	- 4.3	232.5	+ 9.1	375.6	- 1.3
Q4	494.7	+ 4.8	218.4	- 6.1	383.2	+ 2
Total	1,924.6	(...)	876.7	(...)	1,502.4	(...)

General Trend of the Quarterly Evolution of GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 2010 (\$)



The GDPs per capita in the WB and GS in 1999–2010 show that in 1999 it reached \$1,612 and then deteriorated and fluctuated in the following years without restoring its original size (see table 8/8).

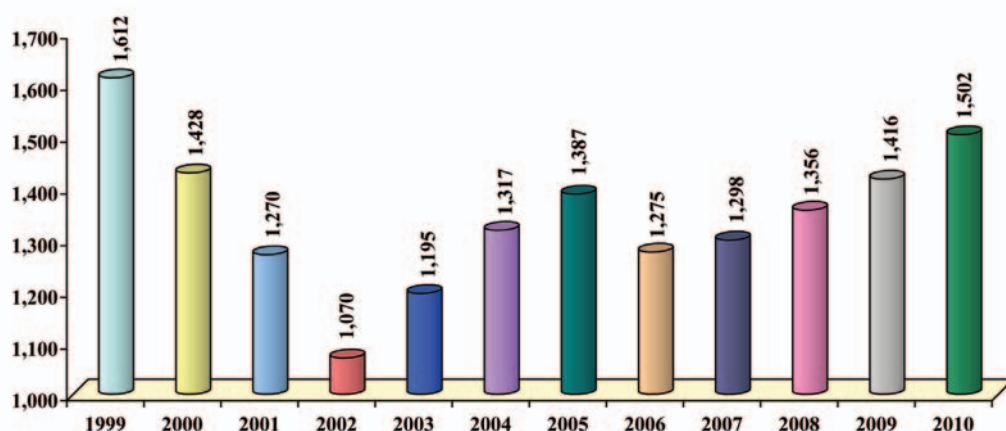
Table 8/8: GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 1999–2010
at Constant Prices (\$) ¹⁴

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Annual value	1,612	1,428	1,270	1,070	1,195	1,317

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Annual value	1,387	1,275	1,298	1,356	1,416	1,502

Note: The figures above are rounded to the nearest integer.

GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 1999–2010 (\$)



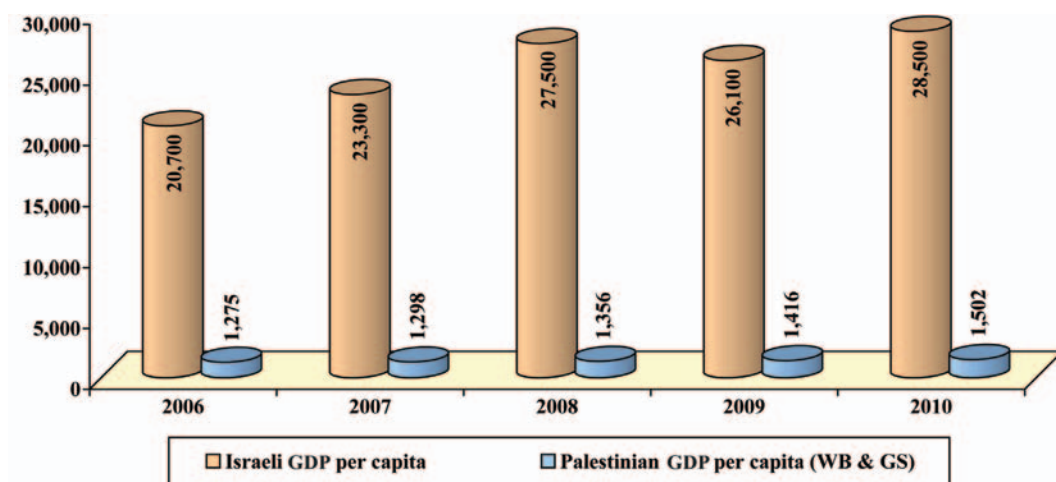
Israel's GDP per capita amounted to \$26,100 in 2009 and \$28,500 in 2010; making it crystal clear how the Israeli individual has enjoyed a higher standard of living at the expense of the Palestinian individual and his pains. As a matter of fact, the average 2009 Israeli per capita income was 18 folds higher than the Palestinian per capita income and around 19 folds in 2010. While the Palestinians do not lack the human potential and capabilities, it is easy to highlight the Israeli role in weakening the development opportunities and the chances of improving the living standards of the Palestinian individual.

**Table 9/8: Comparing the Israeli and Palestinian GDP per Capita
2006–2010 (\$)¹⁵**

Year	Israeli GDP per capita	Palestinian GDP per capita (WB & GS)
2006	20,700	1,275
2007	23,300	1,298
2008	27,500	1,356
2009	26,100	1,416
2010	28,500	1,502

Note: The figures above are rounded to the nearest integer.

Comparing the Israeli and Palestinian GDP per Capita 2006–2010 (\$)



3. Consumption, Saving and Investment Indicators

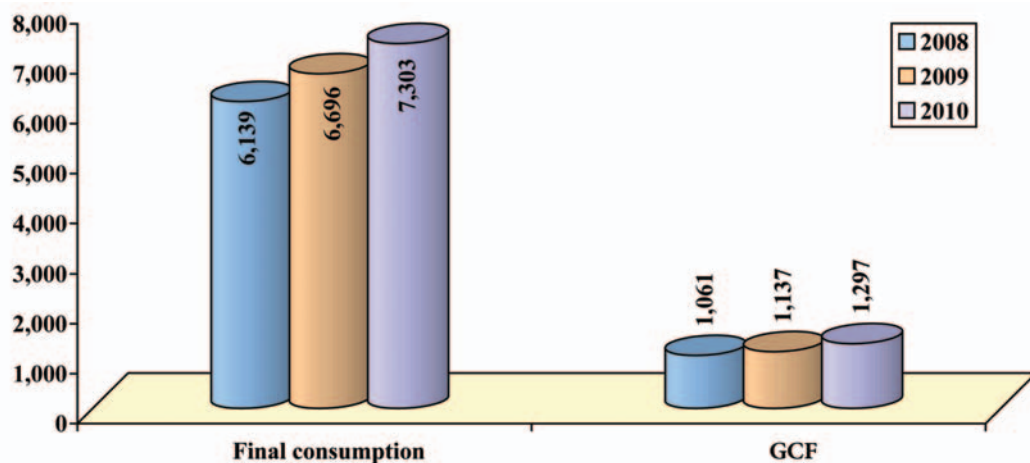
Based on the figures of the PCBS regarding the final consumption in the WB and GS during 2008 and 2009, it is expected to amount to \$7,303 million in 2010 with a growth rate estimated at 9.1% compared to 2009. Regarding Gross Capital Formation (GCF), estimates show that it amounted to \$1,297 million in 2010 with a growth rate amounting to 14.1% compared to 2009.

**Table 10/8: Final Consumption, GCF and Savings in the WB and GS
2008–2010 at Constant Prices (\$ million)¹⁶**

Indicator	2008			2009			2010*		
	WB	GS	Total	WB	GS	Total	WB	GS	Total
Final consumption	4,559	1,580	6,139	5,084	1,613	6,696	5,669	1,634	7,303
GCF	958	103	1,061	1,088	49	1,137	1,202	95	1,297
Savings	1,338	832	2,170	560	426	986	418	211	629

* The figures of 2010 are estimated and are based on the growth rates of 2008 and 2009.

Final Consumption and GCF in the WB and GS 2008–2010 (\$ million)



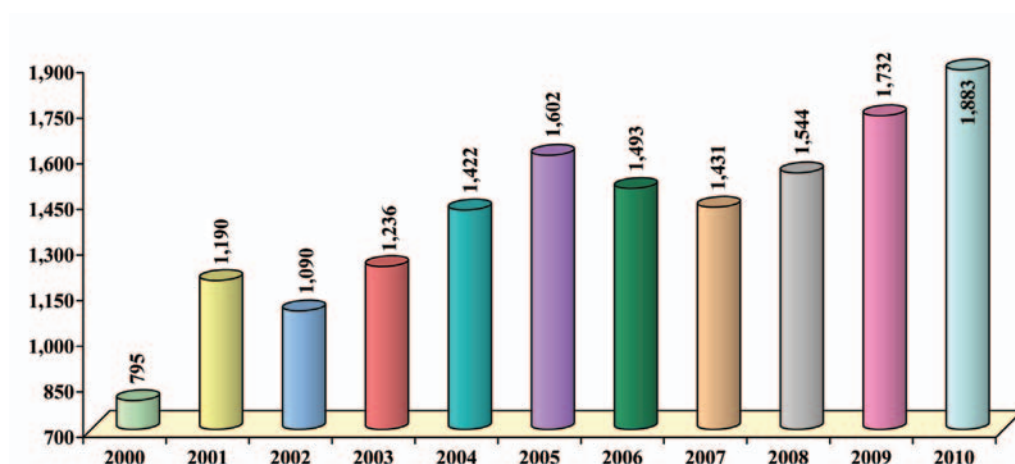
Based on the above, we notice a continued increase in the level of final consumption whether in the WB or GS in a way which exceeds the GDP. The same applies to the GCF with an ongoing decrease in the savings. This might be due to the fact that the per capita national disposable income is still low compared to the essential needs.

4. Public Debt

The total public debt increased continuously in 2009–2010. It increased from \$1,732 million in 2009 to \$1,883 million in 2010, i.e., 8.7%. The table below shows the evolution of total public debt over 2000–2010.

Table 11/8: Total Public Debt Evolution 2000–2010 (\$ million)¹⁷

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Total public debt	795	1,190	1,090	1,236	1,422	1,602	1,493	1,431	1,544	1,732	1,883

Total Public Debt Evolution 2000–2010 (\$ million)

Second: The PA's General Budget (Ramallah)

The general budget of any country reflects the governmental role in economic activity through two essential tools: public revenues and public expenditures, which together form the state general budget. In addition, these two tools could be used to achieve the general fiscal policy of the state.

The government in any country is required to perform the usual duties towards its citizens to meet the needs of the widest possible segment of the population. These duties are public and indivisible, thus there is no substitute for the government.¹⁸

The success of the government in achieving its economic role depends on collecting sufficient public revenues without overburdening the citizens. Sometimes, the government has to borrow money from local or international

financial institutions or it might resort to issuing more national currency while ignoring safety standards. However, this policy might lead to inflation which varies according to what extent the standards are exceeded.

As for the PA, it has not been able to issue national currency or liberate itself from the Israeli control. Consequently, it is deprived of the revenue which any country should get when the Central Bank issues national currency, taking into account the strenuous efforts to transform the Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA) into a Central Bank with full powers including the issuance of national currency.¹⁹

In the light of this situation, donor countries were committed since the signature of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in 1993—Oslo Accords—to provide financial support till the establishment of the Palestinian state and meet all its financial responsibilities. However, the financial support mentioned has been allocated to close the general budget deficit. Thus, the support of the donor countries has become a prominent feature of the Palestinian financial situation in addition to focusing on financing development expenditures.

The annual increase of the budget is not unusual especially on the level of expenditures. This was the case with the PA budget which has grown even further in light of the decline in private sector investments and in production activity, in addition to the limited job opportunities it is likely to provide. This was coupled with a wide gap between public expenditures and revenues, reaching 83.9% in 2008 and was covered by external funding.

To follow the evolution of the PA's general budget and analyze the fiscal situation in 2010 in particular, we address the general budget as follows:

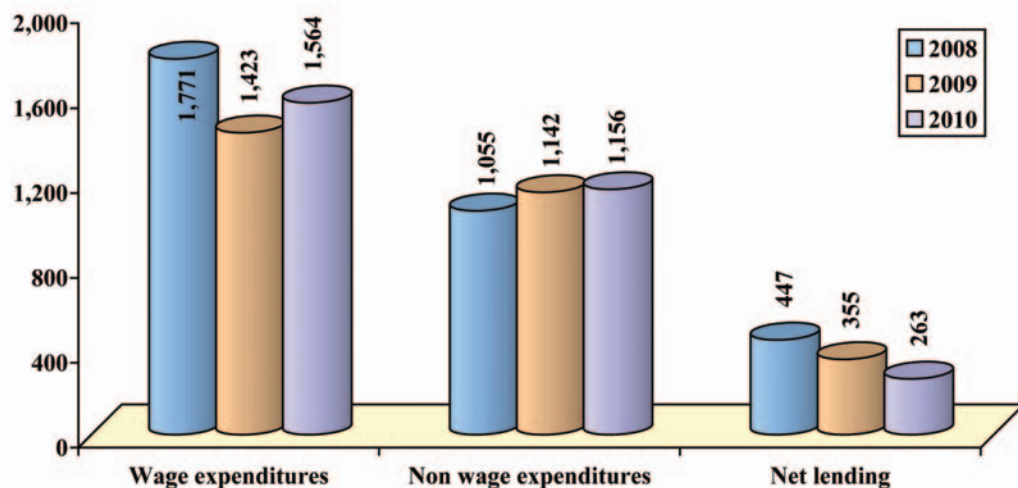
1. Expenditures

The expenditures of the PA have increased year after year, from 2008 to 2013, as shown in the following table:

Table 12/8: Evolution of the PA Expenditures 2008–2013 (\$ million)²⁰

Fiscal operation	Actual						Budget*		Projections					
	2008		2009		2010		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	value	%	value	%	value	%	value	%	value	%	value	%	value	%
Wage expenditures	1,771	54.1	1,423	48.7	1,564	52.4	1,550	48.9	1,710	53	1,796	53.3	1,885	53.8
Non wage expenditures	1,055	32.2	1,142	39.1	1,156	38.8	1,370	43.2	1,358	42	1,426	42.3	1,497	42.8
Net lending	447	13.7	355	12.2	263	8.8	250	7.9	160	5	147	4.4	120	3.4
Total expenditures and net lending	3,273	100	2,920	100	2,983	100	3,170	100	3,228	100	3,369	100	3,502	100

* There are relative differences between the 2010 budget and the actual figures.

Evolution of the PA Expenditures 2008–2010 (\$ million)

The previous table shows the following:

- The wage expenditures on PA employees is considered the main expenditure provision in the budget, where it represented an average of 52.6% of total expenditure and net lending, over the period 2008–2013 with a general increasing trend.

The wages share of GDP is estimated at 36.3% in 2008, 27.1% in 2009 and around 27.3% in 2010. However, it is expected to decrease to 17.1% in 2013 according to the report of Staff Report for the Meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC). The decrease in wage percentage share of GDP has to do with the PA budget policy in 2011. It considered that the increase in the wage bill would be limited to an adjustment of 3.5% in wage rates to compensate for the 2010 inflation, the 1.25% automatic yearly increase, and the increase in net employment by three thousand employees. This means that structural reforms will include diminishing the share of the PA employees relative to the whole Palestinian workforce. To guarantee the success of the previous step, bold measures are needed to reach a comprehensive civil service reform that would reduce the wage bill while improving public sector efficiency. It will become increasingly difficult to reduce the wage bill by relying on a “blanket” restraint on wage rates and new employment. Notwithstanding this notable decreasing trend and its significance, this percentage is still significantly higher than the 10–15%, which is typical of countries at a similar stage of development.²¹

- Non wage expenditures, including transfers and operational expenditures, continued to rise during 2008–2010. This increase is expected to continue in the next three years.
- Net lending, a PA commitment, constituted 13.7% of public expenditure in 2008 with an inclination to decrease year after year to reach 8.8% in 2010. This refers to improved control, inducements to pay bills and increasing the amounts paid by the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company. Accordingly, this reflects an inclination towards decreasing this fiscal operation which is a burden for the government budget.

2. Public Revenues²²

Total net revenues decreased in 2009 by 13% compared to 2008 and increased by 22.8% in 2010. According to the Staff Report for the Meeting of the AHLC, total net revenues are expected to increase from \$1,780 million to \$3,051 million during 2008–2013, at annual growth rate 11.4%. This increase is due to the continued control by the PA of the general fiscal operations in 2008 where total net revenues achieved about 6% growth, which is generally consistent with the budget orientations.²³

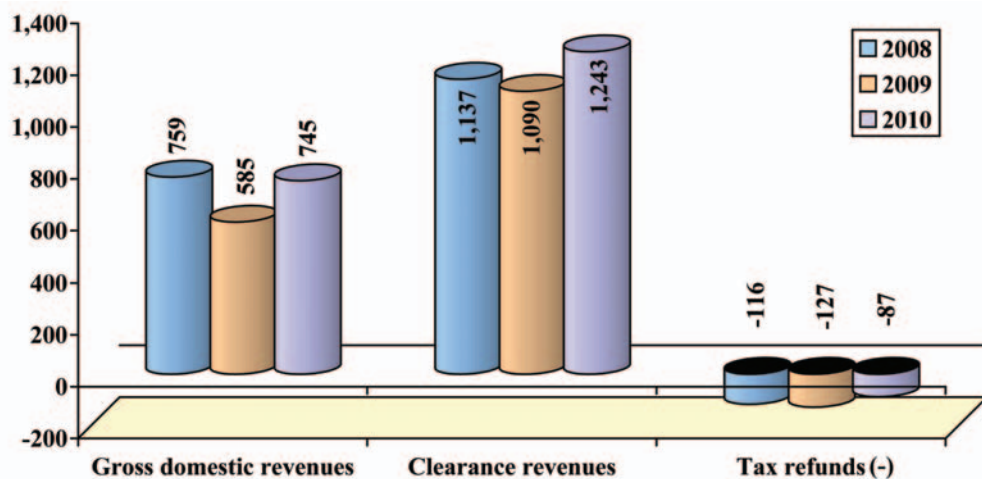
On another hand, the activation of tax revenues since 2007 has led to improving domestic revenues thus leading to lowering total external support from \$1,978 million in 2008 to \$1,277 million in 2010. This is part of the inclination to dispense with the use of foreign donations to reduce the budget deficit (see tables 13/8 and 26/8).

Table 13/8: Evolution of the PA Revenues 2008–2013 (\$ million)²⁴

Fiscal operation	Actual			Budget*	Projections		
	2008	2009	2010	2010	2011	2012	2013
Gross domestic revenues	759	585	745	707	810	1,010	1,303
Tax refunds (–)	– 116	– 127	– 87	– 100	– 107	– 121	– 137
Net domestic revenues	643	458	658	607	703	889	1,166
Clearance revenues	1,137	1,090	1,243	1,320	1,442	1,649	1,885
Total net revenues	1,780	1,548	1,901	1,927	2,145	2,538	3,051
Net domestic revenues to total net revenues (%)	36.1	29.6	34.6	31.5	32.8	35	38.2

* There are relative differences between the 2010 budget and the actual figures.

Evolution of the PA Revenues 2008–2010 (\$ million)



Comparing the total net revenues to the GDP, it is clear that the assumed ratio will decrease from 36.5% to 27.7% during 2008–2013. This is a negative indicator of improvement in taxation and financial efficiency regarding the various forms of revenues.

Tracking the forms of revenues, in terms of their structure or components, we find that they consist of two major parts: domestic revenues, which include taxes and services fees, and the clearance revenues, which Israel collects and transfers to the PA. These latter revenues comprised the major part of public revenues in 2008, 2009 and 2010 and amounted to 63.9%, 70.4% and 65.4% respectively.

Although both kinds of revenues assume an increasing trend, the growth of domestic revenues will assume higher rate especially between 2010 and 2012. These revenues are collected by different government bodies, which might lead to progress in total financial performance. Given the growth rate of net domestic revenues, these revenues are expected to amount to around 38.2% in 2013 as compared to 36.1% in 2008. This expected growth is due to the PA continued efforts to strengthen the management of public revenues which would contribute to the implementation of varied measures aiming at enhancing transparency and accountability since 2007. This comes together with the enforcement of tax management with technical support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

In light of the improvement of tax collection and the consequent increase in tax revenues, in addition to the reasonable reduction in expenditures according to priorities, the deficit in the PA budget is likely to decrease. Worth of mention is that the World Bank has praised the implementation of the PA's reform agenda, where in the first half of 2010, tax revenues were nearly 15% above budget projections.²⁵

The expectations for the coming years are based on the continuation of the political and economic conditions which have prevailed during 2007–2010. However, the collapse of the peace process, the failure of the negotiations with the Israeli side, the likelihood of the outburst of a new *Intifadah* and the deterioration of relations between the PA and the Israeli government might lead to completely different results. On another hand, the Palestinian reconciliation agreement signed on 3/5/2011 will open the door for different scenarios including the return of the siege of the WB, Israel's withholding of tax revenues from the PA besides preventing financial aid and international support for the Palestinian government. It is not likely for the PA, in the light of this reconciliation, to develop its economic capacities effectively, unless genuine pressures were exercised on the Israeli side.

3. General Budget Deficit

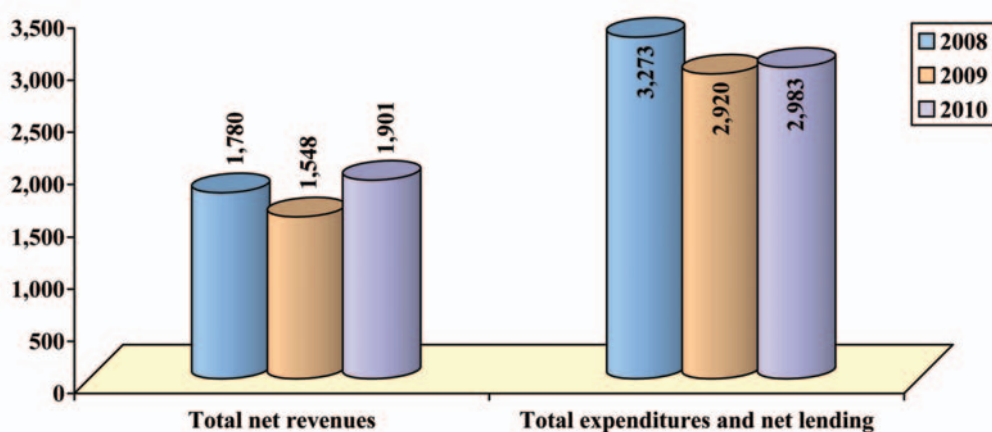
The PA revenues and expenditures show that the 2009 budget deficit reached \$1,372 million as compared to \$1,493 million in 2008. Hence, it fell by \$121 million, i.e., an annual average of 8.2%. The 2010 budget deficit reached \$1,082 million, thus falling by 21.1% from a year earlier level. According to the Staff Report for the Meeting of the AHLC, and provided the stability of the economic and political conditions, the 2013 budget deficit it expected to decrease gradually till it reaches \$451 million. This is due to the expected growth of future revenues at a rate faster than the growth of public expenditures as shown in the following table:

Table 14/8: Evolution of the PA Budget Deficits 2008–2013 (\$ million)

Fiscal operation	Actual			Budget*	Projections		
	2008	2009	2010	2010	2011	2012	2013
Total net revenues	1,780	1,548	1,901	1,927	2,145	2,538	3,051
Total expenditures and net lending	3,273	2,920	2,983	3,170	3,228	3,369	3,502
Balance	– 1,493	– 1,372	– 1,082	– 1,243	– 1,083	– 831	– 451

* There are relative differences between the 2010 budget and the actual figures.

PA Revenues and Expenditures 2008–2010 (\$ million)



Tracing the final balances of 2008, 2009 and 2010 and the relevant estimates over the following years, the deficits reached 30.6%, 26.2% and 18.9% of the GDPs, respectively. These deficits represent a major burden for national economy, and were covered by donor countries. Consequently, the PA was strengthened in the face of any collapse or severe financial crises.

This was a motivation for seeking appropriate policies to remedy the deficit through activating revenues and reducing rapid growth of expenditures, with the hope that the deficit be diminished to a minimum amounting to \$451 million in 2013. It is important to mention here that the PA has to adapt its finances to dispense completely with foreign financial aid since it is likely to stop at any time.

Third: The Budget of the Caretaker Government in GS

On 31/12/2009, the 2010 general budget of the caretaker government in GS was adopted. The expenditures were estimated at \$540 million with an 89.1% deficit. These expenditures were used to cover wage expenditures by 37%, operational expenditures by 11%, transfers by 28%, development expenditures by 18.5%, whereas 5.5% were used for the development of Jerusalem.²⁶ However, what was actually spent amounted to \$297.31 million, thus accounting for 55.1% of what was estimated.

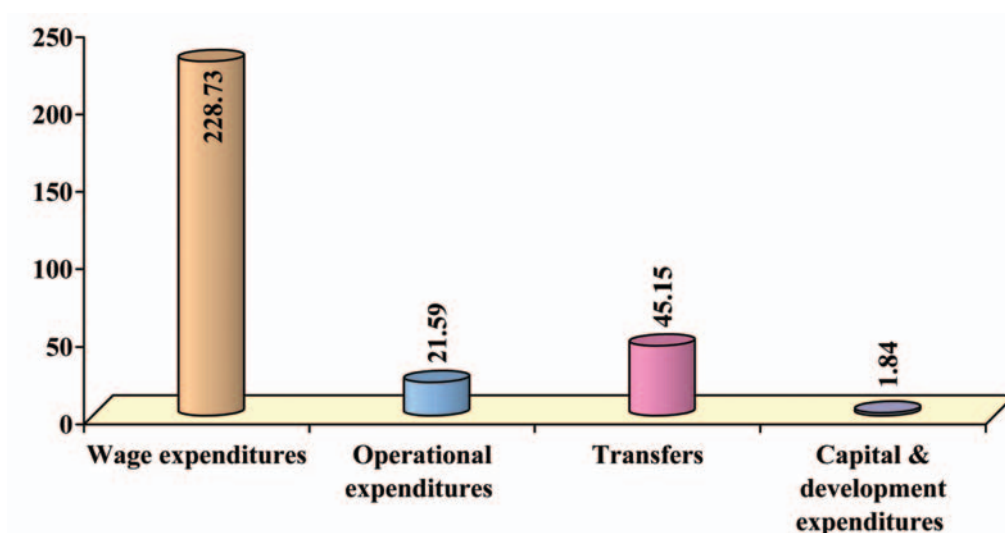
The domestic revenues in 2010 amounted to \$83.01 million while the government received an external budgetary support of \$149.19 million. Thus, the actual deficit in the budget amounted to around \$65.11 million. The majority of the budget was spent to cover wage expenditures which amounted to \$228.73 million, i.e., around 76.9% of total expenditures.

The following table shows the budget of the Caretaker Government in GS in 2010.

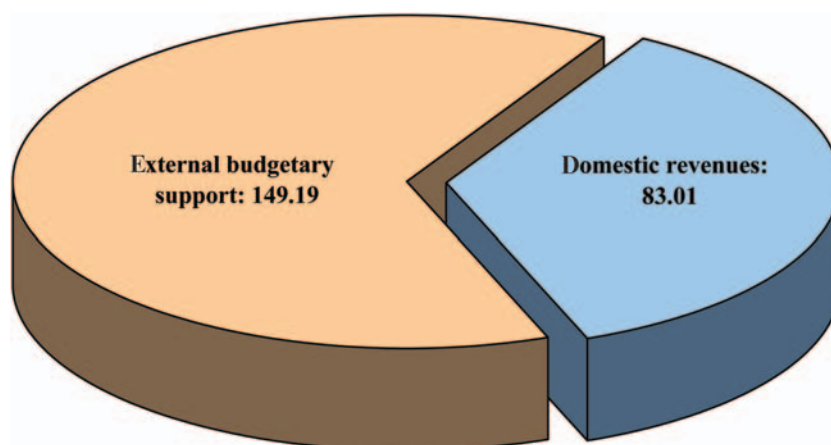
Table 15/8: Fiscal Operations of the Caretaker Government in GS
2010 (\$ million)²⁷

Fiscal operation	Value
Total revenues & external budgetary support	232.2
– Domestic revenues	83.01
– External budgetary support	149.19
Total expenditures	297.31
– Wage expenditures	228.73
– Operational expenditures	21.59
– Transfers	45.15
– Capital & development expenditures	1.84
Actual deficit	– 65.11

The Expenditures of the Caretaker Government in GS 2010 (\$ million)



The Revenues of the Caretaker Government in GS 2010 (\$ million)

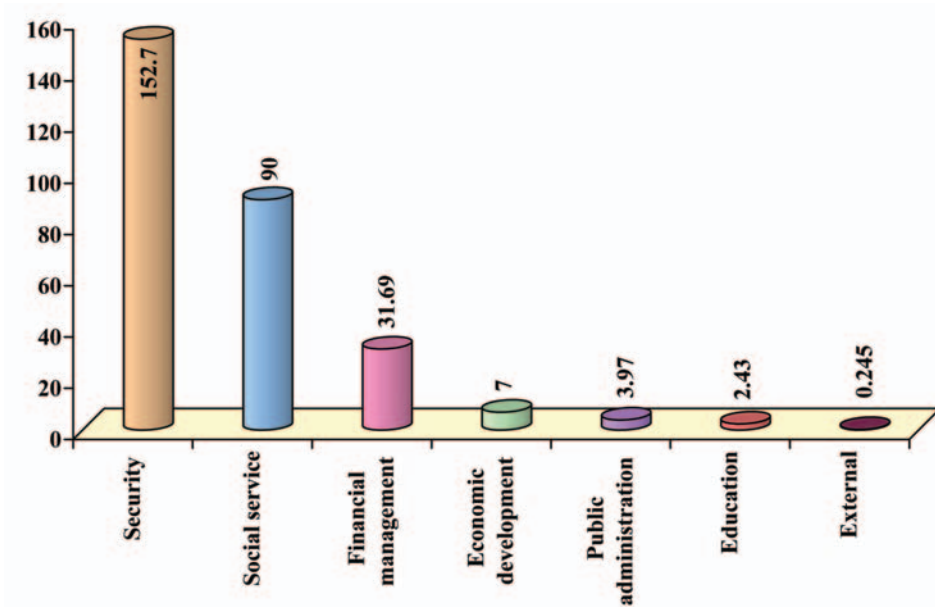


The security sector has garnered the highest share of expenditures amounting to \$152.7 million, whereas the social service sector received around \$90 million. On the other hand, the economic development sector only received \$7 million, while the education sector share was around \$2.43 million. The following table shows the actual expenditures of a number of sectors of the caretaker government in GS during 2010.

Table 16/8: Actual Expenditures of a Number of Sectors of the Caretaker Government in GS 2010 (\$ million)²⁸

Sector	Value
Security	152.7
Social service	90
Financial management	31.69
Economic development	7
Public administration	3.97
Education	2.43
External	0.245

Actual Expenditures of a Number of Sectors of the Caretaker Government in GS 2010 (\$ million)



The previous figures show the hardship of the caretaker government in GS because of the siege and its need to manage different sectors within the minimum means available.

Fourth: Work and Unemployment

1. Importance of the Human Element

The human element is one of the most important elements of production in any society. It is the source needed to provide goods and services essential to domestic and international markets alike. In addition, the human element is the target of production activity, since people are the source of demand for goods and products, whether local or imported.

2. Man Power, Labor Force and Employed Persons

According to the PCBS figures, labor force participation rate in the WB and GS reached 41.1% in 2010 compared to 41.6% in 2009.²⁹

Table 17/8: Man Power, Labor Force and Employed Persons in the WB and GS 2009–2010 (thousands)³⁰

	2009				2010			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Man power	2,255.1	2,276.8	2,298.6	2,320.7	2,342.4	2,365	2,387.2	2,490.7
Labor force	934	949.8	955.4	963.5	953.9	980.4	966.9	1,001.2
Employed persons	697.1	738.7	709.2	724.2	743.7	755.9	709.5	767.2

Table 17/8 shows that the indicators above are likely to grow where the man power increased from around 2.26 million people in Q1 2009 to around 2.49 million in Q4 2010 at quarterly average amounting to 1.4%.

The number of persons participating in labor force increased in the same period from 934 thousand to one million persons at quarterly growth rate 1% only. This means that the growth of the population at working-age was faster than the growth of persons participating in labor force. Consequently, the entrants to the labor force increased at lower rate, where they amounted to 40.2% of the total man power in Q4 2010; thus comprising a low percentage if compared to the previous few years. The number of employed persons increased during the same period from 697.1 thousand to 767.2 thousand, i.e., at a quarterly average amounting to 1.4%. This growth is also considered low compared to the population growth, which is thus reflected on the increasing rates of unemployment.

On another hand, in Q4 2010, around 64.1% of the employed persons work in the WB compared to about 25.7% in the GS. There are also 78,800 workers from the WB, who are employed in Israel and Israeli settlements, i.e., around 10.3% of the total employed persons.³¹ This means that a major segment of the employed Palestinians work in Israel and the settlements. However, this is limited to the employment in the WB as Israel still imposes siege on the GS preventing the Gazans from working inside Israel.

Concerning the distribution of employed persons by economic activity, a relative decline was noticed in commodity sectors compared to larger growth in the service sectors. In Q4 2010, those working in agriculture, fishing, forestry, mining, quarrying, manufacturing and construction represented 35.9% of employed persons, compared to 64.1% in other sectors over the same period.³²

3. Unemployment

The high level of unemployment in the WB and GS is one of the Palestinian intractable economic problems which have persisted since the outbreak of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in late September 2000. In 2010, unemployment rate amounted to 17.2% in the WB compared to 37.8% in GS. The unemployment rate in the WB and GS reached 23.7%, which is one of the highest internationally and in the Arab world.³³

Given the continuity of unemployment over the past years, it is considered as a chronic rather than emergent or temporary situation. Accordingly, this problem needs radical solutions which suit its nature, size and forms and the mobilization of all national efforts to solve it. The following table shows the evolution of unemployment over quarters of 2008, 2009 and 2010 in the WB and GS.

Table 18/8: Quarterly Evolution of Unemployment in the WB and GS
2008–2010³⁴

Year	Quarter	WB & GS		WB (%)	GS (%)
		Number (thousands)	%		
2008	Q1	197.6	22.6	19	29.8
	Q2	231.8	25.8	16.3	45.5
	Q3	252.1	27.5	20.7	41.9
	Q4	250.4	27.9	19.8	44.8
2009	Q1	236.9	25.4	19.5	37
	Q2	211.1	22.2	15.9	36
	Q3	246.2	25.8	17.8	42.3
	Q4	239.3	24.8	18.1	39.3
2010	Q1	210.2	22	16.5	33.9
	Q2	224.5	22.9	15.2	39.3
	Q3	257.4	26.6	20.1	40.5
	Q4	234	23.4	16.9	37.4

The number of unemployed remained high ranging between 197.6 and 257.4 thousand persons during the quarters of 2008–2010 with obvious difference between the rates of the WB and the GS and among governorates. Ultimately, the unemployment rate in the GS is higher than that in the WB amounting to around the double.

There is no doubt that the war launched by Israel on GS in late 2008 and early 2009 has exacerbated the situation there due to the destruction of many industrial enterprises, agricultural land and infrastructure. Still, the rate of unemployment in the GS decreased in Q1 2009 to 37% after it reached 44.8% in Q4 2008, and that was due to the new projects that were implemented by international organizations in GS.

These conditions have many negative consequences, which include increasing the poverty gap between different social strata, and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, thus creating wealth distribution imbalance. Although the government has tended to raise taxes on high-income earners, in order to increase its resources and decrease unemployment rates, this measure was to no avail.

The results indicated in the Labour Force Survey in 2010 that in the WB and GS unemployment was concentrated among the youth aged 15–24 years at 38.8%; 36.8% for males and 49.6% for females. These high rates are because this age group includes new job seekers whether school dropouts or university graduates. Consequently, they find difficulty getting suitable jobs and many of them have to wait many years to get one.³⁵

4. Child Labor

The phenomenon of child labor is widespread in the WB and GS. This is due to poor living conditions and high unemployment rates. Consequently, many children have to leave school, look for a job, and suffer harsh conditions while they try to support their families. Some of them work as beggars, others risk their lives trying to sell candies in the streets.

On the other hand, some children have to assume arduous jobs with long work hours under unfit inhumane conditions, in return for low wages and a dim future. They have to sacrifice the opportunity of going to school with their peers. This phenomenon requires more attention from the competent authorities given its gravity and implications.³⁶

5. Investment Growth and Employment Opportunities

There is a close correlation between the growth of investments on one hand and increasing job opportunities on the other. Thus, governmental bodies are keen to promote investments by all possible means, particularly investments of the private sector since it is open for all production activities and able to withstand business risks.

This is undoubtedly related to the efforts of the official authorities to overcome the obstacles facing investors. Yet, it remains subject to the facilitations which Israel might grant or withhold. Therefore, we expect progress in employment opportunities especially with increased investments of the private sector in services and production activities.³⁷

Fifth: Industrial and Agricultural Activity

1. Industrial Activity

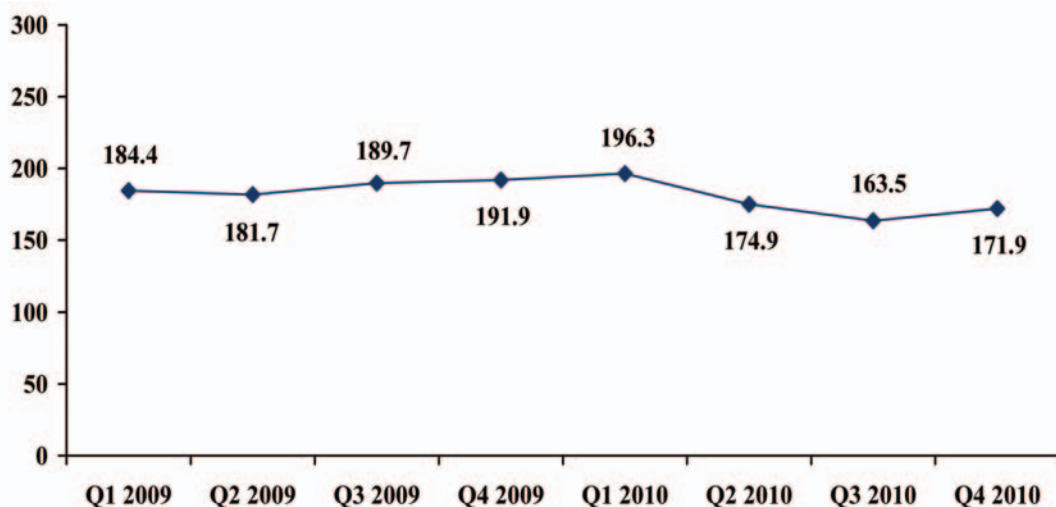
Developed countries owe their achievements to industrial activity, which is considered one of the leading sectors that enhance economic growth. It has the ability to produce huge amounts of diverse and advanced services and goods based on the use of advanced technology. Therefore, many countries take measures to promote the industrial sector so as to join international markets and dispose with major amounts of surplus products intended for export, thus securing substantial financial resources.

In general, the industrial activity witnessed a decline in 2010 estimated at 5.5% compared to 2009. Table 19/8 shows the fluctuation of the industrial activity growth compared to 2009 as the general trend is inclined to a quarterly negative growth estimated at 1% over the mentioned quarters.

Table 19/8: Quarterly Evolution of GDP Growth of Industrial Activity in the WB and GS 2009–2010 at Constant Prices (\$ million)³⁸

Quarter	2009		2010	
	GDP	Quarterly growth (%)	GDP	Quarterly growth (%)
Q1	184.4	(...)	196.3	+ 2.3
Q2	181.7	– 1.5	174.9	– 10.9
Q3	189.7	+ 4.4	163.5	– 6.5
Q4	191.9	+ 1.2	171.9	+ 5.1
Total	747.7	(...)	706.6	(...)

**General Trend of the Quarterly Evolution of GDP of Industrial Activity in
the WB and GS 2009–2010 (\$ million)**



Examining the entire industrial activity in the WB and GS in 1999–2010, we find that industrial GDP has maintained a relatively stable growth where it increased from \$655.5 million to \$706.6 million at 7.8% and annual rate 0.7%. Industrial GDP reached a peak in 2005 amounting to \$789.1 million compared to lowest rate in 2002 estimated at \$534.7 million with margin rate 47.6%. The improvement might be due to the presence of suitable economic conditions including an economic climate conducive to achieving industrial growth. On the other hand, the role of this activity is diminished under unfavorable economic conditions. In all cases, it is not possible to ignore the Israeli policies impeding industrial activity including the repression of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* and the continuous efforts to subjugate the Palestinian people. Consequently, industrial activity witnessed a decline especially in 2000–2003, but started to recover with the end of the *Intifadah*. However, it started to suffer again after Hamas won the elections and formed the 10th and 11th governments, then because of the Israeli siege imposed on the GS (see table 20/8).

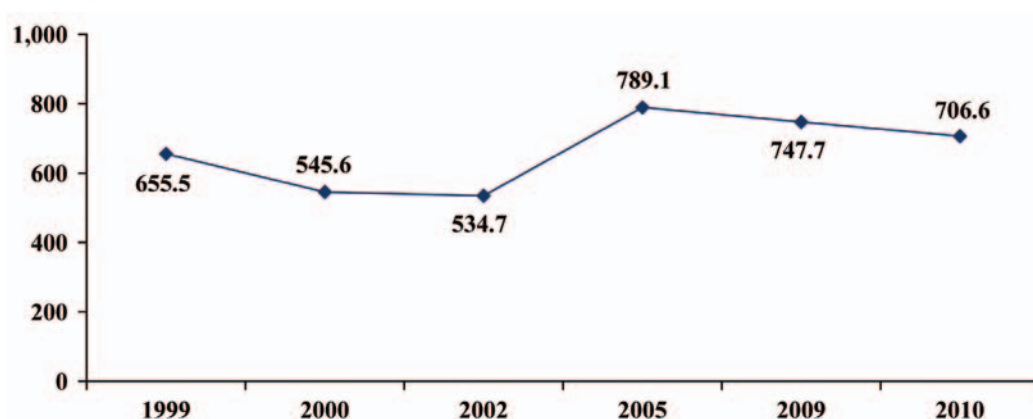
Table 20/8: Evolution of GDP by Industrial Activity in the WB and GS for Selected Years at Constant Prices (\$ million)³⁹

Economic activity	1999	2000	2002	2005	2009*	2010**
Mining and quarrying	35.7	23.8	25.2	40.8	22.6	23.2
Manufacturing	566.4	472.4	385.9	591.8	539.8	507.8
Electricity & water supply	53.4	49.4	123.6	156.5	185.3	175.6
Total	655.5	545.6	534.7	789.1	747.7	706.6

* First revision.

** Flash estimates.

General Trend of the Evolution of GDP of Industrial Activity in the WB and GS for Selected Years (\$ million)



The industrial activity includes three main sectors: mining and quarrying, manufacturing, and electricity and water supply. It is noticed that manufacturing has represented the highest share of industrial activity where it accounted for 86.4% and 71.9% in 1999 and 2010 respectively. Yet, the role of manufacturing industry is declining in favor of water, gas and electricity supply which has increased from 8.1% to 24.9% for the two mentioned years respectively. The decline in manufacturing activity is due to the obstacles facing industrial activity including the competition from the Israeli products and WB settlement products, besides the Israeli siege of GS. On the other hand, activities related to gas and electricity supply tend to increase from year to year to meet the increased daily demand of

the consumers. The mining activity is focused in the WB and it is affected by the restrictions on freedom of movement and what Israel allows in this respect.

2. Agricultural Activity

Agricultural activity is a vital and traditional one. It is based on the production of essential food crops indispensable for human and animal life alike, and has been a source of livelihood for a large number of workers. In addition, it provides local markets with their needs of most types of cereals, vegetables and fruits.

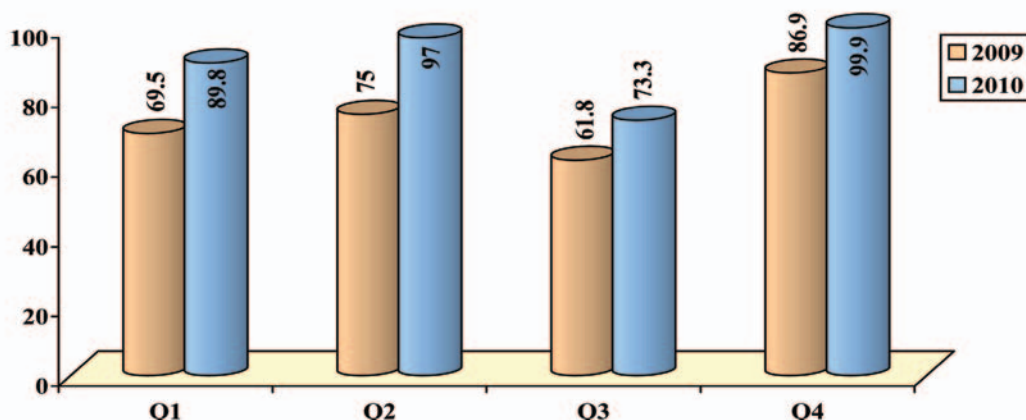
The Palestinian farmer has been able to dispose of a large part of the surplus production in foreign markets. Thus, the proceeds from exports formed an important source of foreign currency necessary to pay for imported goods and reduce its trade balance of payments deficits.⁴⁰ Moreover, the importance of this activity is further obvious in exceptional situations such as crises, wars and the increase in the prices of cereals and essential crops (see table 21/8).

Table 21/8: Quarterly Evolution of Agriculture GDP in the WB and GS
2009–2010 at Constant Prices (\$ million)⁴¹

Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2009	69.5	75	61.8	86.9	293.2
2010*	89.8	97	73.3	99.9	360

* Figures of the first three Qs are second revision while those of Q4 are flash estimates.

Quarterly Evolution of Agriculture GDP in the WB and GS 2009–2010
(\$ million)



Comparing the Qs of 2010 with corresponding Qs of 2009, we notice a positive quarterly growth amounting to 5.3%. The general trend of growth in 2010 compared to 2009 achieved an increase estimated at 22.8%.

On the other hand, examining the general growth trend of the agricultural activity during 1999–2010 shows a notable decline in production from \$470.7 million to \$360 million at negative growth estimated at 2.4%. Thus, the contribution of agricultural activity in the GDP decreased from 10.4% in 1999 to 6.3% in 2010 (see table 22/8).

Table 22/8: Evolution of Agriculture GDP and its Percentage of total GDP in the WB and GS 1999–2010 at Constant Prices (\$ million)⁴²

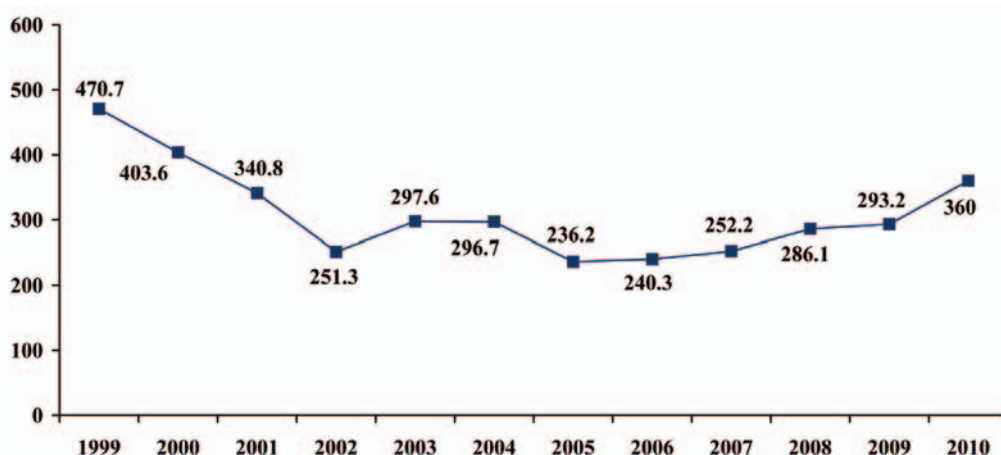
Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Agriculture and fishing	470.7	403.6	340.8	251.3	297.6	296.7
% of total GDP	10.4	9.8	9.1	7.7	7.9	7.1

Year	2005	2006	2007	2008*	2009*	2010**
Agriculture and fishing	236.2	240.3	252.2	286.1	293.2	360
% of total GDP	5.2	5.6	5.5	5.9	5.6	6.3

* First revision.

** Flash estimates.

General Trend of the Evolution of Agriculture GDP in the WB and GS 1999–2010 (\$ million)



Hence, it becomes clear that the decline in agricultural activity is related to the Israeli uptight practices during *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, in addition to the consequences of building the Separation Wall and the Israeli barriers.

3. The Private Sector and Its Role in Enhancing Industrial and Agricultural Activities

The private sector bears the major burden in production activity, while industry and agriculture are critical for the provision of various agricultural crops and industrial products needed in the market. The private sector, together with industrial and agricultural activities, contribute to achieving a higher level of self-sufficiency in key food commodities and to achieving export goals, too. In addition, it contributes to the rise in job opportunities. However, the restrictions which continue to impede the production activity will be an obstacle to economic growth.

In addition, the World Bank has asserted that “recent economic growth will not be sustainable in the absence of private sector-led growth, which is dependent on easing movement and access restrictions within West Bank and to the international markets.”⁴³

The Importance of Bank Credit Facilities for Businessmen

Credit facilities granted to businessmen increased significantly especially after the PA had taken gradual steps to enhance deposits available for the banking sector where the minimum facilities increased to 45% of total deposits. The increase in credit facilities would increase local investments and consequently new projects will be established or existing ones will be revitalized. This in turn would be reflected on the job market where unemployment levels would decline.

These credit facilities will cover some of the needs of factory and plantation owners who have suffered damage during the Israeli war on GS and its ongoing violations. However, banks commitment to credit facilities will vary between the WB and GS because the investment opportunities in the WB are more favorable than those in GS. It remains important to focus more on enhancing the investment opportunities that can be provided by the banking system in the GS while giving it preferential treatment to overcome the many obstacles facing the investment activity there.

As to the specialized lending institutions, the final version of licensing and supervisory regulations of such institutions have been completed by the PA, as part of their reorganizing, control and supervising to ensure their effectiveness, maintain the stability of the financial system, and enhance their contribution to sustainable economic development.⁴⁴ The following table shows direct credit facilities granted by the Palestinian banking system in 2010.

Table 23/8: Quarterly Direct Credit Facilities 2010 (\$ million)⁴⁵

Quarter	Public sector	Resident private sector	Non-resident private sector	Total
Q1	870	1,663	54	2,587
Q2*	825	1,713	51	2,589
Q3	885	1,845	53	2,783
Q4**	893	1,943	50	2,886

* Q1 2010 shows the total facilities (facilities + benefits), while Q2 2010 shows net facilities only.

** The data in Q4 are estimated figures based on the growth rates between Q1 2010 & Q3 2010.

The Need to Expand the Scope of Microfinance Institutions

Microfinance institutions are of great importance in developed and developing countries alike. The private sector plays a major role in the production activity which is based on small enterprises with low capitals and a small number of employees. Most of the investments offered by microfinance institutions are suitable to these enterprises. Besides, there are many individual and family enterprises which benefit from microfinance institutions.

One of the leading microfinance institutions is UNRWA's Microfinance Department in the GS. Its value of lending grew by 92%, from \$3.7 million in 2009 to \$7.1 million in 2010. The number of loans reached 3,622 in 2010, while it was 2,399 in 2009, i.e., an increase of about 51%.⁴⁶

One of the positive signs of this lending is that 95% of borrowers showed commitment to pay their debt which means that they have indeed benefited from the money they obtained. Among the factors which contributed to this achievement is the Small and Medium Enterprise Business Training (SMET) program run by the Microfinance Department where about 79 sessions were held in 2010 and attended by 1,829 trainees.⁴⁷ The efforts of the Department were not emergent or innovated, for since its establishment in 1995 the training program has conducted 723 training courses for 15,872 participants.⁴⁸

Subsequently, micro-financing, together with training of human element, is an important form of investment which helps in refining the skills of the trainees and providing appropriate advice whenever needed. Thus, it is important to expand the scope of such activities, which allow lending institutions to deal with them easily.

Sixth: Economic Ties with Israel

The various forms of these ties reflect the relationship between two unequal parties where one controls the other at the economic, social and political levels. They are based on a number of criteria or indicators summarized in the following points.

1. Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements

On 13/9/1993, this Declaration was signed in Washington, D.C., defining a transition period paving the way for a final solution for all pending issues. However, after the lapse of 16 years, no conclusive results have been attained regarding the deferred issues. The WB and GS remained under occupation, whether directly or indirectly, and the Palestinians could not so far get their right to establish an independent or viable state. On top of that, the Israeli establishment of new settlements and expanding the existing ones led the negotiations between the two sides to a dead end. Accordingly, the Palestinians were denied the right to invest in their natural resources and the freedom to establish international economic relations based on mutual interests and benefits. Thus, one of the forms of dependence on Israel is denying the Palestinians the right to an independent economic decision.

In this context, the PA was inclined to invest \$1.4 billion in a tourist resort on the Dead Sea shore and further \$700 million on a new city near Jericho. The former project, Moonlight Tourism City, consists of hotels, chalets, a mall, a teaching hospital, a center for health research and therapy centers, exploiting the rich minerals of the Dead Sea. The latter, Madenat al-Qamar, is to contain agricultural, industrial and housing development. Both projects would create 50 thousand jobs. However, the implementation of such a vital project is subject to the Israeli approval which confirms the Palestinian dependence on Israel.⁴⁹

The same applies to the establishment of Rawabi, a new planned city near Ramallah located within area A, which is controlled by the PA. It is a project worth

at least \$700 million, and will create up to 10 thousand jobs. The PA had applied for a permit from the Israeli authorities to build an access road for the new city which crosses area C, an area controlled by the Israelis. Yet, launching this project remains subject to Israel's approval.⁵⁰

2. Paris Protocol

The Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the PLO, representing the Palestinian people, was signed on 29/4/1994. According to this protocol, both "parties view the economic domain as one of the cornerstone in their mutual relations with a view to enhance their interest in the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace."

This agreement has addressed many vital issues including import taxes and import policy, monetary and financial issues, direct taxation, indirect taxes on local production, labor, agriculture, industry, tourism and insurance issues. However, there are many negative points regarding the implementation of this protocol as it deprives the Palestinians from making independent economic decision as they are required to refer to the Israeli authorities in every step.⁵¹

3. The Israeli Control over the Crossings

The border crossings which are supposed to link the Palestinians to the outside world are still under the Israeli control while the Palestinians are deprived of sea ports and airports. Thus, the bridges or ports which link the WB to Jordan and then to the rest of the world, are far from complete control of the Palestinians despite the Israeli withdrawal from Jericho area where the bridges are present at its borders.

Similarly, the GS border crossings are under Israeli control, except for the Rafah border, which connects GS with Egypt and is restricted to the movement of individuals.

On the other hand, the Yasser Arafat International Airport in the far southeast of the GS is no longer fit for navigation since the destruction of its facilities in 2006. Furthermore, Israel has disrupted the implementation of the project for the only seaport in the GS, with the exception of very limited attempts by supporters and sympathizers belonging to international NGOs. As for the safe corridor between the WB and GS, it was active for a limited period only.

It follows from the above that opening the crossings and the movement of goods and individuals are subject to the decisions and orders issued by the Israeli side. This stresses the total and fundamental dependence on Israel.

4. Consolidation of External Trade Relations with Israel

The PA territories have varied commercial exchanges with Israel since these exchanges are not subject to the strict restrictions imposed on trade with the outside world. Faced with this situation, a high proportion of Palestinian external exchange is conducted with Israel and is mainly concentrated in the import operations while the export operations are very limited. Hence, the Palestinian economy suffers much harm from this trade policy which has reduced international commodity exchange to importing products mostly from Israel.

The following table shows the size of PA foreign trade in selected years over 2000–2009 and it shows to what extent Israel controls the movement of export and import.

Table 24/8: Palestinian Foreign Trade, Selected Years (\$ million)⁵²

Year	2000	2002	2004	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total Palestinian exports	400.9	240.9	312.7	366.7	513	558.4	518.4
– Total exports from WB	323	208.1	272.8	332.8	490.7	558.4	518.4
– Total exports from GS	78	32.7	35	33.9	22.3	(...)	112
Total Palestinian imports	2,382.8	1,515.6	2,373.2	2,758.7	3,284	3,466.2	3,600.8
Total Palestinian imports from Israel	1,739	1,117	1,747.9	2,002.2	2,442.8	2,794.8	2,651.1
Total Palestinian exports to Israel	370	216	281.1	326.6	455.2	499.4	453.5

Note: The figures are rounded numbers to the nearest tenth (\$100 thousand).

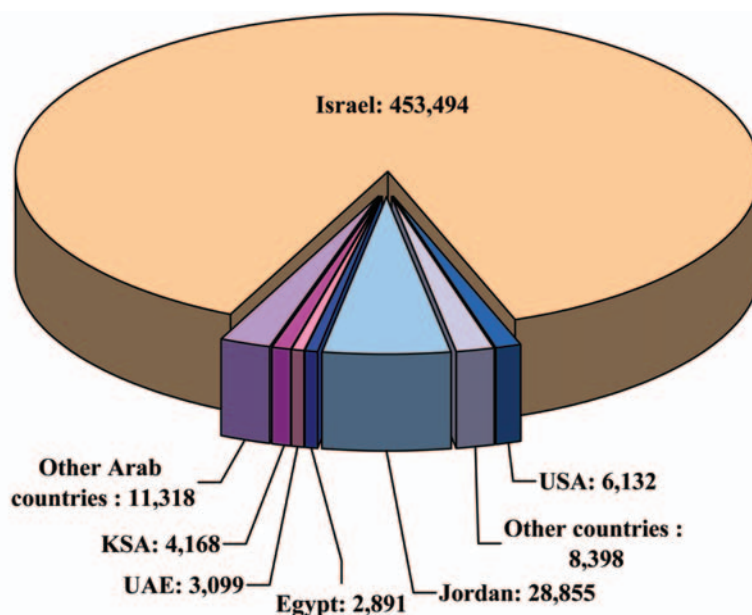
The following table shows the size of trade exchange during 2008–2009 between the WB and GS on one hand and selected countries on the other hand. The table also shows the weak trade exchange with the Arab countries compared to a number of Islamic and foreign countries such as China, Turkey, Germany and South Korea.

Table 25/8: Imports, Exports and Trade Transaction in the WB and GS by Selected Countries of Origin and Destination 2008–2009 (\$ thousand)⁵³

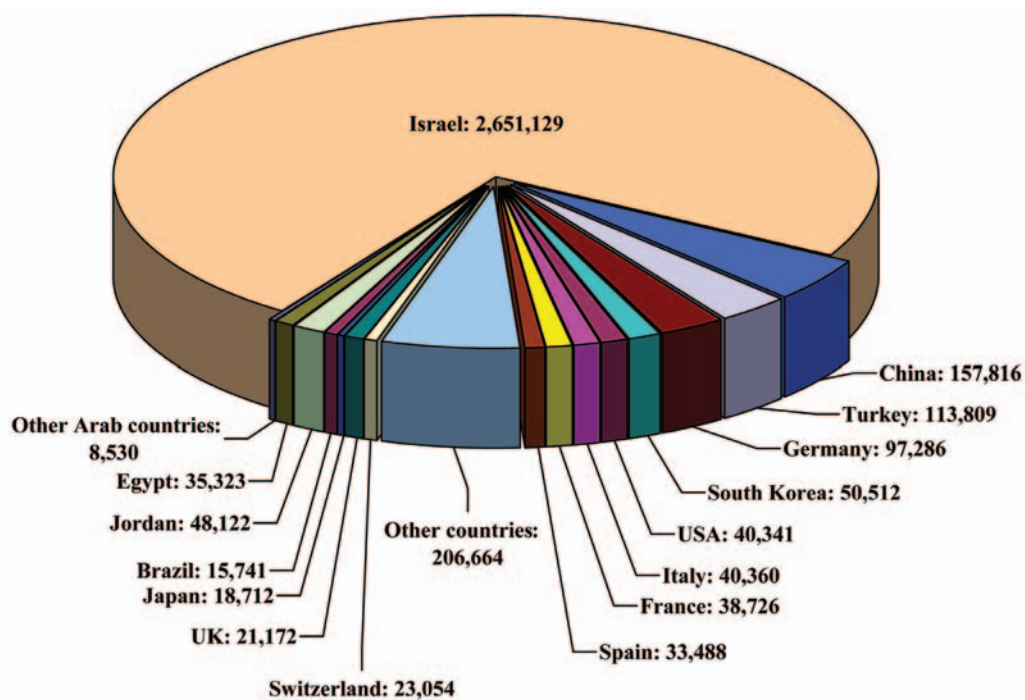
Country	Trade transaction		Palestinian exports to:		Palestinian imports from:	
	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008
Jordan	76,977	81,248	28,855	34,122	48,122	47,126
Egypt	38,214	23,245	2,891	984	35,323	22,261
UAE	7,629	6,481	3,099	3,710	4,530	2,771
KSA	7,155	5,799	4,168	3,568	2,987	2,231
Other Arab countries	12,331	4,151	11,318	3,449	1,013	702
Israel	3,104,623	3,294,252	453,494	499,423	2,651,129	2,794,829
China	157,828	121,064	12	47	157,816	121,017
Turkey	113,862	66,417	53	567	113,809	65,850
Germany	97,380	61,738	94	203	97,286	61,535
South Korea	50,563	26,333	51	(...)	50,512	26,333
USA	46,473	36,702	6,132	3,559	40,341	33,143
Italy	42,584	33,638	2,224	2,162	40,360	31,476
France	39,084	27,741	358	1,252	38,726	26,489
Spain	33,488	22,486	0	24	33,488	22,462
Switzerland	23,227	13,697	173	117	23,054	13,580
UK	21,882	18,907	710	2,967	21,172	15,940
Japan	19,172	16,330	460	193	18,712	16,137
Brazil	15,741	18,036	(...)	(...)	15,741	18,036
Other countries	210,927	146,349	4,263	2,099	206,664	144,250
Total	4,119,140	4,024,614	518,355	558,446	3,600,785	3,466,168

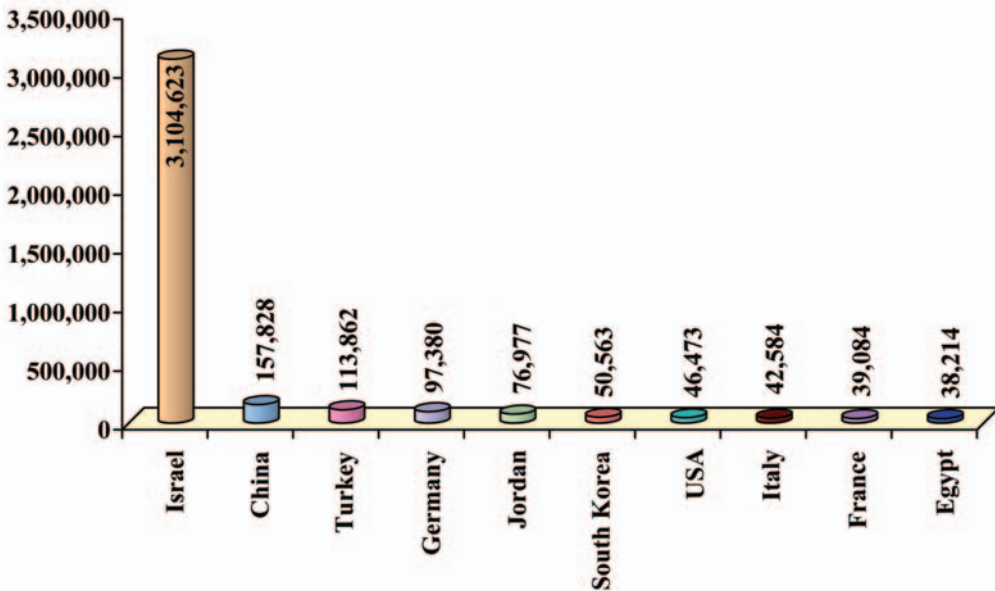
Note: The PCBS has not provided exact figures of the Palestinian exports to Brazil during 2008 and 2009 and to South Korea in 2008 and it calculated the total considering the Palestinian exports to both countries nil.

Palestinian Exports to Selected Countries 2009 (\$ thousand)



Palestinian Imports from Selected Countries 2009 (\$ thousand)



Palestinian Trade Transaction by Selected Countries 2009 (\$ thousand)

Seventh: Foreign Aid and Its Orientations

There are many forms of foreign aid received by the PA to serve the Palestinian economy, provide humanitarian support and enhance the position of the PA. The most prominent forms of this aid include: funds of donor countries, activities of international organizations, grants transferred by convoys and solidarity activists besides the grants to civil society institutions. These forms will be addressed in the following section.

1. Funds of Donor Countries

These funds reflect the commitment of donor countries towards the PA to allow it to carry out major responsibilities and enhance its institutions till the establishment of an independent state. These funds come within a mechanism which allows the collection of the money and re-pumping it to the PA.

It is also noted that these funds continuously flow in response to the needs of the PA which are increasing over time. In addition, the IMF staff prepares reports about the performance of macroeconomy and public finance.⁵⁴ The following table displays the evolution of these funds over the achieved period 2008–2010 and the estimated period 2011–2013.

Table 26/8: Evolution of External Budgetary Support and Development Financing 2008–2013 (\$ million)⁵⁵

Fiscal operation	Actual			Budget*	Projections		
	2008	2009	2010	2010	2011	2012	2013
External budgetary support	1,763	1,355	1,146	1,243	967	881	501
Development financing	215	47	131	670	500	873	1,095
Total	1,978	1,402	1,277	1,913	1,467	1,754	1,596

* There are relative differences between the 2010 budget and the actual figures.

The above table shows that external financing amounted to \$1,978 million in 2008, then it reached \$1,402 million in 2009, i.e., a \$576 million decrease with 29.1% negative growth rate. In 2010, it dropped to \$1,277 million with 8.9% negative growth rate. However, it is expected to increase again in 2011 to reach \$1,596 million in 2013, yet less than that of 2008. Consequently, external financing has been on a downward trend during 2008–2013, with a negative annual growth rate of 4.2%.

On the other hand, external budgetary support is expected to drop significantly where it will decrease from \$1,763 million to \$501 million over 2008–2013, i.e., a \$1,262 million decrease with 22.2% negative annual growth, and where the total percentage decrease is 71.6%.

It can also be noticed that external financing will not constitute more than 80.7% in 2013 compared to its size in 2008, while external budgetary support will not exceed 28.4% of its size in 2008. In addition, the development financing in 2013 will constitute 509% of its size in 2008. This signifies a major structural change represented in an overall reduction, but it is associated with tremendous increase in development financing at the expense of external budgetary support.

This is supposed to come within the draft Palestinian National Plan (PNP) in a manner consistent with improving public sector efficiency. However, for this step to succeed, bold measures are needed to implement a comprehensive civil service reform that would reduce the wage bill while improving public sector efficiency.⁵⁶

The feasibility of the draft PNP is subject to an exact diagnosis of the problems and a precise estimation of the available economic resources. Then appropriate programs should be developed while seriously working to achieve the goals of the PA plan. Moreover, the success of the draft PNP depends on the ability of the private sector to engage in different activities under favorable conditions, where available capacities will be utilized and job opportunities will be created. Consequently, this would contribute to the reduction of growth of employment in government jobs and sustain the reduction in the wage bill. However, the success of the draft PNP is unlikely in case of deterioration in the economic, security or political situation, especially if Israel attempts to thwart the Palestinian reconciliation or exercises pressure on the resistance movements and on the Palestinian side.

Apparently, the draft PNP is trying to adapt to the policies of donor countries. It tends toward improving financial governmental performance regarding the increase of tax and non-tax revenues and then reducing the budget deficit, while focusing on the development expenditures which represent an urgent need for the Palestinian society.

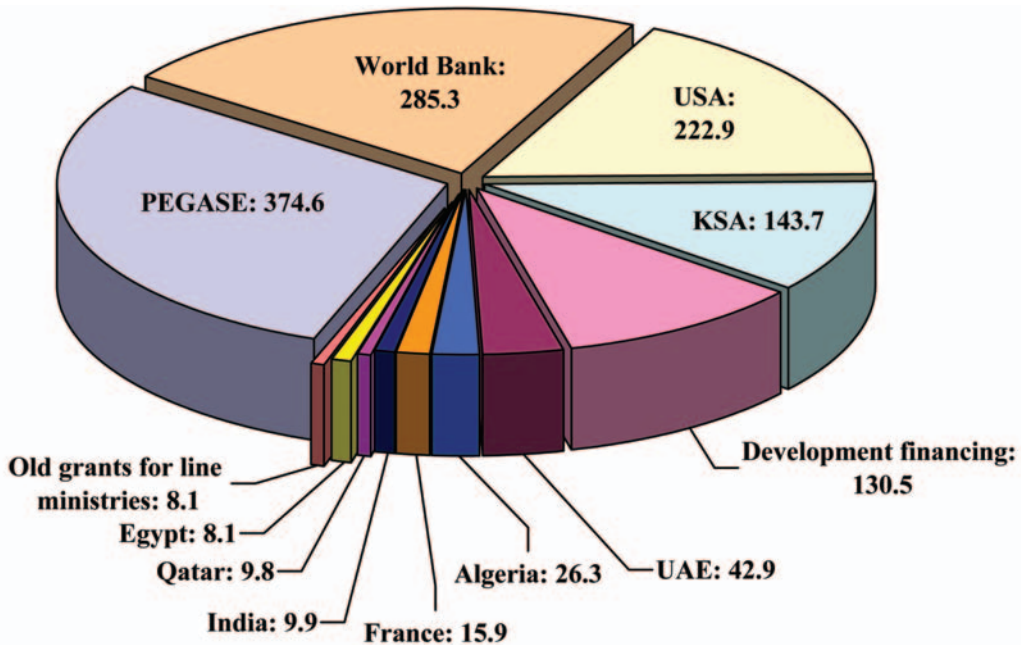
Previous developments suggest that public revenues and expenditures in the draft PNP will be more reliant on local revenues to replace foreign aid and then reduce it to the lowest possible level. This policy is consistent with the IMF recommendations urging the PA to proceed with strict cost-saving measures and the prioritization of expenditures, including the postponement of lower-priority projects, to meet the shortfalls in aid.⁵⁷

In 2010, the Palestino-Européen de Gestion et d'Aide Socio-Economique (PEGASE) which means the Palestinian-European Mechanism for Management of Socio-Economic Aid ranked first in terms of funding with \$374.6 million, then the World Bank with \$285.3 million followed by the US with \$222.9 million and then the KSA with \$143.7 million. The following table summarizes the size of external funding for the PA in 2010 compared to 2009.

Table 27/8: Sources of External Financing for the PA 2009–2010 (\$ million)⁵⁸

Donor	2010	2009
Arab donors	230.8	461.6
KSA	143.7	241.1
UAE	42.9	173.9
Algeria	26.3	26
Qatar	9.8	(...)
Egypt	8.1	17.8
Oman	(...)	2.9
International donors	908.6	893.3
PEGASE	374.6	433.2
World Bank	285.3	135.1
USA	222.9	273.2
France	15.9	27.7
India	9.9	10.1
Turkey	(...)	10.3
Greece	(...)	2.7
Grants for the Ministry of Social Affairs	(...)	1.1
Old grants for line ministries	8.1	(...)
Development financing	130.5	46.8
Total	1,278*	1,401.7

* According to the figures of the PA Finance Ministry, the total external financing is \$1,277 million, yet the figures provided by the ministry here indicate that the total is \$1,278 million. This difference might refer to rounding the detailed figures.

Sources of External Financing for the PA 2010 (\$ million)

2. International Aid Organizations

Many international organizations are engaged in various activities in the GS and WB. They provide services and assistance as international organizations affiliated with the UN or independent from it. These organizations have sought to intensify their activities especially after the war on the GS in the winter of 2008. They usually have to mobilize donors and supporters and appeal to the international community to ensure that the necessary funds are available.

In this context, the 2010 Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) of OCHA-oPt requested a total of \$664.47 million for humanitarian and early recovery projects,⁵⁹ and then it launched 2011 CAP with a total of \$575 million in requested funds.⁶⁰

On the other hand, the USAID having provided the WB and GS more than \$3.5 billion since 1994 for programs in the areas of democracy and governance; education; health and humanitarian assistance; private enterprise; and water resources and infrastructure.⁶¹ According to USAID Mission Director Michael Harvey, “The total US government assistance program for Palestine is about \$700 million, of that about \$400 million is going through USAID” in 2010 and 2011.⁶²

Since 1994, USAID has provided \$670 million in assistance to Palestinians to implement infrastructure projects. The \$300 million Infrastructure Needs Program (INP) was launched in 2008 to provide critical infrastructure that promotes economic growth, improves quality of life for Palestinians in the WB and helps the PA address both immediate and long-term infrastructure needs.⁶³ There are no accurate statistics on the distribution of funds between the WB and GS, yet it is clear that most these funds have been spent in the WB due to the known American policy of besieging the GS.

Among important international organizations supporting the Palestinian refugees is the UNRWA which provides food aid to around 80% of these refugees besides its programs in health, education and others. Aid is also provided by the World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF).

Worth of mention is that there are many Arab and Islamic organizations which provide aid to the Palestinian people such as the Union of Good which is also known as the Charity Coalition, Palestinian Relief and Development Fund (Interpal), the Palestine Charitable Committee of the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO), Al Quds International Institution, Palestinian Business Forum, The Turkish Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) and others.

3. Humanitarian Aid Convoys

The relief convoys organized within the framework of public support are meant to alleviate the suffering of the besieged people of GS. These convoys try to provide a part of the health needs, medical equipment, medicines and ambulances. In addition, medical delegates provide treatment services to the Palestinians who cannot afford to get necessary treatment because of the high costs and restrictions on movement.

On 21/10/2010, Lifeline 5, a convoy organized by the former British MP George Galloway, reached the GS via Rafah crossing. The convoy included around 342 pro-Palestinian activists of 30 nationalities and 137 trucks. The aid was worth around \$5 million, and consisted of medicines, medical, relief and food supplies, in addition to school equipment and worth of around.⁶⁴

On 8/11/2010, the UAE Red Crescent sent aid convoy to GS including 35 truckloads of medical and food supplies. On 25/11/2010, the European Road to Hope convoy entered GS including 37 solidarity activists from UK, Ireland, France, Spain, New Zealand and Argentina, 30 vehicles and 95 tons of aid supplies, medicines and educational materials.⁶⁵ On 27/11/2010, a seven member cross party delegation of the European Parliament visited GS, WB and East Jerusalem, where their purpose was to meet with the elected representatives of all political parties in the PLC in order to assess the living conditions there, as well to discuss the issue of reconciliation.⁶⁶

The Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization for Arab and Muslim Relief Development and Cooperation (JHCO) launched an aid convoy to the GS on 13/1/2011 including five trucks loaded with 76 tons of food supplies and products. In January 2011, the Libyan Al-Quds 5 reached the GS via the Rafah crossing with 80 tons of medicines and medical supplies. The convoy included also 20 trucks that carried two thousand tons infant formula, supplies for the disabled, food supplies, blankets and tents.⁶⁷ On 3/1/2011, Asia 1 aid convoy arrived in GS. The convoy comprised 112 members from Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Japan, Kuwait and New Zealand. They brought \$1 million worth of cargo. It included 300 tons of medicine, food and toys, as well as four buses and 10 power generators for hospitals.⁶⁸

However, these aid convoys only supply urgent food needs but not those needs which appear in the medium and long runs.

4. Civil Society Organizations

There are many civil society organizations working in the WB and GS. They provide agricultural aid and medical relief, promote women empowerment and youth activism, and provide care for children and the disabled, etc. These organizations address the needs of the civil society and their work is complementary to that of the private and public sectors. They are non-profit and depend on external funding, yet there is no data regarding the annual financial support they receive.

Eighth: The PA and Government Management of the Economic Situation

1. The Palestinian Schism

The Palestinian schism in June 2007 led to the establishment of two governments; one in the WB and the other in the GS. Based on the Arab and international recognition enjoyed by the PA in the WB, the Ramallah-based government has worked to extend its authority over the WB and GS, especially in the general budget allocations, as it receives financial support from donor countries.

While each of the two governments seeks to carry out its responsibilities, these efforts succeed in some areas and fail in others. Ultimately, the Palestinian division is one of the negative aspects depriving the Palestinian economy of demonstrating the elements of power it enjoys.

2. Annual General Budget

According to financial regulations, the general budget is prepared every year prior to its implementation. Consequently, the ministries and governmental bodies would be able to collect funds and spend them after the adoption of this budget.

In the WB, the presidential decree approving the 2010 general budget was issued on 29/3/2010,⁶⁹ i.e., a three-month delay. Consequently, different governmental bodies have exercised their financial authority over three months without budget allocations. However, the GS caretaker government approved its 2010 general budget on 31/12/2009.⁷⁰

3. Quality and Price Control on Goods

Governmental authorities have shown increased concern about price control and the availability of commodities in the markets and their conformity to standard specifications. This control is achieved through organized campaigns pursued by the concerned governmental bodies such as the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Health, municipalities, local authorities, security forces and other bodies which exercise joint or independent efforts.

These bodies seek to apply regulations related to prevention of smuggling and verification of expiry of the products displayed in the market or stored, to insure their suitability for human consumption. The competent authorities have succeeded in seizing and disposing of large quantities of contaminated food and

products inconsistent with standard specifications, including tobacco, medicines and fuel while the offenders were referred to the competent judicial authorities. Some merchants store goods to sell them later at a higher price. However, long-term storage damages the goods, and despite that, the merchants try to sell them.

4. No Substitute for Palestinians Working in Israel and the WB Settlements

Since the occupation's early years, Israel has isolated the WB and GS and restricted their contact with the outside world to a minimum, while urging them to deal mainly with Israel. Moreover, different decisions and legislations were passed to ensure their dependence on Israel, while focusing mainly on paralyzing their agricultural and economic activities by replacing local products with Israeli agricultural crops. This compelled many industrial institutions and agricultural enterprises to dispense with large number of workers and forced the Palestinians to seek jobs in Israel.

Thus, tens of thousands of Palestinians flowed into Israel in pursuit of better chances and higher wages. This situation continued till the outbreak of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in 2000 when Israel reduced the Palestinian workforce in Israel proper or the WB settlements, while completely rejecting any workers from the GS and limiting permits to those from the WB. Consequently, the number of these workers dropped to 78,800 in Q4 2010.

Israeli measures participated in increasing unemployment rates while a large number of Palestinians work in the WB settlements, which are illegal according to international law and the international community does not commit itself to buy any of their products. Nonetheless, the decline of employment opportunities urge the Palestinians to accept work in these settlements while the Ramallah-based authority has turned a blind eye to this violation despite its decision to boycott the products of WB settlements.

The PA signed a law banning Palestinians from working in WB settlements and selling their goods. Palestinian government officials estimate that between 20 and 30 thousand Palestinians work in WB settlements and that between \$200 million and \$500 million worth of settlement goods are sold to Palestinians in the WB every year. Palestinian Economics Minister Hassan Abu Libdeh said the PA would try to find alternatives for those currently working in settlements but suggested they would not face punishment.⁷¹

5. The Anti-Corruption Commission

The files of corruption since four years have been recently opened and the cases were referred to the Anti-Corruption Commission which was founded by President Mahmud ‘Abbas on 20/6/2010 to replace the Illicit Gain Commission.⁷² The Attorney-General Ahmad al-Mughni has sent 80 files to be investigated by the Anti-Corruption Commission, some of them related to the corruption of prominent figures in the PA. This step was taken even in the cases filed against suspects living abroad.⁷³

Ninth: The Siege and the Impact of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict on the Economic Situation

The Israeli siege of the Palestinian economy takes many forms. The Israeli measures on the crossings hinder the flow of goods and restrict the movement of businessmen, thus limiting investments in the private sector and reducing it to a minimum despite the efforts made by the PA in this respect.⁷⁴ The situation is further exacerbated by the internal barriers which hinder movement of individuals and goods in northern governorates and consequently increase losses suffered by producers and consumers. The following section presents the main forms of the current Israeli siege.

1. Severe Economic and Trade Restrictions on Hebron

The citizens in the WB city of Hebron live under difficult conditions due to the constraints laid by the Israeli occupation; where there are 122 closures blocking Palestinian access in the Israeli-controlled 4.2 square kilometer area of Hebron (H2) according to a survey by the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) in cooperation with OCHA-oPt. Ninety-three of these closures include: checkpoints, partial checkpoints, road blocks, an earthmound, and road gates; most of which have been in place since late 2000. The remaining 29 closures consisted of road barriers and cement barriers, barbed wires and iron gates. These closures, along with ongoing settler violence, have affected both commercial activities and social life inside the Old City of Hebron. Consequently, through 2010, more than one thousand homes are estimated to have been vacated by their former Palestinian residents, and more than 1,800 commercial businesses

have closed. Nearly 650 Palestinian shops in the heart of the city were closed by military orders, which are renewed every six months, in addition to the low tourist and visitor movement.⁷⁵

2. The GS Embargo Despite the Partial Easing of the Siege

Since 2007, the GS continues to be under siege with partial opening of the crossings and a limited list of allowed items. While Israel deprives the Palestinians of economic development and its resources, it has a strategy of a “humanitarian minimum” in GS, as stressed in Israeli official documents. This makes economic growth limited, unbalanced and dependent on the services sector which is unstable.

3. Limiting the GS Crossings to One

The Israeli authorities decided on 2/3/2011 to permanently close the largest commercial crossing point, al-Mintar (Karni) crossing east of Gaza City. The movement via this crossing, which is used for the transport of wheat, grains and gravel, would be diverted to south-east of GS to the Karm Abu Salim crossing, the last operational commercial crossing.

This measure which aims at reducing the number of crossings is an extension of an old Israeli policy. In June 2007, for example, opening al-Mintar commercial crossing was limited to two days per week to allow the transport of wheat, animal feed and gravel. On 12/9/2008, Sofa crossing to the south-east of GS was closed completely, which was used to import gravel and construction materials. On 1/1/2010, al-Shuja'iyyah (Nahal Oz) crossing, which was used to import fuel and cooking gas, was totally closed. Thus, three out of four crossings were closed between mid 2007 and the beginning of 2011.

These developments come within a systematic policy to limit goods trade to one crossing which would be subject to congestion and probable partial or even complete closure under security pretexts. A few months after the second *Intifadah* in 2000, the Israel closed the department of importing goods at the Beit Hanoun (Erez) and Rafah crossings.⁷⁶

4. Access-Restricted Areas in GS

Another face of the Israeli siege is its restrictions on Palestinian access to areas located up to 1,500 meters from the fence (an area comprising 17% of the GS's territory). Thus, 35% of the GS agricultural land is currently located in an

access-restricted area; the ability to export will mean little for many agricultural producers who are currently unable to safely reach their land.⁷⁷

5. Adverse Effects of the Embargo on GS Living Conditions

Deterioration was a common feature to different aspects of life in the GS in 2010 despite the limited economic growth. This deterioration was the result of the weakness of the said growth, the poor state of the infrastructure and the relative stagnation of reconstruction. Consequently, these conditions reflected on the income of a wide social segment leading to the spread of poverty and urging around 80% of the total population in GS to depend on relief aid. Some of the forms of this decline include:

a. Degradation of Water Resources

Water supply in the WB and GS for human beings is less than the minimum required level both in quantity and quality. Around 60% of the population does not have water supplies except once every few days for limited hours per day. The experts confirm that this water is not potable because it's polluted and contains high level of salts and nitrates. Potable water is limited to 10% of the total needs.

This degradation is caused by falling water levels in GS aquifer, especially after Israel dug wells in the settlements built on a large area of government lands in the GS causing depletion to much of its fresh water.

Although Israel unilaterally withdrew from the GS in 2005 and stopped using the mentioned wells, it dug huge trap wells at deep levels on the Israeli side of the borders with GS, "siphoning water supplies from the aquifer before they reach Gaza." That's because GS is a "'downstream' of the portion of the aquifer that lies beneath Israel, with lateral groundwater flows coming from Israel into the Gaza portion of the aquifer."⁷⁸

The problem of drinking water and irrigation sector has worsened significantly due to the random digging of wells by residents in their agricultural lands without official licenses. This phenomenon has triggered the concerns of the local and municipal authorities, the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) besides the Agriculture Ministry to organize well drilling and distribution.⁷⁹

b. Poor Sanitation

The sewage problem in the GS is due to the inability to purify waste water or make it suitable for irrigation, and this is due to the limited capacity of the sewage treatment plants.

Consequently, wastewater further complicates living conditions especially when it is discharged into the sea at close distances from the shore, thus leading to significant contamination. Ultimately, citizens are deprived of the sea, in addition to the negative impact on the fisheries. Besides, a part of the sewage water finds its way to the aquifer, to contaminate it and increase its salinity.

6. Interruption and Irregularity of Electricity Services

Despite the urgent need for electric power for domestic and production needs, power outages extend over hours per day and the Gazans are deprived of regular electricity supply. Thus, the dire consequences of power cuts are inflicted on the whole population.

The electricity problem in the GS is represented in the lack of supply quantities needed for consumer market as Israel restricts the fuel quantities allowed into the Strip. While the GS needs between 270–300 megawatt of power, only 190 megawatt is available per day, i.e., around 65% of the total need.⁸⁰ Electricity deficit exceeds one third the actual needs not to mention the increased demand on this service which has become of vital importance.

Conclusion

The year 2010 showed an increase of 9.3% in the GDP in the WB and GS, where the growth was originally at low levels. The main factor which helped to achieve this growth was the external financing provided by donor countries and the aid provided from different countries including the US, EU and some Arab governments.

Other factors include the relative state of stability, the efforts to enhance economic performance in the WB and GS, the limited relaxation of the restrictions on the movement of individuals, and allowing the GS to export a limited amount of its products.

Despite the difficulties it is facing, the Palestinian economy enjoys a great potential for growth and has the capacities to advanced investments. Its strong points are found mainly in its advanced banking system and modern financial market both of which enjoy the public's confidence in the absence of any Palestinian obstacle to free movement of capital.

Based on the above factors, accompanied by partial breakthrough in economic activity, it could be said that the Palestinian economy has promising future growth at rates faster than what has been achieved so far, especially when economic obstacles are removed from the WB and GS and the state of Palestinian schism is ended. Hence, some estimates expect a growth of 7% in 2011.

In general, the Israeli occupation remains the major impediment to the Palestinian economy, which works in a hostile environment intent on subjugating the Palestinian, expelling him from his home and land and imposing political conditions on him. This economy remains vulnerable to violent shocks because of the Israeli measures, for as long as the Palestinians seek liberation and independence.

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Index

A

- Al-‘Abbasiyah, 300
- ‘Abbas, Mahmud (Abu Mazin), 29-30, 34-35, 41-42, 45, 47-51, 53, 57-58, 107, 119, 139, 141, 146, 149, 154, 159, 160-163, 170, 200, 211-212, 217-218, 236-237, 252, 257, 314, 415
- ‘Abd al-Qadir, Hatim, 280
- Abdul Razak, Mohd Najib bin Tun, 215
- ‘Abdullah, 158
- ‘Abdullah, ‘Abdullah, 164, 166
- ‘Abdullah, ‘Adel, 358
- ‘Abed Rabbo, Yasir, 111
- ‘Abidin, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Salam Musa, 105
- Abtan Mosque, 289
- Abu al-‘Aynayn, Sultan, 162-163
- Abu al-‘Ardat, Fathi, 166
- Abu al-Ghait, Ahmad, 42, 139, 146-147, 151, 249
- Abu ‘Arab, Subhi, 163
- Abu Dis, 296
- Abu Fa‘ur, Wa’il, 165
- Abu Hammad, Ra’id Mahmud Ahmed, 105
- Abu Hasira (Yaakov Abuhatzaira), 173
- Abu Hasnah, Nafith, 52
- Abu Khalil, Mirvat, 52
- Abu Libdeh, Hassan, 414
- Abu Maizar, Muhammad, 52
- Abu Rudaina, Nabil, 50, 212
- Abu Sitta, Salman, 360
- Acre, 289
- Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLIC), 53, 383, 386
- Adatto, Rachel, 313
- Aegean Sea, 97
- Africa, 78, 85, 100
- Al-Aghwar, 334, 339, 342
- Aharonovitch, Yitzhak, 280
- Al-Ahmad, ‘Allam, 48
- Al-Ahmad, ‘Azzam, 43, 49, 163
- Ahmadinejad, Mahmud, 161, 205-206, 212
- Albar, Syed Hamid, 214
- Aleppo, 359
- Algeria, 39, 409
- Alie, Marzuki, 206, 217
- Alliance Church, 287
- Amal Movement, 165
- Amato, Giuliano, 245
- American Association of Jurists (AAJ), 266
- American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), 243
- Amman, 153, 155, 244
- Amnesty International, 246, 263
- Ampal-American Israel Corporation, 174
- ‘Anata, 296
- Al-Anbiya’ Mosque, 289-290
- Ankara, 190, 194, 196-197, 202-204
- Annapolis, 109
- Anti-Defamation League, 211
- Applied Research Institute—Jerusalem (ARIJ), 307-308, 315
- Al-Aqsa Foundation for Endowment and Heritage, 286
- Al-Aqsa Mosque, 141-142, 177, 187, 195, 199, 216-217, 219, 257, 259, 279-283, 285-287, 319, 357, 392, 395, 399, 414
- Arab Gulf, 333
- Arab League, 39, 46, 122, 138, 140-142, 144, 159, 169, 175, 177, 205-206, 314
- Arab Follow-Up Committee, 46, 122, 138-139, 147, 159, 169, 201, 232, 234, 238
- Arab National Congress, 358
- Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR), 152
- Al-‘Arabi, Nabil, 150, 152
- ‘Arafat, 109
- Al-Araqib, 79
- Arens, Moshe, 116



Argentina, 48, 85, 269, 412
 Ariel, Uri, 313
 Arınç, Bülent, 193
 Al-‘Arish, 38, 143, 150-151, 188, 194
 Ashdod Port, 192
 Ashkenazi, Gabi, 94, 197
 Ashton, Catherine, 39, 245-246, 249-251, 314
 Asia, 100, 412
 Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), 207
 Al-‘Ass, Yunis, 163
 Assad, Bashar, 159, 161-162, 212
 Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA), 263
 ‘Atallah, Ahmad, 40
 Al-Ateyya, Abdul Rahman bin Hamad, 171
 Athens, 97
 Atzmaut (Independence) Faction, 68, 124
 Australia, 84-85
 ‘Awarta, 290
 Al-‘Awjah, 174
 Al-‘Awwa, Salim, 177
 Ayalon, Ami, 112
 Ayalon, Danny, 168, 190-191
 ‘Ayn al-Bayda, 164
 Azerbaijan, 220
 ‘Azzam, Sheikh Nafidh, 209

B

Baghdad, 235
 Bahrain, 169
 Balata (refugee camp), 50
 Balkan, 85, 204
 Bank of Israel, 86
 Barak, Ehud, 54-55, 67-69, 72, 75, 99, 116, 124, 161, 178, 191
 Barakah, Ali, 43, 166
 Barakat, Nir, 297, 299
 Barghouti, Fadwa, 358
 Barghouti, Marwan, 358
 Barhoum, Fawzi, 36
 Başbuğ, Mehmet İlker, 197

Al-Batsh, Khalid, 33
 Beersheba, 96
 Beirut, 163-164, 346, 359
 Beit Fajjar, 289-290
 Beit Hanina, 296-297, 300, 304, 315
 Beit Hanoun (Erez), 416
 Beit Jala, 316
 Beit Safafa, 302, 304, 315
 Beit Sahour, 304
 Beit Ummar, 290
 Belarus, 72
 Belgium, 84, 90-91
 Ben-Ari, Michael, 313
 Ben-David, Alon, 144
 Ben-Eliezer, Benyamin, 68, 191, 195-196, 204
 Ben Shemen, 286
 Beqa‘ Valley, 164, 346
 Berlusconi, Silvio, 244, 251
 Bethlehem, 77, 205, 239, 257, 288-290, 304-306, 308, 339, 342
 Bhatt, Ela, 39
 Biden, Joe, 194, 238, 240, 301, 307
 Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque, 77, 199, 290
 Al-Bilbisi, Hilmi, 52
 Bil‘in, 316
 Bin Makhlof, Shakib, 358
 Biran, Shraga, 288
 al-Bireh, 306, 339, 342
 Bishara, ‘Azmi, 52, 77
 Blair, Tony, 201, 234, 249
 Bolivia, 48, 269
 Bonker, Don, 215
 Borg, Tonio, 39
 Boroujerdi, Alaeddin, 207
 Brahimi, Lakhdar, 39
 Brasov, 98
 Brazil, 48, 91, 194, 255, 269, 358, 404
 Britain, 247
 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 234, 264
 Broto, Gatot Dewa, 216
 Brussels, 53, 195, 207, 244

Al-Buhayrah, 173
 Burin, 32, 290
 Burj Barajneh (refugee camp), 359
 Bush, George W., 93, 118, 243
 Al-Bustan, 299-300

C

Caglayan, Zafer, 199
 Cairo, 29, 46, 107, 116, 145-146, 149, 152, 160, 169, 174, 207, 234
 Cameron, David, 248
 Cameroon, 220
 Camp David, 93, 110-111, 148, 234
 Canada, 85
 Carmel, 65, 80, 196, 204
 Carter, Jimmy, 267
 Caspit, Ben, 119
 Çelikkol, Ahmet Oğuz, 190, 197
 Central America, 85
 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 266
 Charity Coalition, 411
 China, 90-91, 194, 254-256, 269, 403-404
 Clinton, Hillary, 111, 194, 237-238, 241-242, 306
 Congressional Research Service (CRS), 92
 Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF), 411
 Cordesman, Anthony H., 266
 Cote d'Ivoire, 220
 Crowley, Philip J., 236
 Cuba, 240, 252
 Cyprus, 90, 204, 247, 358

D

Al-Dabbagh, Salah, 52
 Dagan, Meir, 94
 Dahlan, Muhammad, 50-51, 57
 Al-Dallal, Muhammad, 170
 Damanhur, 173
 Damascene Hall, 359
 Damascus, 43, 46-47, 149-150, 158-162, 169, 172, 188, 201, 209, 252, 359

Damascus Gate, 300, 305
 Damatiuh, 173
 Davos, 190
 Davutoğlu, Ahmet, 192-196, 198-201, 204
 Dayton, Keith, 35, 53-55
 De Gucht, Karel, 267-268
 Dead Sea, 401
 Dead Sea Works Ltd., 174
 Deir al-Ghusun, 32
 Della Pergola, Sergio, 85, 291
 Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), 30, 46, 166-167
 Dewan Rakyat (Malaysia), 214
 Dimona, 208
 Diskin, Yuval, 53, 115
 Doha, 169-170, 177
 Donahoe, Eileen Chamberlain, 262
 Dubai, 144, 170-171
 Al-Duhniyah, 291

E

East Mediterranean Gas Company (EMG), 174
 Ebadi, Shirin, 266
 Ebal, 290, 305
 Ecuador, 48, 269
 Edelstein, Yuli, 313
 Egypt, 38, 41-43, 55, 85, 93, 113, 121, 123, 125, 145, 147-148, 150-152, 169, 173, 175-176, 178, 188, 203, 206-207, 209, 215, 217, 241, 243, 247-248, 264, 333, 402, 404, 409
 Egyptian Movement for Change (EMC), 178
 Egyptian Steel Wall, 142, 205-206, 209
 Eiland, Giora, 116
 Ein el-Hillweh (refugee camp), 162-163
 Ein el-Tal (Hindrat) (refugee camp), 359
 Al-'Eizariya, 105, 296-297
 Eizenkot, Gadi, 96-97
 Eldad, Arie, 313
 Elders, 39, 267
 Elkin, Zeev, 313



Erdoğan, Recep Tayyip, 190-196, 198-201, 204, 207

Ethiopia, 84

Europe, 38, 58, 78, 82-84, 100, 113, 207, 244, 247, 250-251, 264, 267, 292, 357-358

European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza (ECESG), 247

European Commission (EC), 245

European Parliament, 246-247, 412

European Union (EU), 39, 85, 112, 168, 188, 222, 231, 237, 244-248, 250-251, 256, 261-263, 267-269, 312, 314, 346, 418
- Court of Justice, 244

F

Al-Faisal, Turki, 169

Faraj, Majid, 44-45

Farawaneh, Abdul Nasser, 102-104

Fatah, 29-30, 33-34, 36-37, 41-46, 48-55, 57-58, 65, 107, 111, 115, 141, 149, 161-163, 166, 169, 188, 211, 237-238, 280
- Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, 54
- Central Committee, 41, 43, 49-51, 162-163
- Revolutionary Council (FRC), 34, 51, 163-164

Fayyad, Salam, 29-37, 45, 50, 53, 56-57, 115, 139, 249, 269, 314

Feiglin, Moshe, 280

Fidan, Hakan, 195

Ford, Ferald, 243

Ford, Robert, 242

The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (IHH) (Turkey), 192, 411

France, 84-85, 90-91, 248-251, 293, 404, 409, 412

Frattini, Franco, 39

Free Patriotic Movement (FPM), 165

Future Movement, 165

G

Gabon, 220, 259

Galant, Yoav, 94

Galloway, George, 38, 411

Gamliel, Gila, 170

Gantz, Benny, 94

Gaon, Vilna, 283

Gates, Robert, 212-213, 305

Gaylard, Maxwell, 263

Geagea, Samir, 165

Geneva, 32, 111, 189, 196, 259, 261, 267, 314

Gerizim, 290, 305

Germany, 84-85, 90-91, 145, 245, 251, 403-404

Gharib, Muhammad, 173

Ghunaym, Abu Mahir, 49

Al-Ghussein, Ihab, 40

Gilani, Syed Yousuf Raza, 218

Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF), 216

Golan, Galia, 74

Golan, Heights, 82, 160, 162, 255, 260, 343

Golan, Yair, 97

Goldstone Report, 246

Gönül, Veedi, 197

Gonzalez, Felipe, 245

Grandi, Filippo, 262

Grappo, Gary, 235

Greece, 97, 204, 248, 409

Gro Brundtland, 267

Guatemala, 266

Gül, Abdullah, 191-192, 196, 198, 201

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), 170-171, 178

H

Habashnah, Samir, 156

Habayit Hayehudi-The New National Religious Party (NRP), 313

Hadera Paper Ltd., 174

Haifa, 80, 96, 196, 289, 293

Halhud HaLeumi, 313
 Al-Hallak, Muhsen, 163
 Hamas, 29-30, 35-46, 50-58, 65, 94, 104, 106-107, 140-141, 149-153, 158, 160-162, 166-167, 169-170, 188, 200-201, 204, 206, 209-211, 233, 236-237, 239-242, 246, 251-253, 395
 - Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, 51, 55-56, 58, 144
 - Political Bureau, 33, 41, 141, 160, 188, 201
 Hammad, Fathi, 40
 Hammad, Nimr, 280
 Hanegbi, Tzachi, 72-73
 Haniyyah, Isma'il, 37-41, 45, 58
 Haret Hreik, 167
 Hariri, Sa'ad, 167
 Harvey, Michael, 410
 Hasan, Hamdi, 178
 Al-Hassan, Bilal, 52, 358
 Hatoyama, Yukio, 256
 Al-Hayyah, Khalil, 153
 Hebron, 34-35, 52, 56, 58, 77, 103, 199, 205, 234, 239, 244, 251, 257-258, 290, 305, 308, 315-316, 318, 334, 339, 341, 415
 Herzliya, 79
 Herzog, Mike, 54, 68
 High Supreme National Committee for the Support of Detainees, 40
 Hizbullah, 94, 162, 165, 167-168, 208-209, 237, 239, 242
 Hizma, 304
 Holy Sepulcher, 287
 Holyland, 72
 Hong Kong, 90-91
 Human Rights Watch (HRW), 106, 154-155, 264
 Hurva Synagogue, 205, 280, 283
 Husni, Faruq, 173
 Hussain, Tal'at, 219
 Al-Husseini, Rafiq, 48-49

I

Ibrahim, Anwar, 214
 Ibrahim Mosque, 77, 177, 199, 205, 239, 244, 290, 305
 IC Power Ltd., 174
 Ihsanoğlu, Ekmeleddin, 188
 India, 39, 84, 90-91, 255, 358, 409, 412
 Indonesia, 187, 205, 216-217, 220-221, 412
 Indyk, Martin, 266
 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), 264
 Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), 79
 Interior Ministry's Jerusalem District Planning and Construction Committee, 301, 306
 International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), 194, 254, 263
 International Committee of the Red Cross [ICRC], 233, 264
 International Court of Justice (ICJ), 215, 260
 International Criminal Court (ICC), 207, 215
 International Criminal Police Organization—INTERPOL, 144, 170
 International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO), 411
 International Monetary Fund (IMF), 88, 368, 406, 408
 International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), 144, 175
 International Strategic Research Organisation, 198
 International Union of Muslim Scholars (IUMS), 177
 Iran, 94, 98, 115, 163, 187, 194-195, 205-214, 221-222, 237, 239-240, 266
 Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), 207
 Iraq, 32, 35, 167, 235, 238
 Iraqi borders, 358
 Ireland, 39, 245, 266, 412
 'Isa, Mahmud, 163
 Al-'Isawiyyah, 296, 299-300, 315
 Iskenderun naval base, 195
 Islamabad, 218-219



Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (PIJ), 30, 33, 39, 46, 52, 54, 166, 209-210
 - Political Bureau, 209
 Islamic National Bank (INB), 241
 Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd. (IAI), 95, 253
 Israel Chemicals Ltd., 174
 Israel Electric Corporation, 174
 Israel National Water Company (Mekorot), 318
 Israel Security Agency — ISA (Shabak), 53-54, 56, 101, 112, 115
 Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 82-83, 312, 353
 Israeli Supreme Court, 298-299
 Issoze-Ngondet, Emmanuel, 259
 Istanbul, 192, 199-200
 Italy, 90-91, 245, 251, 404

J

Jaba', 296
 Jabal al-Mukabber, 296, 304, 315
 Jaffa, 287-289, 305
 Jaffa Gate, 287-288, 305
 Jakarta, 216-217
 Jalili, Saeed, 206
 Japan, 90-91, 256, 264, 404, 412
 Jarrar, Khalidah, 47
 al-Jbayli, 164
 Jeddah, 188
 Jenin, 308, 318, 339, 342
 Jericho, 36, 308, 334, 339, 341-342, 401-402
 Jerusalem (*al-Quds*), 31, 34, 48, 54, 70, 72-74, 79, 82, 84, 98, 100-106, 109-111, 117-122, 124, 138-139, 141-142, 146-147, 153-154, 157, 159, 162, 177, 189-190, 199-200, 203, 205-206, 208, 212, 218, 232-233, 235, 238, 241-242, 244-245, 251, 253-260, 267, 279-281, 283-306, 308, 311, 313-317, 319, 332, 334, 339, 341-343, 354-355, 367-368, 387, 412
 - Old City, 111, 259, 280, 283, 287, 294, 296-297, 305, 315, 415

Jerusalem Center for Social & Economic Rights (JCSER), 296
 Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS), 293, 355
 Jerusalem Light Rail (JLR), 297
 Jewish Agency, 83-85
 Jewish Agency for Israel, 83
 Jewish Quarter, 111, 283, 287
 Jish, 359
 Jordan, 42, 48-49, 113, 115-116, 118, 121, 151, 153-158, 171-172, 175, 177, 211, 218, 235, 241, 332-333, 343-344, 347-352, 356-357, 402, 404
 Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization for Arab and Muslim Relief Development and Cooperation (JHCO), 412
 Joseph's Tomb, 290
 Jumblatt, Walid, 165-166
 Justice and Development Party (AKP) (Turkey), 196, 202-203

K

Kadima, 67, 69, 71-72, 74-75, 115, 313
 Kafr 'Aqab, 296
 Kan, Naoto, 256
 Karm Abu Salim crossing, 416
 Karm al-Mufti, 298
 Kartasasmita, Agus, 217
 Katsav, Moshe, 72
 Katz, Yaakov, 313
 Kaufman, Gerald, 247
 Kazakhstan, 220
 Kefaya, 178
 Kfar Saba, 289
 Kfar Zabad, 164
 Khalfan Tamim, Dahi, 170
 Khamenei, Ali, 206-208, 213
 Al-Khawli, Isma'il, 173
 Khirbet Yarza, 290

Ki-moon, Ban, 195, 256-258
 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), 42, 140,
 168-169, 235, 404, 408-409
 Klein, Baruch, 287
 Knesset, 66-74, 76-77, 79, 88, 98, 105, 124,
 246, 255, 312-313
 Kochavi, Aviv, 94
 Kocijancic, Maja, 250
 Kouchner, Bernard, 244, 249
 Kuala Lumpur, 215
 Al-Kurd, Um Kamal, 298
 Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) (Turkey),
 195, 204
 Kurtzer, Dan, 117
 Kuwait, 143, 155, 170, 412

L

Labor Party, 65-69, 73, 75, 124
 Landau, Uzi, 144, 175
 Larijani, Ali, 206-207
 Latin America, 84-85
 Lavrov, Sergei, 251-253
 Lebanese Democratic Gathering Bloc, 165
 Lebanese Forces, 165
 Lebanese Social Democratic Party (al-Kataeb),
 165, 167
 Lebanon, 38, 43, 94-95, 97, 115, 143,
 161-168, 194-195, 209-210, 212, 238,
 248, 262, 333, 345-352, 358-360
 Lei, Hong, 255
 Levey, Stuart, 242
 Levin, Yariv, 313
 Libya, 42, 140, 206, 232, 314
 Lieberman, Avigdor, 66, 69-72, 76, 110,
 114-115, 124, 161, 191, 244, 253, 264,
 313
 Likud, 65-66, 68-71, 73-74, 124, 280, 313
 Livni, Tzipi, 71
 Lod, 79, 158
 London, 38, 212, 358
 Lubban al-Sharqiya, 290

M

Al-Mabhuh, Mahmud, 144, 170, 246
 Madenat al-Qamar, 401
 Al-Madhoun, Hassan, 112
 Madrid, 120, 139
 Maguire, Mairead, 266
 Maimon, Moshe Ben, 285
 Malaysia, 187, 205, 214-215, 219-221, 412
 Malta, 39
 Mamilla Cemetery, 287, 297, 313
 Manhattan, 35
 Mansur, Muna, 54
 Al-Maqdah, Munir, 163
 Mar Elias, 288
 Martin, Michael, 248
 Marwani Prayer Hall, 283
 Al-Masri, Sa'id, 172
 Matalon, Moshe, 77
 Mavi Marmara, 38, 97, 187, 192, 196, 207,
 210, 215, 217, 261
 Mearsheimer, John J., 266
 Mecca, 42, 149, 188
 Mediterranean Sea, 190
 Medvedev, Dmitry, 201, 252
 Mehmanparast, Ramin, 205-206
 Menchu Tum, Rigoberta, 266
 Meretz, 67, 69
 Meridor, Dan, 35-36
 Merkel, Angela, 251
 Metz, Steven, 266
 Middle East, 31, 110, 114-116, 118, 121, 161,
 169, 193, 197, 199, 208, 211, 214, 218,
 232-240, 242, 250-252, 254-255, 263, 268
 Miller, Alex, 77, 313
 Al-Mintar (Karni), 247, 416
 Mish'al, Khalid, 29, 41-42, 107, 141, 149,
 158, 160, 169, 188, 201, 252
 Mitchell, George, 117-118, 214, 238, 240-242,
 250
 Mitri, Tarek, 360
 Mitzna, Amram, 67



Mizher, Jamil, 47
 Mofaz, Shaul, 71, 112, 115
 Molcho, Yitzhak, 119
 Moratinos, Miguel Ángel, 161, 244
 Morgan, Barry, 248
 Morocco, 85, 175
 Moscow, 191, 251-252
 Mossad, 94, 144-145, 170, 246
 Mottaki, Manouchehr, 205-207
 Mount of Olives, 301
 Al-Mu'allim, Walid, 161-162
 Mubarak, Husni, 94, 145-148, 176, 211, 244
 Al-Mughni, Ahmad, 415
 Mullen, Michael, 239
 Muller, Michael, 53
 Musa, 'Amr, 39, 138-139, 141-144
 Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem (MOTJ), 287
 Muslim Brotherhood, 177-178
 Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), 248
 Mustafa, Abu Ramiz, 164
 Mustafa, Fadl, 163

N

Nablus, 32, 56, 95, 290, 305, 308, 315, 318, 339, 342
 Nahariya, 208
 Nahr al-Bared (refugee camp), 358
 Nasrullah, Hasan, 168
 Natalegawa, Marty, 217
 National Islamic Congress, 358
 National Museum of Damascus, 359
 National Security Council (MGK) (Turkey), 197
 Al-Natsheh, Rafiq, 49
 Naveh, Yair, 94
 Negev, 67, 79, 289
 Neirab (refugee camp), 359
 Nesirky, Martin, 262
 Nesterenko, Andrei, 252
 Netanyahu, Benjamin, 33, 66-71, 73-77, 79-80, 88, 96-97, 107, 113-119, 138-

139, 144, 146, 149, 162, 178, 204, 210, 212-213, 231, 238, 240-241, 244, 250, 267, 301, 306-307, 313
 Netherlands, 90-91, 244, 248
 New York, 98, 242, 259
 New Zealand, 84, 195, 412
 Nicaragua, 143
 Nigeria, 220
 North America, 84
 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), 236
 North Korea, 240
 Norway, 245, 267
 Al Nu'man, 296
 Nur Wahid, Muhammad Hidayat, 217
 Nuweiba, 151

O

Obama, Barack, 107, 113, 116-118, 121-122, 139, 146-147, 169, 211, 232-236, 240, 242-243, 253, 267-268, 307
 Oil Refineries Ltd., 174
 Olmert, Ehud, 55, 72
 Oman, 235, 409
 OPC Rotem Ltd., 174
 Orbach, Uri, 313
 Oren, Michael, 239
 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 88, 263
 Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), 177, 187-190, 199, 205-206, 221
 Oslo, 40, 52, 93, 108-110, 138, 148, 218, 267, 381

P

Pakistan, 187, 218, 238, 412
 Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), 29-31, 33-34, 42-48, 50, 52, 58, 108, 110, 123-124, 149, 158-159, 164, 166, 168, 212, 232-233, 237, 268, 402
 - Central Council, 45

- Executive Committee of the PLO, 44-46, 49, 111, 113-114, 122
 - Negotiations Affairs Department (NAD), 111
 - Palestinian National Council (PNC), 45, 58
 - Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA), 242, 381
 - Palestinian Authority (PA), 29-30, 32-33, 35-36, 41, 43, 45-50, 52-58, 74, 78, 101-102, 106-112, 115, 119-120, 123, 125, 138, 140-142, 146, 148, 150, 159, 171, 200, 204, 211-212, 231-234, 237, 243, 249, 251-253, 256, 268-269, 280-281, 314, 349, 354, 357, 373, 380-387, 399-403, 406, 408-411, 413-415
 - Palestinian Business Forum, 199, 411
 - Palestinian Central Bank, 31, 381
 - Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 312, 317, 338, 342, 353, 378, 390, 404
 - Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), 30, 33-34, 57, 164, 247, 412
 - Palestinian People's Party (PPP), 30, 46
 - Palestinian Relief and Development Fund (Interpal), 411
 - Palestinian Return Centre (PRC), 358
 - Palestinian Return Community (Wajeb), 359
 - Palestinian Water Authority (PWA), 318, 417
 - Palestino-Européen de Gestion et d'Aide Socio-Economique (PEGASE), 408-409
 - Palmer, Geoffrey, 195
 - Papadimas, Nicholas, 288
 - Paris, 212, 263, 402
 - Patriarch Irineos I, 280, 288
 - Patriarch Theophilos III, 288
 - Peace Now, 75, 301, 307, 312
 - Peres, Shimon, 36, 70-71, 162, 167
 - Persian Gulf, 170
 - Petraeus, David, 239
 - Pillar, Paul, 266
 - Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), 30, 33, 40, 46-47
 - Central Committee, 47
 - Political Bureau, 47
 - Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), 164, 167
 - Prodi, Romano, 245
 - Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), 165-166
 - Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) (Indonesia), 216
 - Putin, Vladimir, 253
- ## Q
- Qaddumi, Faruq, 51
 - Al-Qaeda, 239
 - Qalqilya, 308, 315, 339, 341
 - Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf, 177
 - Qarawat Bani Hassan, 290
 - Qatar, 42, 140-141, 169, 409
 - Al-Qawasmeh, Khalid, 30
 - Al-Qawasmeh, Osama, 36
 - Al-Qibli Mosque, 283
 - Quartet, 112, 114, 147, 201, 231-235, 249-250, 252, 254
 - Al Quds International Institution, 411
 - Al-Qudwah, Nasir, 50
 - Qurei', Ahmad, 111
 - Qusaya, 164
- ## R
- Rabin, Yitzhak, 243
 - Rabinovich, Itamar, 215
 - Rabinovich, Shmuel, 284
 - Rachel's Tomb (Bilal Bin Rabah Mosque), 77, 177, 199, 205, 239, 290, 305
 - Rafah, 143, 150-153, 174, 203, 209, 215, 247-248, 291, 339, 402, 411-412, 416
 - Raja, Anwar, 164
 - Al-Ram, 296-297, 304
 - Ramallah, 29-31, 36, 52-53, 56, 58, 106-107, 125, 150, 188, 200, 252, 268, 290, 306, 308, 311, 315, 339, 341-342, 380, 401, 413-414

Ras al-‘Amoud, 302
 Rawabi, 401
 Al-Rifa‘i, Abou ‘Imad, 166
 Al-Rifa‘i, Muhammad, 52
 Al-Rishq, ‘Izzat, 33
 Riyadh, 149, 160, 169
 Robinson, Mary, 39, 245, 267
 Romania, 98, 204
 Rome, 244
 Rosner, Shmuel, 267
 Ross, Dennis, 211
 Rotem, David, 313
 Russia, 82, 85, 91, 100, 112, 160, 194, 231,
 251-253, 255-256, 269, 292
 Russo, Tal, 94

S

Sa‘ar, Gideon, 77
 Sabih, Mohammad, 142
 Sabra, 358-359
 Safed, 78
 Saleh, Ahmad, 163
 Salfit, 290, 306, 308, 339, 341-342
 Salman the Persian, 290
 Saqr, ‘Uqab, 167
 Sarafand Mosque, 289
 Sarkozy, Nicolas, 234, 251
 Al Sa‘ud, ‘Abdullah Bin ‘Abd al-‘Aziz, 143
 Schmidt, Helmut, 245
 Schneller, Otniel, 313
 Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA),
 39
 Sembiring, Tifatul, 216
 Senegal, 220
 Separation Wall, 115, 279, 296, 307, 311, 315-
 317, 319, 337, 399
 erry, Robert, 31
 Sha‘ban, Duraid, 164
 Shafiq, Munir, 52, 358
 Shai, Nachman, 313
 Sha‘lan, Abu Iyad, 163

Shalit, Gilad, 45, 52, 104-105, 233-235, 248,
 252
 Sharon, Ariel, 109, 118
 Shas, 66, 70, 74, 80, 238, 307
 Sha‘th, Nabil, 41
 Shatila, 358-359
 Sheikh Jarrah, 110, 257, 296, 298, 315
 Shepherd Hotel, 298-299
 Shimon HaTzadik Tomb, 298
 Shirazi, Ali, 207
 Shu‘fat, 297, 304
 Al-Shuja‘iyyah (Nahal Oz) crossing, 416
 Siberia, 255
 Sidon, 346
 Silwan, 257, 290, 296, 299-300, 305, 315
 Sinai, 152, 176, 209, 243
 Sinirlioglu, Feridun, 196
 Sirte, 122, 139-142, 144, 159, 199, 206, 232,
 257, 314
 Sofa crossing, 416
 Solana, Javier, 245
 South Africa, 248
 South Korea, 91, 403-404
 Soviet Union (former), 82, 84-85
 Spain, 91, 245, 250, 404, 412
 Srour, Sa‘ad Hayel, 158
 Steinitz, Yuval, 246, 313
 Stoere, Jonas Gahr, 249
 Stoltenberg, Thorvald, 245
 Strategic Studies Institute (SSI), 266
 Stubb, Alexander, 248
 Sudan, 240
 Suez Canal, 207
 Suleiman, Jaber, 360
 Suleiman, ‘Omar, 42, 146, 149
 Sur Baher, 296, 304, 315
 Switzerland, 90-91, 404
 Syria, 25, 69, 85, 94, 138, 151, 158-162,
 167-168, 200, 203, 208-209, 241-242,
 255, 333, 344-345, 347-352, 358-359

T

Taba, 110-111
 Al-Tabtaba'i, Walid, 170
 Al-Tahir, Mahir, 47
 Al-Tahir, Mu'in, 52
 Al-Talbieh, 288
 Al-Tamimi, 'Abdul Ghani, 358
 Al-Tamimi, Fahmi Shabaneh, 48-49
 Al-Tayyib, Ahmad, 177
 Tehran, 194, 205, 208-210, 212-213
 Tel Aviv, 80, 95, 168, 173, 176-177, 190, 192, 197, 202, 208, 214, 253, 264, 293
 Temple Mount, 285-286
 Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), 415
 Thabit Organization For The Right of Return, 359
 Al Thani, Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim, 138-139
 Al-Thawri, 296, 315
 Thrall, Nathan, 35, 54
 Tianjin, 255
 Tira, 359
 Tirawiyyah, Fakhri, 163
 Toner, Mark, 239
 Tubas, 290, 308, 339, 341-342
 Tufail, Muhammad Akhtar, 218
 Tulkarem, 32, 308, 315, 339, 341
 Tunisia, 85, 125
 Al-Tur, 296, 315
 Turkey, 39, 42, 51, 75, 90-91, 97, 115, 143, 151, 187, 190-205, 207, 210, 219-222, 255, 403-404, 409
 Turkmenistan, 220
 Tyre, 163, 346

U

'Ubayd, Muhammad 'Ali, 163
 'Ubeidat, Kamal, 298
 Union of Good, 411
 Union of Islamic Organizations in Europe, 358

United Arab Emirates (UAE), 144, 170, 175, 404, 409, 412
 United Kingdom (UK), 84-85, 90-91, 152, 234, 249, 404, 412
 United Nations (UN), 31, 33, 39, 45, 47, 112, 116, 123, 142-143, 195-196, 200, 205, 216-218, 231, 235, 245, 254-258, 262, 267, 314, 410
 - Human Rights Council (HRC), 189, 237, 261
 - Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA-oPt), 318, 410, 415
 - Security Council, 48, 108, 123, 143, 147, 167, 169, 194, 207, 210, 215, 233, 236, 239, 241, 253-254, 259-260
 - United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 411
 - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 142, 177, 360
 - United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 216
 - United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), 108, 116, 121, 142, 190, 215, 259-260
 - United Nations Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, 246, 261
 - United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 243, 259, 262, 344-346, 349-352, 400, 411
 United States of America (US/ USA), 35, 42-43, 45, 52-55, 58-59, 83, 85, 90-93, 95, 98-99, 106, 109, 112-113, 116-118, 123, 137-139, 145, 147-148, 150, 159, 168, 193-196, 201-203, 205, 211-215, 222, 231-232, 234-243, 245, 250-252, 255-257, 259, 261-264, 266-269, 293, 306, 314, 356, 404, 408-410, 418
 - Central Command (CENTCOM), 237, 239

- Congress (House of Representatives/ Senate), 96, 121, 202, 239-242, 267
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 385, 410-411

‘Uraiqat, Sa’ib, 111, 119

Uribe, Alvaro, 195

Uruguay, 48, 269

US-Israel Joint Economic Development Group (JEDG), 241

‘Usbat al-Ansar, 162

Uzbekistan, 220

V

Venezuela, 240

Von Weizsäcker, Richard, 245

W

Wadi ‘Arabah, 156

Wadi Hilwah Street, 283, 300, 305

Wadi al-Joz, 297, 305

Al-Wadiah, Yasir, 41

Al-Wafd Party, 173

Walaja, 302, 304

Walt, Stephen M., 266

Washington, 113, 114, 117, 119, 139-140, 146-147, 194, 196, 206-207, 210-212, 215, 234, 239-240, 242, 250, 262-263, 267, 401

Welch, David, 35

Western Wall Plaza, 283-285, 287

Westerwelle, Guido, 39

Williams, Jody, 266

World Bank, 234, 368, 385, 399, 408, 409

World Economic Forum’s (WEF), 170

World Food Programme (WFP), 411

World Health Organization (WHO), 262, 318

World Trade Organization (WTO), 172

Y

Yadlin, Amos, 94

Yalin, Haim, 97

Yasser Arafat International Airport, 402

Yemen, 85, 169

Yeroham, 67

Yesha Council, 314

Yesui, Zhang, 254

Yildirim, Fehmi Bülent, 192

Yishai, Eliyahu “Eli”, 80, 238

Yisrael Beitenu, 66, 69-70, 72, 74, 76-77, 124, 313

Yosef, Ovadia, 307

Yudhoyono, Susilo Bambang, 217

Yusroh, Yoyoh, 217

Yusuf, Ahmad, 159

Yusuf, Hisham, 142

Yusuf, Nasr, 112

Z

Al-Zahhar, Mahmud, 43, 150, 153

Al-Za‘im, 315

Zainal Abidin, 214

Zaken, Shula, 72

Zaki, ‘Abbas, 164

Zamir, Avi, 100

Zamosh, Yoram, 283

Zardari, Asif Ali, 218

Zatara, 56

Al-Zaza, Ziad, 30

Al-Zeer, Majid, 52, 358

Zoabi, Hanin, 77

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91. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh and Ziad al-Hasan, *The Political Views of the Palestinian Refugees in Lebanon as Reflected in May 2006*, 2009.
92. Ishtiaq Hossain and Mohsen Moh'd Saleh, *American Foreign Policy & the Muslim World*, 2009.
93. Abbas Ismail, *The Israeli Racism: Palestinians in Israel: A Case Study*, Book Series: Am I Not a Human? (1), translated by Aladdin Assaiqeli, 2009.
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This Report

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2010/11 is the sixth in a series of annual resourceful scientific studies. The Report discusses the developments of the Palestinian issue of 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 read for all those concerned.

An outstanding team of 14 academics and experts contributed to this Report. It is divided into eight chapters, that cover 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.

As a serious addition to Palestinian studies, those interested in this field, including specialists, experts, libraries of universities and research centers, should have their copies of this Report.

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2010/11



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