

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12



Edited By

Dr. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh



Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12



**Al-Zaytouna Centre
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List of Abbreviations

AIPAC	The American Israel Public Affairs Committee
AKP	<i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> (Justice and Development Party)
BCM	Billion Cubic Meters
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
DPRA	Directorate of Political and Refugee Affairs
EC	European Commission
ECESG	European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GS	Gaza Strip
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IHH	<i>İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı</i> (Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSS	The Institute for National Security Studies
IRC	International Red Cross
ISA	Israel Security Agency (Shabak)
JEA	Jerusalem Education Administration
JOD	Jordanian Dinars
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
l/c/d	Liters per Capita per Day
MB	Muslim Brotherhood



MCM	Million Cubic Meters
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCHA-oPt	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian territory
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PA	Palestinian Authority
PARC	Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PEGASE	Palestino-Européén 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
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PPP	Palestinian People's Party
PRCS	Palestine Red Crescent Society
PWA	Palestinian Water Authority
RP	Registered Person
RPC	Registered Person in Refugee Camp
RR	Registered Refugee
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SNC	Syrian National Council
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
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	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WB	West Bank

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Chapter Four:

The Palestinian Issue and the Muslim World

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Chapter Five:
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Issue and the
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Chapter Seven:

Demographic, Economic and Educational Indicators

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Introduction

The changes and revolutions that swept the Arab world in 2011 marked a major turning point in the region's modern history. If these changes continue in a positive direction, where the peoples would succeed in imposing their will, establish representative regimes that express the dignity of Arab citizens, and embark on projects of development and progress, then this will no doubt lead to changing the equation in the conflict with Israel in the middle and long run.

Indeed, one of the leading factors that allow Israel's continued occupation is the weakness, division, fragmentation and underdevelopment of its surroundings countries. Therefore, the presence of a strategic sphere for occupied Palestine, and one which is strong, perseverant and coherent at once—which clings to Arab and Islamic rights in Palestine and supports resistance forces—will leave a huge mark on the Palestinian issue. This sphere would include several mechanisms that support the Palestine national action, and also would influence the tracts of both resistance and peaceful settlement.

Nevertheless, all this may remain in the realm of wishful thinking. For one thing, the region's revolutions and transitions are facing many internal and external hurdles. They are also suffering from attempts to hijack them, divert them from their trajectories, and undermine their visions and/or attempts to regenerate corrupt regimes in a different form. This is not to mention schemes to partition the region along sectarian and ethnic lines.

What has come to be known by many as the “Arab Spring,” has so far had only a limited impact on the Palestinian issue. To be sure, Fatah and Hamas and other factions have signed a reconciliation agreement. But its implementation on the ground has progressed very slowly and reluctantly; the agreement has so far been used only for political exploitation, with Palestinian strife being managed rather than being resolved. It is perhaps still premature to speak about a “Palestinian Spring” that would unite Palestinians under one umbrella, and a unified national program in which they would focus their concerted efforts on confronting the occupation and on the liberation project.

The Palestinian Strategic Report is being published—in both Arabic and English—for the seventh year in a row. It has become an essential reference consulted by researchers and experts concerned with Palestinian affairs.

The *Report* contains a wealth of information, data and analyzes, supported by up-to-date documents. The *Report* adheres to strict academic standards and the principles of objectivity, and follows only accepted academic methodologies. The *Report* covers the internal situation in Palestine, as well as Arab, Islamic and international positions on the Palestinian issue. The *Report* also tackles developments on the Israeli scene, and issues pertaining to Israeli military aggression, Palestinian resistance and the peace process.

The *Report* devotes a special chapter to the occupied territories and the holy sites. Also in this *Report*, the chapters on demographics and economic conditions have been merged together, where the focus was placed on the key indicators. Data on education was also added to this chapter.

Twelve experts on Palestinian affairs have taken part in the preparation of this *Report*. Besides, the advisers on the *Report* played a key role in evaluation and final refereeing, and in developing the *Report*'s contents. Al-Zaytouna Centre's working team, particularly the editorial assistants and archive staff, were heavily involved in the preparation and production of this *Report*. Here, we must particularly give credit to the exceptional and commendable efforts of colleagues Iqbal 'Omeish and Ghina Jamal al-Din.

Finally, we thank *Allah* (S.W.T) for the growing success of this *Report*. We also thank all those who have supported this *Report*, and encouraged us to continue producing it. Lastly, we welcome all constructive criticisms, feedback or advice.

The Editor,

Dr. Mohsen Moh'd Saleh

Chapter One

The Internal Palestinian Scene

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Introduction

While the wider Arab political scene in 2011 saw some initial sweeping changes in favor of democratic systems that express the will, honor and dignity of the populations, the Palestinian part of this scene remained essentially slow and sluggish.

However, during the same year, the Palestinians successfully concluded the national reconciliation agreement and an honorable deal for a prisoner exchange with Israel. Moreover, for some time, the Palestinians engaged the world with the application for admission to the United Nations (UN) for a State of Palestine. Nonetheless, while the world was preoccupied with dramatic developments in the Arab world, the Palestinians sadly failed to implement their reconciliation agreement, which was employed only in a temporary tactical manner. Moreover, differences between the Palestinian factions remained as profound as ever over the issues of the peace settlement, the resistance, security forces, elections, the formation of the government, etc. Thus, the internal Palestinian conflict remained during 2011, where the schism was managed rather than ended. The status quo essentially remained intact: the governments of Ramallah and Gaza Strip (GS), the security coordination between Ramallah and Israel, and the siege of GS all continued as they had. Moreover, civil and public liberties were not sufficiently guaranteed to make the environment conducive to free and fair elections with equal opportunity for all parties to prepare for their electioneering and election campaigns.

This chapter discusses the Palestinian internal scene during 2011 and early 2012. It addresses a web of important issues:

First: The Emergency Government in the West Bank

The emergency government, which the President of the Palestinian Authority (PA) Mahmud 'Abbas formed after Hamas' seizure of control over GS in June 2007, continued to function under the premiership of Salam Fayyad, but with limited

administrative and security authority over towns, villages and refugee camps in the West Bank (WB).

Throughout 2011, there were no signs of any move towards legitimizing Fayyad's government by giving it the confidence of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), which had, anyhow, remained officially dysfunctional. However, in mid-February, Fayyad's government submitted its resignation at the request of Mahmud 'Abbas, who then authorized Fayyad to form a new Cabinet.¹ But the legal three-week period of grace, (supposedly until the end of the first week of March) expired without any success in forming a new Cabinet because of the persistent differences between Fayyad and Fatah. Hence, the former requested an extension of two further weeks to accomplish the mission.

The massive youth and popular movements of mid-March, which demanded the immediate end of schism and the conclusion of the reconciliation deal, soon overtook the relatively minor issue of the Cabinet formation. Thus, decisions on Fayyad's government were allowed to wait until after the conclusion of the reconciliation agreement in Cairo on 3/5/2011, which was officially celebrated the next day. This Agreement stipulated the formation of a national consensus government of professionals and technocrats from outside the Palestinian factions.

Thus, it was agreed that the Fayyad government would continue to perform its duties until Fatah, Hamas and other Palestinian factions concluded their deliberations on the formation of a government of national consensus, which should be, by virtue of the Doha Declaration of February 2012, presided by Mahmud 'Abbas himself.

The conflicts within Fatah had obstructed the holding of the 2010 local elections, which Fayyad was obliged to reschedule to 9/7/2011.² But in May, just a few days after the conclusion of the Cairo reconciliation agreement, the Fayyad government once more postponed these elections to 22/10/2011 on the pretext of allowing sufficient opportunity for the success of the reconciliation efforts, and to strive towards holding concurrent elections in the WB and GS.³ However, due to the stumbling implementation of the Palestinian reconciliation agreement, Fayyad postponed the elections once more, this time to an unspecified date to be declared some time in the future.

Meanwhile, Fayyad continued the efforts that he started two years previously to establish the institutions of the Palestinian State, which was scheduled to be

declared by the end of the summer of 2011. In fact, Fayyad had publicly, and more than once, declared his governments' ability to meet the responsibility of the declaration of the Palestinian state in September,⁴ as scheduled. By this date, the tireless efforts of the representatives and the embassies of the PA had succeeded in securing the recognition of the Palestinian state by 139 countries.⁵

Israel seemed to have seriously misjudged the seriousness of the Palestinian move to officially declare their state via international institutions. It felt this to be just a propagandist maneuver that 'Abbas and Fayyad harbored to exert pressure on Israel to secure better conditions for the resumption of the negotiations, believing that 'Abbas would ultimately, and at the last moment, back down.⁶

But 'Abbas did not budge an inch. Supported by Fayyad's government and the PA, he energetically pursued the drive to obtain international recognition of the Palestinian state unless and until Israel agreed to halt settlement building and recognize the 1967 borders as the basis for the negotiations. 'Abbas' determination provoked and angered Israel, which issued a range of threats: termination of the Oslo Accords, stoppage of all negotiations and contacts with the PA, invasion of the WB, exposing 'Abbas to the same fate of his predecessor, the late Yasir 'Arafat, by besieging his compound, suspension of depositing tax revenue in the Palestinian treasury and withdrawal of all the privileges granted to the leaders and senior officials of the PA. This pressure was not restricted to the occupiers, but extended to the United States of America (US) administration, which threatened to totally freeze its aid to the PA.⁷

Confronted with 'Abbas' stubborn determination, Israel retreated, although it did suspend clearance revenue. Meanwhile, on 23/9/2011, 'Abbas gave an important address to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), which featured an unprecedented condemnation of the Israeli occupation.⁸ The speech was well received by important sectors of the Palestinian people and a number of their political forces, who viewed it as a positive step towards freeing the official Palestinian decision from foreign intervention and hegemony, and a basis for a new phase in which reconciliation and national unity will supersede and dominate. But other, equally important, Palestinian forces expressed their reservations on the speech's position towards the resistance, the peace settlement and other issues.

'Abbas and the PA were profoundly disappointed because of their failure to secure the support of nine members of the Security Council,⁹ and the consequential

failure of their bid to secure the recognition of the UN for the Palestinian state. Nonetheless, the PA secured, on 31/10/2011, full membership in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). This opened the way for a bitter confrontation between the Palestinian and Israeli positions, while the US administration retaliated by stopping its subsidy to UNESCO, seemingly prompted by the PA's declared intention to apply for the membership of other international organizations and agencies.¹⁰

Though the PA had firmly claimed that it would resubmit its application for full membership, the tremendous political and economic pressure exerted on it placed it in an extremely embarrassing situation, and blocked the resumption of its drive to secure international recognition for a Palestinian state.

The position of the PA, outlined above, towards the issue of the Palestinian State cast doubt on its seriousness in pursuing this path. It is logical to wonder whether this move was somehow related to the PA's desire to improve its negotiating position in a probable peace negotiations with Israel, and whether it is at all worthwhile to focus on this option at a time when the PA is not willing to confront the Israeli-American opposition to the very end.

The Israeli suspension of clearance revenues presented Fayyad's government with a serious financial crisis with very serious economic ramifications.¹¹ In fact, Fayyad's government had, as early as the middle of 2010, admitted the financial difficulties, but signs of the crisis were vivid by early 2011.¹² Fayyad attributed the crisis to the reduction of the donors' subsidies as well as foreign aid, which seriously affected his government's ability to honor its commitments, particularly the monthly payment of the salaries of over 150 thousands government employees.¹³

Fayyad's government adopted some austerity measures to reduce its dependence on foreign aid. Nonetheless, though public expenditure was reduced from \$1.8 billion* during 2008 to \$790 million in 2011, the financial crisis deepened.¹⁴ The Israeli decision of late 2011 to pay the clearance revenue to the PA was not really effective in this respect, as it only delayed the crisis.

The economic restrictions imposed on the PA by the Paris agreement, namely the Protocol on Economic Relations signed in Paris in 1994, deprived the PA of

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

having real and viable economic potentialities. It was therefore unable to rid itself of dependence on foreign aid, the availability of which depends on the political whims of the Western powers.

Accusations of flagrant corruption were not restricted to some of the ministers of Fayyad's government, but extended to the Prime Minister himself, who was accused of being involved in corruption by no other person than the president of the Palestine State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau, Mahmud Abu al-Rub.¹⁵ Moreover, according to press releases given in early 2011 by the PA's attorney general in Ramallah, Ahmad al-Mughni,¹⁶ 80 corruption cases were referred to the Anti-Corruption Commission which is headed by Rafiq al-Natsheh and that was established in 2010. Some big fishes, including incumbent ministers, were, according to al-Mughni, subjected to investigations.

Al-Natsheh had asked Prime Minister Fayyad to lift immunity from two of his ministers in preparation for investigating some corruption charges against them.¹⁷ Moreover, on another occasion, al-Natsheh said that immunity had actually been lifted from a number of ministers in preparation for their trial,¹⁸ while investigations of charges of corruption had actually commenced in the case of two ministers, who submitted their resignation.¹⁹

Despite the chain of corruption charges against some ministers in Salam Fayyad's government, and the undertaking given by the attorney general and the Anti-Corruption Commission that they meant business, only the Minister of Social Affairs, Hassan Abu Libdah was referred to the judiciary, in early February 2012. This indicates that investigations were, if undertaken at all, undertaken hesitantly and half heartedly, and firm measures are unlikely to be taken against the culprits.

The corruption charge was not the only issue raised against Fayyad's government in 2011; it was also blamed for targeting the resistance, as well as civil liberties, in the WB. Many activists were interrogated and arrested, and public and private liberties were violated, including dismissal from public posts for political reasons, prohibition of assembly and demonstrations by force and infringement on the freedom of speech and expression by various means. All these measures were undertaken under the pretext of the security obligations of the Oslo Accords, the agreement that initiated security cooperation with Israel.

The PA tried, in vain, to improve the image of its security forces. It claimed that they are obliged to abide by proper legal measures in all their activities, particularly with regard to arrest operations. Moreover, they were not to try civilians in military tribunals,²⁰ and had to refrain from arresting any citizen except with a prior arrest warrant issued by the Office of the Attorney General.²¹ But none of these measures was actually applied on the ground.

Contrary to the expectation of some, the conduct of the security apparatus did not see any change after the conclusion of the reconciliation agreement in May 2011. The security forces continued their oppressive measures against the resistance, and hardly a day passed without interrogations and political arrests being carried out, though the reconciliation agreement stipulated the prevalence of freedom, and the release of detainees.

Some sectors among the Palestinian youth were so inspired by the Arab Spring that they called, on 15/3/2011, for the assembly of huge marches to put pressure on Fatah and Hamas to initiate serious steps to end the schism.²²

Though seemingly welcoming this popular youth drive, Fayyad's government had evidently tried to swim with the tide in order to avoid the probable negative repercussions of the movement, and attempted to appear as a champion of unity and national reconciliation. In reality, it used its security forces to undermine the movement's fundamental objectives through repeated interrogations and arrests of its organizers and participants. Hence, in a short time, it managed to check the momentum of, and then abort, this revolutionary initiative.

Meanwhile, during 2011, tension continued between Fayyad's government and the rival government in GS. This estrangement was clearly demonstrated in the contradictory positions of the two sides on several common administrative and national issues, such as the issues of pilgrimage, *'Umrah* (smaller pilgrimage to Mecca), passports, health and electricity.

The government of GS, under Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah, attributed all these hostile positions on the part of Fayyad's government and the PA in Ramallah to their participation in the imposed siege on GS and their drive to exert political and financial pressure on GS through denial of its legitimate share in the financial subsidy and other funds allocated for relief and humanitarian purposes.²³

Second: The Caretaker Government in the Gaza Strip

Though summarily dismissed back on 14/6/2007, by presidential decree, Haniyyah's government in GS continued to function during 2011, notwithstanding the formidable difficulties that it experienced; primarily the political and economic siege, and the repercussions of the Palestinian schism on the administration of GS and the national project in general.

Immediately after the overthrow of the former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Haniyyah's government expressed its earnest wish that this development would lead to a new chapter in the relationship between Egypt and GS. The latter had endured great hardship as a result of the adverse positions and policies of Mubarak's regime towards Hamas and its government.

Haniyyah cabled Field Marshal Muhammad Hussein Tantawi, chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), to assure him of his government's desire to maintain the security and stability of Egypt during the period of change. Moreover, he vowed that his government would undertake its duty of policing the borders in a way that ensures Egypt's security and sovereignty, vowing not to interfere in its internal affairs.²⁴

Meanwhile, the post revolutionary Egyptian government declared its full support for GS and the legitimate demand to end the siege. Both the Egyptian Prime Minister 'Isam Sharaf, and his Foreign Minister Nabil al-'Arabi, emphasized the necessity to speedily lift the siege of GS, a move that was welcomed by Haniyyah's government, still suffering the intense and protracted blockade.²⁵

Notwithstanding the seemingly warm relations between Haniyyah's government and Egypt, tangible changes did not go beyond the political and media arenas, with no major breakthrough taking place on any of the important issues brought about by the imposed restrictions and the siege of GS. As emphasized by Egyptian official sources, major developments remain primarily contingent on the successful conclusion of internal Palestinian reconciliation.²⁶

Nonetheless, political and media relations between the new Egyptian regime and Haniyyah's government have significantly developed in more than one direction. It surpassed the former narrow security domain and reached broader issues and concerns, on which joint official meetings were held between ministers from both sides.

Shortly after the success of the revolution, the Egyptian government declared a new mechanism for the opening of Rafah crossing, which constitutes the only available passage for contacts between the Gazans and the outside world. Haniyyah's government welcomed this Egyptian move, declaring their hope that Egypt would "swiftly implement the decision to end continued Palestinian suffering due to siege."²⁷

Eventually, though, the Egyptian administrative policy of Rafah gateway led to some disagreements with Haniyyah's government. This was particularly because a result of the Egyptian insistence on restricting the numbers and movements of the travelers crossing via Rafah, and their adherence to blocking black listed travelers who had been banned from entering Egypt under the Mubarak regime. Tension continued for several weeks,²⁸ but it was eventually eased by some improvements taken by the Egyptian side to facilitate the movement of the travelers. This did not constitute a comprehensive solution of the Rafah problem, though Egypt repeatedly promised to resolve the issue once and for all sometime in the future.²⁹ As things stand, it seems most likely that the problem will remain, particularly with regard to the black listed travelers, until a breakthrough is made on the formation of a Palestinian national consensus government within the dictates of the national reconciliation agreement.

Towards the end of 2011, Isma'il Haniyyah, the prime minister of the caretaker government, made his first visits since Hamas' take over of GS in mid-2007, to several Arab and Muslim countries, viz. Egypt, Sudan, Turkey and Tunisia.

Interestingly Haniyyah was officially received as a legitimate prime minister of a constitutional government in the Sudan, Turkey and Tunisia, but not in Egypt where the Egyptian prime minister and SCAF chairman declined to afford him official treatment. Nonetheless, Haniyyah's tour played an effective role in breaking up the political siege of GS, and in the discussion of several important issues, such as lifting the siege, reconstruction of GS, Jerusalem and its Judaization by the Israelis, and some educational and health matters. During his visits to Sudan, Turkey and Tunisia, Haniyyah met senior government officials, leaders of political parties and representatives of popular movements, in addition to meetings in Egypt with the general-guide of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), the sheikh of al-Azhar, the secretary-general of the League of Arab States and the leadership of Egypt's intelligence apparatus.³⁰

At the end of January 2012, Haniyyah undertook another tour to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Discussions focused on the issues of reconstruction, unemployment and electricity, where several promises of help and support were made by the leaders of these countries.

In February 2011, Haniyyah declared his intention to hold a cabinet reshuffle in order to reduce the burden on his ministers, some of whom had more than one portfolio, as well as to freshen up his government. He formed a special committee to study the means towards securing the participation of Palestinian forces, factions and personalities in the proposed new line up. But this effort led to nowhere, as all the pro-PLO forces as well as the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (PIJ) declined, the former under the pretext of the schism, and the latter for political reasons.

In early March 2011, Haniyyah undertook the cabinet reshuffle in two phases, because of some legal considerations, and submitted it for the PLC vote of confidence, as stipulated by the Palestinian Basic Law.³¹ However, Haniyyah was keen to emphasize that the arrangements did not carry significant political weight, as his government would readily resign once a new consensus government is agreed upon within the framework of the national reconciliation dialogue.³² Fatah dismissed the exercise as unconstitutional, stating that it would only aggravate the schism.³³

Haniyyah's government dealt carefully with rising Israeli military provocation that continued throughout 2011, stating that the national interest dictated a reserved reaction to deny Israel any excuse to attack GS, and to target the resistance factions.³⁴ Nonetheless, GS was subjected to several waves of Israeli attacks, of which the most serious was in August 2011. The Israeli target was reportedly the assassination of Isma'il Haniyyah, but this plot was foiled by direct Egyptian intervention.

Haniyyah's government tried its utmost, using through various ways and means, to control the rising Israeli military aggression, and to prevent escalation. To this end Hamas had extensive contact with the various Palestinian resistance factions, approached the leadership of the Egyptian intelligence services, and made earnest appeals to the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the international community to stop all forms of aggression and halt abort Israel's assault on GS, and impose a mutual truce on the two parties.³⁵

Meanwhile, the wave of Israeli claims that the Palestinian resistance was significantly strengthening itself by acquiring new weapons and military equipment, allegedly constituting a grave threat to Israel, never stopped. These charges reached their apex with the Israeli claims that GS has become a base for al-Qaeda and international jihadists, and a spearhead for operations against the Israeli presence in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.³⁶

Israel executed a number of assassinations of Palestinian activists in GS on the pretext that they were involved in operations against Israel in the Sinai Peninsula. Israel threatened assassinations would be carried out against anyone planning or working against Israel anywhere. This highlights Israel's drive to rationalize its aggression against GS and its desire to discredit the resistance regionally and internationally. Within this context, senior Israeli military officials issued, from time to time, threats of war or a major military operation against the resistance factions, reflecting Israel's determination to destroy the infrastructure of the resistance forces and paralyze their activities. This determination was probably heightened as a result of the major anti-Israel developments across the Arab region, notably the pro-Islamist transformation and increasing expression of opposition to the occupation and its measures.³⁷

One of the major achievements of Haniyyah's government was the noticeable success of its security forces to maintain peace and internal stability in GS. This tranquility was disturbed by the kidnapping and execution of the Italian pro-Palestinian activist, Vittorio Arrigoni, by some extreme jihadists.³⁸ Swiftly, the security forces discovered the location of Arrigoni, but their attempt to settle the matter peacefully sadly failed because a leader of this ultra-orthodox Salafist group rushed to kill Arrigoni and one of his own colleagues, before committing suicide.³⁹

Gaza's security forces continued targeting Israeli agents in GS in 2011, and they succeeded in capturing many of them, depriving Israel of their much needed services. The GS Ministry of Interior viewed this action as a major security achievement for the resistance project and the maintenance of the Palestinian rights.⁴⁰

In an act unprecedented in the history of the Palestinian security forces, the Minister of the Interior and the leaders of the security forces summarily and permanently dismissed 120 security employees because of their unsatisfactory behavior and violation of established administrative systems and procedures.⁴¹

With this action, Haniyyah's government gave a serious warning that it would not allow any of the security employees, irrespective of his/her position and loyalty, to operate outside the prevailing regulations and laws.

The economic and financial predicament constituted a formidable difficulty for Haniyyah's government in 2011, which was already overburdened by the siege imposed on GS since 2007. Thus, deteriorating economic conditions continued, and the scarcity of raw materials entering via the crossings associated with Israel had, in particular, further aggravated the poor living conditions of the Palestinian citizens of GS. Haniyyah's government tried to offset the impact of the economic crisis through various measures, including an employment drive that recruited thousands of unemployed people, an extension of financial aid to unemployed workers and efficient administration of the limited materials that were allowed entry via the crossings between GS and Israel.⁴² Nonetheless, these measures did not shield Haniyyah's government from accusations of imposing excessive taxes on some commodities.

In its attempt to improve economic conditions, Haniyyah's government also submitted economic proposals to the Egyptian government. These included the establishment of a free trade zone in al-'Arish region, and the renting of a special platform in al-'Arish port to import commodities to GS; both sites would be far away from Israeli targeting and control. But these remained mere theoretical ventures that were never implemented by the Egyptians. However, Haniyyah asserted that his government's running of the economic affairs of GS continued to demonstrate its observance of the principles of transparency and avoidance of financial indebtedness.⁴³

In their striving to support the besieged Palestinian people in GS, several supportive convoys and delegations from within and outside the Arab-Islamic world visited GS throughout 2011. They included regular Arab and Islamic convoys, and European delegations of incumbent and former politicians and parliamentarians. However, with the cooperation of the Greek authorities, Israel managed to prevent the arrival of Freedom Flotilla 2 to Gaza's shores. The most important of these was the international convoy "Spring of Freedom," which included more than 100 international parliamentarians, Muslim scholars, and Arab activists representing more than 40 countries. They reached GS in November 2011 and issued the International Declaration To Refuse People Blockade.⁴⁴

The delegations and convoys that strove to break the siege played a major role in rallying external support to the Palestinians, including against the siege of GS. Moreover, they were instrumental in exposing Israeli policies that violate human rights, international conventions and the international and humanitarian laws.

With regards the youth movement described above, Haniyyah's government dealt with the drive flexibly right from the beginning; the government in GS even declared its determination to meet the movements objectives and to secure their attainment.⁴⁵ But the relationship between the two sides became rather strained following the massive youth rally of March 2011, as the government accused its organizers of departing from the national agenda and choosing to pursue narrow partisan interest. By the end of April 2011, this particular disagreement was less relevant as Hamas and Fatah signed the reconciliation agreement in Cairo.

Third: National Reconciliation Process

The issue of the Palestinian reconciliation is one of the most complicated ongoing issues on the Palestinian scene. Every Palestinian, irrespective of their intellectual orientation and party loyalty, hopes to see a resolution to the split. The internal schism has overburdened the Palestinians and discredited their case internationally.

As the Egyptian revolution gained momentum, a significant change occurred in Fatah's position towards the issue of reconciliation, namely, its acceptance of Hamas' observations on the Egyptian proposal.⁴⁶ But, by then, Hamas had tabled new conditions which, in effect, meant that for reconciliation to be successfully concluded, it would need to be taken outside the domain of the Egyptian document.⁴⁷ Following this stumbling progress, Fatah offered to conduct elections,⁴⁸ but Hamas refused on the grounds that it was preoccupied with crystallizing a comprehensive national vision within an initiative to end the schism.⁴⁹ Simultaneous to this development, both movements turned down an initiative by Salam Fayyad to maintain both governments, in GS and Ramallah; Hamas had by this point started to exhibit some flexibility towards the Egyptian paper.⁵⁰

Following an Egyptian declaration that Palestinian reconciliation was the primary concern of the new Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil al-'Arabi,⁵¹ the issue

was once more raised. But this was not enough for it to be seriously pursued, as there were still differences between Fatah and Hamas on the interpretations of some points and observations in the Egyptian document.

The Arab Spring inspired a popular movement in both the WB and GS to end the schism, which included a massive march, scheduled in late March. Isma'il Haniyyah took advantage of this moment to give a televised speech, in which he invited Fatah to a comprehensive dialogue, to be held anywhere, to conclude reconciliation.⁵² 'Abbas quickly and positively responded to this invitation by offering to visit GS and to form a consensus government.⁵³ But, because of some media skirmishes and political differences between the two sides, this visit did not materialize.⁵⁴

Egypt's strict neutrality after the collapse of Mubarak regime had been a primary factor for enabling the acceptance of the Egyptian document by all the concerned parties. By then, Egypt had revived its patronage of the process of reconciliation, and its more general role towards Palestinian issue, which was based on the primacy of the conclusion and implementation of reconciliation.

The Egyptians supervised serious follow-up meetings between Hamas and Fatah during March and April. Though Turkey had tried to act as an intermediary between Fatah and Hamas,⁵⁵ the reconciliation issue remained an exclusive Egyptian concern, until it was finally announced that the reconciliation agreement had been signed by the two movements in Cairo on 27/4/2011.

The initiating of the reconciliation agreement certainly came as a pleasant surprise for all the Palestinians who had been extremely frustrated by the long schism. In Cairo, on 3/5/2011, the agreement was officially signed and the next day it was celebrated in a ceremony attended by all the Palestinian factions. The Palestinians were full of hope that they could bypass the past and to open a new page in domestic Palestinian relations, especially after both movements emphasized in their speeches their determination to achieve national unity and to put the Palestinian house in order. However, aware of the history of past experience, many Palestinians were concerned with the overall phraseology of the text of the agreement and by the fact that new rounds of dialogue between the two sides were needed in order to reach common agreement on many details of the reconciliation.

Palestinian forces and factions had on the whole welcomed the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas, though they demanded that there should

be sufficient guarantees to see it through.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, some factions, like PIJ⁵⁷ and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP)⁵⁸ voiced reservations, while several others called for going beyond this bilateral framework into a comprehensive national agreement.

The inconsistent reactions of Israel and the US to the deal seemed to demonstrate that the conclusion of the agreement had taken them by surprise. Immediately after its initiating, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, commented that the “Palestinian Authority must choose either peace with Israel or peace with Hamas. There is no possibility for peace with both,”⁵⁹ and further stated that Washington “should consider stopping economic aid to the Palestinian Authority if a Hamas-Fatah unity government did not recognize Israel and renounce terror,”⁶⁰ while his Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said that with “this accord, a red line has been crossed,” and warned that the elections envisaged under the agreement would allow Hamas “to take control of Judaea and Samaria.”⁶¹

“Speaking to the American legislators, Netanyahu quoted remarks by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in April 2009, that Israel would not hold talks with or economically support a Palestinian government, including Hamas, until Hamas recognized Israel and abandoned violence.” Moreover, a meeting of the seven member Israeli ministerial forum known as the Septet declared its decision to launch a diplomatic campaign, with particular emphasis on the European Union (EU), to thwart international recognition of the unified Fatah-Hamas government.⁶² As a precursor, Israel implemented its threats to suspend the transfer of clearance revenue to the PA.⁶³

Notwithstanding explicit Israeli threats of dire consequences, other official sources gave a different angle to the official position. Amos Gilad, head of the Defense Ministry Diplomatic-Security Bureau, declared that a real reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas remained unlikely and farfetched.⁶⁴

The American administration was extremely disturbed by the conclusion of the reconciliation agreement, and some members of the Congress demanded that it should lead to the stoppage of all American aid to the PA.⁶⁵ However, the Director of Policy Planning in the State Department, Jake Sullivan, declared that Washington would continue with its aid to the PA under the leadership of ‘Abbas and Fayyad,⁶⁶ reflecting a relatively balanced and rational American position in comparison to the hasty Israeli response.

The implementation of Palestinian reconciliation faltered as a result of the following issues:

1. Political Detention: While the Palestinians were hopeful, after the conclusion of the reconciliation agreement, of a promising new era, the security forces in the WB continued their customary practices including arrests of Hamas activists. Hence, senior Hamas figure, Musa Abu Marzuq accused certain elements within Fatah of obstructing reconciliation.⁶⁷ Moreover, Isma'il Haniyyah criticized the wave of summonses and arrests, and called for an honest implementation of the reconciliation agreement,⁶⁸ while Khalid Mish'al, head of the Hamas Political Bureau, declared that the practices pursued in the WB contradict the spirit of the reconciliation agreement, emphasizing that they are part of the past; a dark chapter in the schism that should be closed once and for all.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, political detention continued notwithstanding the repeated official assurances that it would cease.

2. The Political Program: Though 'Abbas declared immediately after the signature of the reconciliation agreement that the major concern of the new consensus government would be elections and the reconstruction of GS, he soon backed down, and began emphasizing that the transitional government was still his government, and it would be adhere to the policy of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).⁷⁰ This sudden change of heart predictably provoked the ire of Hamas, who emphasized through a member of its political bureau, Mahmud al-Zahhar, that the Palestinian people should not be held hostage to 'Abbas' political program,⁷¹ while another leader of the movement, Salah al-Bardawil, declared that the agreed upon government was not that of the President, and it was to carry no political program, as it was to be a government of technocrats.⁷² Thus, the sharp differences between Hamas and Fatah on this issue continued, without any conciliatory settlement in prospect.

3. The Proposed New Government: Immediately after the end of the official signing ceremony of the reconciliation agreement in Cairo, Fatah and Hamas embarked on bilateral meetings to explore mechanisms for implementing the items of the agreement, notably the formation of a national consensus government.

Notwithstanding the positive environment that dominated the early meetings, held between the two sides under the patronage of Egyptian intelligence services in Cairo, consensus on the mechanisms for the formation of the new government and the involvement of other Palestinian factions in the discussions, things went

back to square one once Fayyad was proposed for the premiership of the national government. The dialogue between the two sides reached to a virtual stalemate, as ‘Abbas insisted on Fayyad and Hamas outright rejected the idea.⁷³

With the failure of the dialogue between Fatah and Hamas on the formation of the national government, which would have theoretically ended the schism, and in spite of the assurance of Musa Abu Marzuq that the movement was ready to form a government acceptable to the West in order to end the siege,⁷⁴ some informed Palestinian sources were inclined to believe that the issue of the formation of the new government would be postponed until September 2011. This was said to be a result of American-Israeli pressure on the PA, and to await the outcome of the PA’s bid for recognition of the Palestinian state at the UN,⁷⁵ a move that had been rejected by Hamas.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, ‘Abbas appealed to Egypt’s SCAF Chairman Field Marshal Muhammad Hussein Tantawi, to persuade Hamas to accept Fayyad,⁷⁷ and, on another occasion, he told the Egyptian intelligence leadership that Washington had given him only one option: accept Fayyad or to face American boycott.⁷⁸

Criticism of the Palestinian factions because of the failure to reconcile fully was rife and extended to disagreements within Fatah’s leadership on ‘Abbas’ insistence on Fayyad. But ‘Abbas remained adamant. A deadlock developed, media battles continued, and there was news of Turkish intercession between the two sides that focused on convincing Hamas to accept Fayyad.⁷⁹ Things dragged on until September, at which point the PA failed in its bid for full UN membership, amidst sporadic dialogue between the two sides.

The above failure prepared the ground for new dialogue in order to implement the faltering reconciliation agreement, and new, higher level, dialogue was actually conducted, in preparation for a summit between ‘Abbas and Mish‘al towards the end of November. Public assurances were given that the predicament of naming the new prime minister had been overcome. For the first time signs of mutual agreement on this issue emerged, as ‘Azzam al-Ahmad, a member of Fatah’s Central Committee, declared that Fayyad had been excluded from the deliberations of the formation of the government.⁸⁰ But he soon came back to say that Fatah’s position on his nomination had not yet changed.⁸¹

All hopes rested on the summit between Mish‘al and ‘Abbas, held on 23/11/2011 in Cairo, producing a bilateral declaration that committed both sides

to meaningful national partnership, and the launching of practical efforts towards achieving internal domestic reconciliation.⁸² ‘Azzam al-Ahmad declared that an agreement between the two parties had been reached on the implementation of the political program during the next phase of reconciliation, as well as on the future of the PA, the PLO, the Palestinian State, the societal reconciliation, the holding of elections on schedule, the consolidation of the armistice in the WB and GS, recognition of popular resistance and the settlement of the issue of detainees within days. Moreover, he announced that the two parties had agreed to continue deliberations on the issue of the government, and that a meeting between ‘Abbas and Mish‘al would be held on this and all other outstanding issues.⁸³

During the meeting, it was agreed to convene the interim leadership framework which would handle the reactivation, development and restructuring the PLO. ‘Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas’ Political Bureau, declared that the meeting was positive, frank and transparent, and had served to launch a new phase in which the Palestinians could move on from the prevailing political stalemate and explicit American hostility towards Palestinian demands.⁸⁴ Despite this injection of momentum, a subsequent meeting between Mish‘al and ‘Abbas did not produce anything new, which impelled Mish‘al to caution against foreign intervention aimed at aborting the reconciliation.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, Mahmud al-Zahhar spoke of ‘Abbas’ lack of determination to see the agreement through,⁸⁶ while Mahir al-Tahir, a member of the Political Bureau of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), warned against administering the schism rather than ending it.⁸⁷

On 18/12/2011, Fatah and Hamas’ delegations met under Egyptian patronage, where they declared practical steps to resolve pending issues, amongst which were political detainees, passports, freedom of movement, and the return of escapees from GS.⁸⁸ This created a new environment of optimism, and triggered Mahmud al-Zahhar, who had participated in all these meetings, to state that a breakthrough had occurred on many issues vital to reconciliation.⁸⁹

On 20/12/2011, the Palestinian factions met in Cairo and reached a consensus on the members of the central elections committee, committee of freedom and confidence building in the WB and GS, and the societal reconciliation committee. Moreover, it was agreed that the issue of the formation of the new government should be finalized by the end of January 2012, and that the parliamentary blocs should hold an exploratory meeting in Cairo to be followed by another one in the

WB and GS. A presidential decree was to be issued calling for the PLC to convene in February 2012.⁹⁰ Some practical considerations relating to internal conditions and external intervention cast serious doubt on the chances of concluding the deal, leading some to suggest that both Fayyad and Haniyyah's governments would continue in power until elections.⁹¹

Following the decision to refer some of stumbling blocks to reconciliation to factional committees, Mish'al declared that no single person could monopolize political decision making, nor the administration of the institutions of the PA and the PLO,⁹² and that no elections would be held before the formation of the desired unity government.⁹³ Nevertheless, political summons and detention by the security forces continued in the WB, notwithstanding the agreement between the two parties to conclusively and finally end this practice, which motivated Hamas to emphasize that there were elements attempting to abort the Palestinian reconciliation agreement.⁹⁴

Hamas' suspicion seemed well-placed, as reconciliation remained dormant in spite of the consensus agreed upon in some of the committees, particularly with regard to political detention, freedom of movement and travel and the issues of freedom. Things remained stagnant until early February 2012 when Hamas and Fatah agreed that President 'Abbas would lead an interim national consensus government. But even this breakthrough did not herald the end of the conflict over the issue of the government and a number of barriers to reconciliation remained.

However, though, under internal and external pressure, the government file may be settled in the foreseeable future, the whole reconciliation process appears, at best, to continue to be extremely slow in the next phase. This is due to the PA security forces which continue to act in a way that renders reconciliation issue practically void of its major themes and concerns, refusing to respond positively to agreements made on the issues of freedom and the release of political detainees.

Weighing up prevailing conditions, no major breakthrough should be expected on reconciliation until presidential and PLC elections are held. Many view this to have been the very aim of the PA and Fatah in creating so many delays.

Fourth: Prisoner Swap Deal and Its Internal Repercussions

The prisoner swap deal between Hamas and Israel was an important event that had repercussions on the internal Palestinian political scene.

Since the failure of the deal to release captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit that was to be concluded with the former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, no progress had been made and the efforts of the German and Egyptian intermediaries did not produce results because of the bias shown towards Israel. By the end of March 2011, Musa Abu Marzuq declared that that Hamas would no longer accept the Germans as intermediaries.⁹⁵

Immediately after its success on the Palestinian reconciliation issue, Cairo embarked on another venture, namely to conclude a deal on Shalit, who was something of a household name in the West by this point. It was apparent that the Egyptians were more determined this time to achieve a breakthrough on the issue. On 2/6/2011, Muhammad Basyouni, the former Egyptian ambassador to Israel, surprised political circles by declaring that a deal for Shalit would be ready for implementation within hours.⁹⁶ Though the concerned parties denied the actual conclusion of the deal, Basyouni's statement was an indicator that the swap deal was in its final stages, and that the "deportation issue" was the only remaining obstacle.⁹⁷

Meanwhile, news agencies reported that Hamas had transferred Shalit's file from Mahmud al-Zahhar to Musa Abu Marzuq,⁹⁸ while Israel emphasized that the deal was experiencing a crucial development.⁹⁹ However, the "deportation issue" finally led to the failure of this round of negotiations, and Hamas to emphasized that Shalit would not be freed unless and until the Palestinian detainees gained their freedom through an honorable swap deal.¹⁰⁰

Though an Israeli newspaper claimed that joint Turkish-Israeli efforts were working for a breakthrough,¹⁰¹ the issue of Shalit remained stagnant until a new round of talks started in August between Israel's Defense Ministry Diplomatic-Security Bureau Director Amos Gilad, and some Egyptian officials.¹⁰² An Egyptian source revealed that shuttle negotiations had been conducted under the patronage of the Egyptian intelligence agency between a Hamas delegation, led

by Hamas Political Bureau delegate Ahmad al-Ja'bari and an Israeli negotiating team led by David Meidan, who had been in charge of Shalit's release.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, some Israeli sources claimed that Netanyahu had become more receptive to Hamas' conditions for the release of Shalit.¹⁰⁴ Suddenly, however, Egypt declared the postponement of negotiations to an unspecified date because of the intransigence of both sides on some issues, but it undertook to continue to explore the possibility of crystallizing a compromise solution.¹⁰⁵

The deadlock continued until, suddenly, after a successful media blackout and without an advance warning, political and media circles were informed on 11/10/2011 of the conclusion of a swap deal. In a televised message, Khalid Mish'al explained that his government had concluded a prisoners' swap deal, "Devotion of the Free," in which 1,027 Palestinian prisoners would be exchanged for the Israeli soldier Shalit. He added that the release of the detainees will be in two stages: First, 477 male and female prisoners would be released within a week, secondly, after two months, 550 others (the sick, aged and children) would follow. Mish'al emphasized that the deal was a significant achievement, as it included detainees from the WB, GS, Jerusalem, the 1948 occupied territories and the Diaspora. This, he declared, showed the unity of the nation and of the Palestinian people, as the deal included all political factions.¹⁰⁶

Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, which captured Shalit and held him for 64 months, commended the deal as a historic achievement that had been concluded according to the conditions and principles of the resistance.¹⁰⁷

Usamah Hamdan, head of the Hamas International Relations Department, revealed an Israeli commitment in the deal not to target the freed detainees,¹⁰⁸ while 'Izzat al-Rishq declared that the deal was concluded after consultation and full understanding with the leadership of the detainees' movement.¹⁰⁹

The first stage of the deal was implemented on 18/10/2011,¹¹⁰ whereby 450 male and 27 female detainees were freed. Their origins were as follows: six from the 1948 occupied territories, 318 from the WB, amongst whom 45 were from East Jerusalem, 125 from GS and one from the occupied Golan Heights.

According to the terms of the deal, 40 of the detainees were exiled from Palestine for different periods to Turkey, Qatar, Syria and Jordan, while another

163 were deported to GS, amongst whom 17 were due to return to their homes after three years. Of those, 315 male prisoners and 5 female were serving life-sentences, 67% of those freed in the first phase. They constituted 37% of the total number of the Palestinians convicted to life imprisonment in Israeli jails. Amongst those freed were the dean of the detainees, Na'el al-Barghouthi, who had spent 33 years behind bars, and the most senior of the detainees, the 80 year old Sami Yunus, who had been in detention for 29 years. Prominent Hamas leaders were among the prisoners released such as Yahya al-Sanwar, Rawhi Mushtaha and Zaher Jabareen.

It is worth mentioning that the resistance had managed on 2/10/2009 to secure the release of 20 detainees, 18 females from the WB and one woman and her son from GS, in exchange for a video tape showing Gilad Shalit alive.

The Palestinians, including all the resistance factions, overwhelmingly welcomed the swap deal. It was commended by al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of PIJ, which emphasized that it would not be the last such deal,¹¹¹ while the PFLP viewed the deal as an important lesson for the resistance in its future drive to release detainees, and it praised Hamas for achieving this success for all the Palestinians.¹¹² The deal was also blessed and described as a historic achievement by Zuhair al-Qaissi, the secretary-general of the Popular Resistance Committees, one of the factions that captured Shalit,¹¹³ and by Fatah¹¹⁴ and the DFLP,¹¹⁵ as well as by the rest of the factions and their representatives, who issued congratulatory press releases and declarations.¹¹⁶

Though Fatah had welcomed the conclusion of the deal, its disagreement and strained relations with Hamas, who had gained a lot from this development, were clear in Fatah's declarations and press releases. They cast doubt on the deal's timing, claiming that Netanyahu's government had exploited the deal to end its isolation, and to besiege the Palestinian leadership.¹¹⁷

On 18/12/2011, the second stage of the swap deal was implemented, whereby 550 detainees were released, who were mainly from Fatah, and included 55 minors.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, Abu 'Ubaidah, the spokesperson of Ezzedein Al-Qassam Brigades, declared that Hamas would raise with the Egyptians some violations that had taken place during the implementation of the second stage of the deal.¹¹⁹

Hamas' flexibility in accepting the deportation of some detainees and its bypassing of the liberation of some prominent detained Hamas leaders, may be justified by the fact that what they secured in the deal was the maximum that could

be extracted from the Israelis, who had actually backed down from their previous extreme rejectionist position. This obliged Hamas to make use of this opportune moment to free hundreds of the detainees who were convicted to long periods in prison, rather than to make them hostages of future rounds of negotiations that may take a long time, or to associate them with the release of a few leaders of the movement, whom Israel adamantly refused to release.

Moreover, Hamas never ignored the strategic reports that persistently spoke of the possibility of the disclosure of Shalit's hidden location in GS. Such a development would mean the loss of a unique opportunity to free hundreds of the Palestinian detainees, who had no other means by which to escape Israel jails.

The official Palestinian position towards the deal was divided into two, in accordance with the long standing political and geographical schism in the Palestinian arena. First, was the stand of Haniyyah's government in GS, who outlined the reasons that drove them to conclude the deal in line with the conditions set by the Palestinian resistance. The second position was voiced by the PA in Ramallah, which was hesitant, realizing that the swap deal strengthened the position, influence and status of Hamas at the expense of the PA.

The conclusion of the deal was a source of elation for Haniyyah's government, openly expressed by its premier and ministers. Notably, Haniyyah said on one occasion that the achievement of the deal was a watershed in the conflict with the occupation,¹²⁰ and indicated on another that the deal had satisfied 75% of the demands of the resistance.¹²¹

Conversely, the PA openly uttered its concerns about the deal, notwithstanding its overall welcoming position. The president and prime minister described it as a national achievement that contributed to ending the misery of Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails. While the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Riyad al-Maliki, and Minister of Prisoners 'Issa Qaraqi', cast doubt on the deal, and Major General 'Adnan al-Damiri, spokesman for the Palestinian security forces, accused Hamas of exploiting the deal to implement a partisan agenda and coup activities in the WB. By this, he was referring to the PA's prohibition of festivals that Hamas wanted to organize in the WB to honor the freed detainees. Meanwhile, Haniyyah's government condemned the administrative recalling of a number of these former prisoners by the PA security forces, which it described, along with al-Damiri's accusations, as a "moral collapse."

Simultaneously, a reliable Egyptian source revealed that ‘Abbas had sent five messages to Netanyahu, after the first stage of the deal urging him to honor the pledge of his predecessor, Olmert, to free the detainees.¹²² This indicates the acute embarrassment and paralysis that the PA felt after the conclusion of the deal.

Popular Palestinian movements and positions gave strong support to the conclusion of the deal. All the 2011 sit-ins, parades and popular activities within and outside Palestine had called upon the Palestinian factions that detained Shalit to stick to their demands and not to surrender their conditions on the deal under any circumstances. The weekly sit-in of the relatives of the detainees in the GS branch of Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) was the most outstanding interaction of the Palestinians on this issue. Their hope for the release endured until the actual conclusion of the deal.

On the declaration of the swap deal, a wave of relief and happiness swept the WB and GS, though people acknowledged their sadness at inevitable inability of Hamas to secure the release of some of the prisoners. Nationalist and Islamic forces, as well as the unions and the popular committees, organized parades,¹²³ and a feeling of victory spread throughout Jerusalem,¹²⁴ 1948 Palestine,¹²⁵ and the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.¹²⁶

The High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel called upon the government of Netanyahu to undertake the initiative of releasing the Palestinian prisoners as a gesture for peace, rather than to wait for the kidnapping of Israeli soldiers to conclude swap deals.¹²⁷ In the same vein, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) called for the lifting of the siege of GS on the grounds that there remained no further pretext for maintaining it.¹²⁸

On the Israeli side, since early 2011, Israel kept repeating the same rejectionist position on the Shalit issue, encouraged by the pro-Israeli position of the German intermediary. But, the extent of internal pressure impelled Netanyahu and his government to maintain the façade of continued efforts and contacts to conclude the deal.

Chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and former Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, was the first Israeli politician to condemn his government’s handling of the Shalit issue. He warned that Shalit could face the same destiny of the pilot Ron Arad, who was captured in 1986 by the Lebanese resistance, and he emphasized that the cost of securing Shalit’s release will increase

with time.¹²⁹ Subsequently, a study conducted by a team of experts of The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv, concluded that the conclusion of the deal and the acceptance of Hamas' demands would not tilt the balance of power.¹³⁰ The Israeli army was placed in such an embarrassing situation that Israeli army Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Benny Gantz, declared that the army was confidentially striving to secure the release of Shalit,¹³¹ while Netanyahu stated that his government had been taking many measures to achieve this very same objective, of which, he claimed, the Israeli public knew very little.¹³²

The calls within Israel for the conclusion of the deal had sharply increased. Former leaders of the Israel Security Agency—ISA (*Shabak*) and of the Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations (*Mossad*) called for its conclusion at any cost, as Hamas was not expected to retreat from its demands.¹³³ Besides, some members of the Knesset called upon Netanyahu's government to pay any price to secure Shalit's release.¹³⁴

While the former Security Shabak Head Yuval Diskin, urged Egypt to be more effective on the negotiations, after the great role that it played in achieving the Palestinian reconciliation,¹³⁵ an Israeli security official admitted that tens of millions had been spent, in vain, on security operations to try to identify Shalit's location.¹³⁶ Moreover, Gabi Ashkenazi, the former Israeli army chief of staff, admitted that Israel had failed to rescue Shalit, which reflected the occupation's failure in dealing with Hamas.¹³⁷ In early June, Minister for Home Front Defense Matan Vilnai had emphasized the importance of releasing Palestinian prisoners, as there was no other means to free Shalit,¹³⁸ while Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Ehud Barak said that Shalit's deal should not be concluded at any cost.¹³⁹

In July 2011, as a means of pressuring Netanyahu, some members of the Knesset signed a petition calling for an exchange deal.¹⁴⁰ Only a few days later, Israeli army Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Benny Gantz declared that he had appointed a special team to review the investigation on the circumstances surrounding Shalit's capture.¹⁴¹ Thus, increasing pressure inside Israel, combined with Hamas' steadfastness on its position, contributed to the successful conclusion of the deal, which Netanyahu had to defend against criticism from some Israeli political figures and organizations.

The negotiations were initiated with a message from Hamas addressed, through a non-Israeli intermediary, to the Israeli negotiator David Meidan, “saying that Hamas was offering a final resolution on the matter.” Hence, Israel agreed to activate the talks with the Egyptians as mediators.¹⁴² The breakthrough took place when the leader of the Shabak managed to convince Netanyahu to accept the deal. Meanwhile, the Israeli negotiating team was further empowered by the inclusion of Netanyahu’s Military Secretary Major General Yohanan Locker, and some senior leaders of the Shabak and the Mossad.¹⁴³ Finally, the Israeli government overwhelmingly endorsed the deal,¹⁴⁴ on which Minister for Home Front Defense Matan Vilnai commented, “This was a very difficult decision, but we have a profound commitment to ensure the return of any abducted soldier.”¹⁴⁵

While Shaul Mofaz of the Kadima Party supported the swap deal, the party’s leader and leader of the opposition, Tzipi Livni, opposed it.¹⁴⁶ The Minister of National Infrastructure Uzi Landau also opposed it on the assumption that it would escalate “terrorism” and encourage future kidnapping operations.¹⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the Israeli Minister of Improvement of Government Services Michael Eitan insisted that the deal would not end the war with Hamas,¹⁴⁸ Yesha Council Head Danny Dayan stated that the deal constituted a serious blow to Israel’s deterrence capacity,¹⁴⁹ and some former Israeli officials, including Uzi Dayan, the former head of the National Security Council, warned that the Shalit deal shows Israel to be weak.¹⁵⁰

On the implementation of the first stage of the deal, Netanyahu said that the decision to cut a deal was “among the most difficult that I have ever made.”¹⁵¹ At his reception for Shalit at a military base, he warned that any group who “returned to terror” would be “taking their life into their own hands.”¹⁵²

Some believed that the support of the Shabak and the Mossad for the deal were a cover for their own failure to discover and free Shalit¹⁵³ at a time when the Mossad Chief Tamir Pardo, had admitted the impossibility of freeing Shalit with a military operation.¹⁵⁴ Some Israeli military sources revealed that Israel undertook not to hurt or assassinate any of the freed detainees.¹⁵⁵ Conscious of the size of the dilemma faced and the political damage inflicted by the swap deal on the Israeli government, Barak called for new strategies for dealing with future cases of kidnapping Israeli soldiers.¹⁵⁶

According to Israeli newspapers and other media, overall Shalit's deal was an enormous and historic loss to Israel, as it had consolidated Hamas' strength.¹⁵⁷ "In an interview with Israel Radio, Livni said that the deal strengthened Hamas and gave them legitimacy, while undermining Israel's strategic deterrence."¹⁵⁸ However, we have sufficient evidence to conclude that the intelligence and military failure to pin down Shalit's location, despite huge expense and effort, was the most important reason for the Israeli submission and acceptance of Hamas' demands and conditions.

The Israeli inclination towards flexibility on the issue was undertaken for two main reasons; First, Hamas' steadfastness and insistence on its demands throughout the previous five years. Second, the fear that the Shalit issue might get out of hand and the experience of Ron Arad may be repeated, which would mean the loss of Shalit for good.

Another important reason for the conclusion of the deal that should not be ignored is the desire of Netanyahu to exploit it politically, i.e., to make use of it to make some political and partisan gains and alleviate the pressure besieging him from all sides.

Finally, the most important lessons drawn from this deal may be summarized as follows:

- The deal revealed the ability of the Palestinian side to administer a successful negotiation process with its Israeli counterpart, unlike the case of the peace process.
- To bypass Israeli criteria, conditions and positions is not an impossible or especially difficult task.
- The deal presented an excellent example of the viability of adherence to the values of strength, steadfastness and dignity, compatible with the national Palestinian interest, not harming complex and interdependent political relations with the world and the region.
- Time should not be used as an excuse against the attainment of Palestinian aspirations, as Palestinian rights do not diminish with the passage of time, and so the rush to conclude unfair and defective peace settlements on the pretext of fear of losing the homeland is unjustified.

The most important repercussions of the deal may be enumerated as follow:

- The consolidation of Hamas' position and influence, and a defeat for Israel.
- The weakness of the position and influence of Fatah and the PA.
- Provision of a strong boost to the Palestinian people in the face of the occupation.

Based on this, the Israeli retreat on the Shalit deal and the official Israeli criteria for drawing lessons, any scenario on a future deal is expected to experience critical junctures, and its rounds of negotiations are bound to face stubborn obstacles, particularly during the preliminary stages.

In any case, Shalit's deal constituted an important precedent that paves the way for any future deals, notwithstanding the stance and tactics Israel employs.

Fifth: Palestinian Factions and Forces

2011 did not witness a fundamental change in Palestinian political affairs, and the relationship between the factions. The Palestinian arena experienced the predicaments and obstacles that it had suffered over previous years. The most prominent of these obstacles are probably the absence of a common strategic vision, a lack of a consensus on the current national priorities and the continuation of the rift between the programs of resistance and peace settlement. The Palestinians could not agree on the minimum common agenda based on national fundamentals. Moreover, the centers of decision-making are scattered across many places and areas, which adversely affects the ability of decision-making to resist external pressures, particularly from Israel and the US. In addition, the confidence crisis dominating inter-Palestinian relations, particularly between Fatah and Hamas, is a major reason for the Palestinian political and geographical schism, notwithstanding the progress attained in the Palestinian reconciliation that culminated in Cairo Agreement of 3/5/2011 which reduced the tension between the two parties that had grown since 2007, as well as the hostile media campaigns and mutual accusations.

In this context, the "security issue," which led to the failure of previous agreements, still constitutes the most prominent aspect of difference. Disagreements over security reinforce current ill-confidence between the two parties and political arrests and security coordination with Israel continue. Security coordination

has become a permanent policy despite its negative impact on the Palestinian national project, reconciliation process and reconstruction of the security forces. Consequently restrictions imposed on the resistance and on personal freedoms in the PA areas have continued.

Nevertheless, mutual attempts were made to restrict media accusations against each other, and the leadership of both Fatah and the PA in Ramallah took some positive and quite accommodative positions towards Hamas. The most prominent of those was their rejection of Netanyahu's declarations that asked the Palestinian leadership to "choose either peace with Israel or peace with Hamas." Sa'ib 'Uraiqat commented on these declarations by emphasizing that there is no room for comparison between Israel and Hamas. He stressed that Hamas is a nationalist movement, which we may or may not agree with, but it is a Palestinian movement. He, furthermore, declared his movement's commitment to the option of reconciliation.¹⁵⁹

As for Hamas, the movement somehow evaded criticizing the then most important drive that the PLO and the Palestinian leadership had focused on during 2011, namely to secure the recognition of the UN for a Palestinian state. This was interpreted as another gesture by Hamas to promote the positive environment between the two sides, though it had a number of observations on the plea to the UN. However, just before the submission of Palestine's UN bid in September 2011, Hamas voiced some reservations since the plea was not submitted for consultation and deliberations in the Palestinian arena. Sami Abu Zuhri, Hamas' spokesman, said that it was a unilateral movement that entailed many hazards, and that it was essential that an independent Palestinian state should be established on the liberated territories, rather than declaring a state under occupation.¹⁶⁰

In another vein, the prisoners' swap deal, "Devotion of the Free," was instrumental in consolidating the positive environment in the Palestinian arena, and in creating a kind of a national front that sympathized with the detainees in Israeli jails. The different Palestinian parties, including Fatah and the PA in Ramallah, commended the deal as a "national achievement" for all the Palestinian people.

During 2011, the relationship between the Palestinian factions and the PA in Ramallah did not experience any change, notwithstanding the resignation of the government of Salam Fayyad in February 2011, and his delegation to form a new one. However, all the factions, except Fatah, declined to participate in this

proposed government. Some quarters in Fatah even criticized the deliberations on the formation of the government, because their organization was marginalized when new ministers were named.¹⁶¹ News spoke of a demand submitted to ‘Abbas by the Fatah Revolutionary Council that a person other than Fayyad be asked to form the new government,¹⁶² and that he should also be excluded from the Ministry of Finance in protest against his economic policies.¹⁶³

Aside from the differences on the formation of Fayyad’s government, other problems within Fatah itself, between Mahmud ‘Abbas and Muhammad Dahlan, continued in 2011. This conflict culminated in the expulsion of Dahlan from Fatah’s Central Committee, and subsequently his dismissal from the movement. Dahlan’s contest of this decision was rejected by Fatah’s court, and the Fatah Revolutionary Council endorsed the dismissal order.¹⁶⁴ The PA’s security forces also besieged Dahlan’s house in the WB, arrested some of his guards and associates, and confiscated a quantity of arms and ammunitions.¹⁶⁵

The committee that investigated Dahlan accused him of attempting to poison the late President Yasir ‘Arafat, planning a military coup in the WB and plotting to liquidate some Palestinian leaders, including Major-General Kamal Midhat, who was assassinated in Lebanon on 23/3/2009; there were also accusations of bribery, corruption and channeling public funds to his own companies.¹⁶⁶

In another context, within its attempt to put its house in order, Fatah convened its second conference for its branch in Lebanon to elect its new 15-member leadership.¹⁶⁷ Some steps were taken to do likewise in GS, where the legal duration of the leadership there had already expired.¹⁶⁸

In the same vein, ‘Azzam al-Ahmad, a member of Fatah’s Central Committee, said that since its signature of the reconciliation agreement in May 2011, his movement had practically started its preparations for the new elections.¹⁶⁹

Though Hamas and its government in GS had adhered to patronizing the program of the resistance, they worked for consolidating calm in agreement with the other resistance factions. On several occasions, and for the sake of avoiding a new Israeli assault against GS, they tried to convince the factions to avoid escalation, particularly during the periods in which Israel intensified its offensive against the Strip, and the Palestinians responded by bombarding surrounding Israeli targets.

Regarding Hamas, the presence of the movement's leadership in Damascus was one of the most important issues discussed in 2011. Reacting to the crisis in Syria, several media reports spoke of transferring the movement's leadership outside Damascus. But a spokesperson of Hamas, 'Izzat al-Rishq, a member of Hamas' Political Bureau, denied these reports, and emphasized that Damascus provided the best environment for the movement's activities.¹⁷⁰ This denial did not stop media speculation that recorded a kind of "alienation" between Hamas and the Syrian regime because the former refrained from publicly declaring its support to the latter. Moreover, some rumors claimed that, in an angry reaction to Hamas' position on the Syrian crisis, Iran ceased financing the movement.

In early 2012, news spread that the majority of Hamas leaders, including Khalid Mish'al and his deputy Musa Abu Marzuq and most members of the Political Bureau, had moved with their families outside Syria, either to GS or to other Arab capitals, including Cairo, Doha and Amman.

It is worth mentioning here that many Hamas members and cadres were compelled to leave Syria because violence had interrupted their activities, while others were obliged to leave because of the instability and lack of security within Syria. But these departures were quiet, gradual and without any official declaration that would provoke and anger the Syrian regime. However, at the same time, Hamas left behind some of its non-political cadres to administer the affairs of the movement, and to serve Palestinian refugees in Syria.

As for the PIJ, it did not see eye to eye with Hamas regarding participation in power under the Oslo Accords. Thus, it refused to participate in any future government or legislative elections on the grounds that they are associated with this agreement and involved security arrangements with Israel. However, relations between the two movements improved. One of the signals for this apparent rapprochement was Haniyyah's call to PIJ to engage in a serious dialogue to explore the possibility of the complete unification of the two movements. The PIJ welcomed this move, and sought to examine ways to unite the Palestinian Islamic movement and the resistance.¹⁷¹

The PIJ agreed with Hamas that they should avoid military escalation in GS, but, at the same time, it emphasized the right of the resistance to respond to any Israeli violations, and that any calm should be mutual and simultaneous. As for the

activities of the PIJ in WB, they were adversely affected by the strong drive of the security forces there against the resistance.

The position of the Palestinian leftist forces vis-à-vis the internal Palestinian equation did not experience any major changes. Both the PFLP and the Palestinian People's Party (PPP) continued to reject participation in the governments of Ramallah and GS on the grounds that it would consolidate the schism. However, the DFLP maintained its participation in the government of Salam Fayyad in Ramallah, but it expressed no intention to join the new government that Salam Fayyad was to form in 2011.¹⁷² Though three factions had signed the Palestinian reconciliation agreement in Cairo, they continued to criticize what they called "the duality and partnership" of Fatah and Hamas in dealing with internal issues, and to press the two sides to implement what had been agreed upon.

Following the signature of the agreements, the PFLP terminated its boycott of the meetings of the PLO Central Committee, but it concurrently refused to participate in the government that was supposed to be formed because of what the PFLP Deputy Secretary-General, 'Abdul Rahim Malluh, called "the dual monopoly" of Fatah and Hamas.¹⁷³ Later, this was reiterated by a member of the PFLP Political Bureau, Rabah Mahanna, who said that the dual dialogue of Fatah and Hamas, instead of a comprehensive national one was a factor for the stumbling reconciliation agreement.¹⁷⁴

Similar observations were voiced by the PPP, where, Walid al-'Awad, a member of its Political Bureau, complained that the agreement seemed to be a partnership.

The DFLP Secretary-General Nayef Hawatmeh emphasized the urgent necessity of fixing the mechanisms of implementing the agreement, and warned against international and regional forces that would strive to obstruct it.¹⁷⁵

All the Palestine forces and factions welcomed the detainees' swap deal. The PFLP had also commended the deal, though the Israeli occupation dictated that its imprisoned secretary-general, Ahmad Sa'adat, be excluded from it. Mahir al-Tahir, a member of the PFLP's Political Bureau and its representative in the Diaspora, indicated that this issue does not by any means mitigate the importance of the deal, which he described as a Palestinian achievement to the credit of Hamas.¹⁷⁶ The DFLP viewed its conclusion as a resounding and honorable victory to the Palestinian people and resistance; while the PPP recorded that it represents a major national achievement by any standard.¹⁷⁷

The DFLP supported the drive to secure the recognition of the Palestinian state by the UN, which Hawatmeh described as a right of the Palestinian people.¹⁷⁸ Meanwhile, Ahmad Sa'adat said that the move was a step in the right direction, although not sufficient, and declared that the whole Palestinian issue should be referred to the UN, otherwise this step would only be a change of a spare part of Oslo's vehicle.¹⁷⁹

Sixth: Internal Security and the Security Predicament

The PA and its security forces continued to view security coordination with the occupation forces as an “obligation” by virtue of the agreements signed with the Israeli side that should not be retreated from, irrespective of the resultant stumbling negotiations process, and the rise of the encroachments of the Israeli settlers on the Palestinians and their holy sites in the WB. The PA did not take into consideration the development of Palestinian reconciliation, the impact of security coordination on internal Palestinian relations and unity, the national interest and the wider Palestinian national project. For this coordination was, and still is, a source of extensive controversy, and a major factor for igniting differences within the Palestinian domain.

At the same time, security coordination continued to be an umbrella that shielded the PA from the Israeli-American threats to impose an embargo on it after the reconciliation agreement with Hamas. Many warnings issued by Israeli and American quarters stated that the suspension of financial aid to the PA may affect its ability and willingness to continue security cooperation with Israel. The same quarters were also concerned that the PA may reduce or abolish security coordination as leverage against the stumbling negotiations, or in case the US vetoed Palestinians' bid for UN recognition of their state. All these warnings and concerns demonstrated that the PA's extension of security services to the occupation was the prime concern of Israel and its ally, the US.

The decision of the PA to continue security coordination with Israel was repeated, more than once and before and after the conclusion of the Cairo Agreement, by President Mahmud 'Abbas himself. On 14/3/2011, the Hebrew Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA), Kol Israel – Reshet Bet, interviewed 'Abbas who affirmed that as long as he was the president of the PA, he would not allow

an *Intifadah* (uprising) or any security chaos in the Palestinian territories, or the stoppage of security coordination with Israel.¹⁸⁰ Moreover, during a meeting with a number of Israeli intellectuals in Ramallah, ‘Abbas explained that the PA and Israel “have good coordination to prevent terror and keep the situation calm and quiet. We will continue to do our job. Security will prevail as long as I am in office.”¹⁸¹ This was seemingly a message to calm the Israelis with regard to the probable repercussions of the Palestinian move at the UN.

Head of the Fatah delegation on reconciliation dialogue, ‘Azzam al-Ahmad, repeated ‘Abbas’ position by saying that the security coordination is conducted by virtue of a signed agreement between the PA and the Israelis; in other words they do their duty and we do ours. But he emphasized that this coordination is not undertaken at the expense of the Palestinian national interest, including that of the resistance. Al-Ahmad added that resistance in the Palestinian domain is not a unilateral concept, that armed resistance does not exist in the Palestinian arena, and that there is consensus that the time is not opportune for the use of violence. He added that there is no resistance except that led by Fatah and the PLO factions, which constitutes popular, peaceful and diplomatic resistance to confront illegal settlement activities.¹⁸²

In practical terms, the signature of the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas did not affect Israeli-Palestinian security coordination. According to the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, “No decisions have been made by the Israel Defense Forces regarding any changes in security cooperation with Palestinian Authority security forces in the West Bank following the announcement of reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas.”¹⁸³ A few days after the signing of the reconciliation agreement, the same newspaper reported that “coordination meetings were held among some IDF officers and PA counterparts” to discuss ways and means to contain Palestinian demonstrations and popular protests planned for the *Nakbah* (catastrophe) anniversary in the WB.¹⁸⁴

The continuation of the security coordination after the Cairo Agreement compelled Hamas member of parliament (MP) Hamid al-Bitawi to accuse the PA’s security forces of actively striving to obstruct the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas.¹⁸⁵

Up to just before the Palestinian move in the UN, security coordination had continued and it was reported that “a special team, run by the Israeli Army and

the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank, was also formed to coordinate activities in case of clashes.”¹⁸⁶ Moreover, *Haaretz* newspaper stated that Security coordination between the Israeli army and Palestinian security forces had proven its effectiveness in the face of heightened tensions over the PA’s application for membership at the UN. Large-scale demonstrations in PA-controlled towns were kept from spilling over into other areas of the territories controlled by Israel.¹⁸⁷

Some media close to Hamas also circulated news that the PA security forces launched a campaign to arrest Hamas activists in the WB, just before the Palestinian move in the UN. According to the Palestinian Information Center and the website of Felesteen Online, issued in GS, the Israeli army had demanded this campaign after it received news of a Hamas drive to reconstruct its forces in the WB after the reconciliation agreement. These media sources added that Israeli army officers had told the Palestinian security forces of confessions made by some Hamas activists it had recently arrested, and that the arrests by both the Palestinian and Israeli security forces were undertaken in coordination.¹⁸⁸

What is striking is that the spread of this news synchronized with what Israeli sources told Israel’s Army Radio; that Hamas had apparently decided to restore its military capability in the WB. The security apparatus had, furthermore, warned of Hamas attempts to undertake resistance operations inside Israel, though the ISA had uncovered Hamas’ cells in Jerusalem and other places in the WB. These sources added that the Israeli security services had a rare opportunity to know Hamas’ ways and means of establishing contacts and international relations, as well as the extent of the influence of the movement’s leadership in Damascus and GS on its military activities in the WB.¹⁸⁹

In the same context, Moti Almoz, the head of Israel’s Civil Administration, minuted that amongst the achievements of the security coordination in late August and early September 2011 was the discovery by the Israeli security services of some pro-Hamas resistance cells in the WB that were planning to launch resistance operations inside Israel.¹⁹⁰

A report released by the Press Office of Hamas accused the Palestinian security forces of arresting 805 of its cadres and supporters during 2011, including 350 freed detainees from Israeli jails and eight journalists. The report added that political detention continued even after the reconciliation agreement to reach 434 of its supporters, of whom 95 were arrested after the

meeting of President Mahmud ‘Abbas with Khalid Mish‘al, head of Hamas Political Bureau, on 23/11/2011, and 21 others after their second meeting on 21/12/2011. The report also recorded that, within the framework of continuous security coordination, Israel arrested 160 Hamas supporters after they had been released by the Palestinian security forces, and that the PA handed Israel four Israelis, who mistakenly entered the WB.¹⁹¹

In the same vein, the leader of the PIJ and the Gaza coordinator of the public freedoms committee set up to implement the May 2011 deal, Khalid al-Batsh, reported on 19/1/2012 that the number of political detainees in the WB totaled 108, of whom 99 were Hamas members and 9 were PIJ members.¹⁹²

In the same context, the PCHR issued a Report on Torture Practices in the PA during the period August 2010 and until September 2011. It documented cases of torture and inhumane or degrading treatment that the security forces in the WB had inflicted on activists of Hamas and the PIJ just because of their affiliation.¹⁹³

‘Azzam al-Ahmad admitted cases of political detention in the WB, but quickly added that his movement was firmly against them. He claimed that these incidents were undertaken under security pretexts and by some security personnel who had taken advantage of the state of schism in the Palestinian arena to do this.¹⁹⁴

The GS witnessed violations committed by the security forces of Hamas’ caretaker government. Khalid al-Batsh reported that 53 Fatah supporters were held in Hamas prisons,¹⁹⁵ and a PCHR report recorded that Fatah activists were tortured.¹⁹⁶ Fatah also accused Hamas of calling and harassing its cadres in GS on more than one occasion, amongst which was the prohibition by the security forces of celebrations of Fatah’s 47th anniversary.¹⁹⁷

The Hamas government in GS was also accused of preventing some of Fatah’s cadres and leaders from leaving the Strip on several occasions. The Deputy Secretary of the Fatah Revolutionary Council, Amal Hamad, was not allowed to go the WB,¹⁹⁸ as well as three of Fatah’s cadres, who were denied travel via Rafah to Turkey, where they were to participate in a workshop on national reconciliation.¹⁹⁹ Moreover, members of Fatah’s Revolutionary Council were prohibited from joining the movement’s seventh meeting in Ramallah.²⁰⁰

Returning to security coordination; this was the most prominent, if not the only, PA action in 2011 that was commended and welcomed by Israel. The Defense

Minister Ehud Barak praised the role that the security forces of the WB had played in protecting Israeli settlers. During an interview with IBA, he called for continuing cash flow to the PA, notwithstanding the reconciliation agreement with Hamas, to ensure funding of the security forces that serve Israeli interests.²⁰¹

Moreover, Israel's Defense Ministry Diplomatic-Security Bureau Director Amos Gilad emphasized the credible role of security coordination and the Palestinian security forces in providing peace to Israel, by saying that the security coordination with the PA, particularly with the different Palestinian intelligence forces, coupled with the refusal of PA President Mahmud 'Abbas, and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, to support "terrorism" against Israel, had provided Israel with peace. He noted that the PA fight against Hamas and other factions, knowing full well that these Palestinian organizations could destroy the PA.²⁰²

Central Command Chief Major-General Avi Mizrahi, mentioned, during a televised interview with the Israeli Channel 2, that after Palestinian reconciliation several meetings with the Palestinian security forces were held and understandings were reached. He said that these forces realized that their interest lay in the continuation of security coordination, since their leaders have personal and public interests in this coordination. Mizrahi added that the Israeli side feels that the PA leaders are sincere. On the expected Palestinian moves in September 2011, Mizrahi did not expect a military *Intifadah*, as the PA and its security forces would not allow it, and since they succeeded in destroying Hamas' infrastructure. But he did expect some temporary peaceful mass demonstrations. At the same time, he expected confrontation between the Israeli army and the settlers, because of the latter's aggression and disregard the law.²⁰³

Israeli declarations indicate that security coordination has reached a dangerous stage. Its function is no longer confined to the pursuit of the resistance, and to prevent military attacks against Israel, but superseded this to reach the level of protection of the settlers, and the prohibition of popular movements from even approaching areas of contact with the Israeli army inside WB territories. This behavior contradicts even the political agenda of the PA itself, which focuses on confronting the Israeli settlement activities, and on peaceful resistance. It strips the PA of all elements of power or pressure, and transfers peaceful resistance to a means of airing Palestinian public tension, but without any effective influence on the occupation, thus enabling it to endure with ease.

If we relate Barak's declaration on the efforts of protection of the settlers to the unprecedented ascendancy of the latter's attacks against the Palestinian people, land and holy sites in the WB, we will realize that the security coordination has become dangerous to Palestinian security; it has weakened the resistance, and diminished the prospects of the Palestinians being able to defend themselves.

For the Palestinians, security coordination is an obstacle to reconciliation. It harms internal Palestinian relations, and denies, through its suppression of resistance, any elements of pressure or strength. Thus, it is a danger to the entire Palestinian national project.

Conversely, this security coordination represents a primary Israeli need and interest, as it provides security to Israel and its settlers, while the Palestinians get nothing in return. It also gives Israel a cover to continue its settlement building and impose facts on the ground; enabling the settlers to continue their aggression.

Therefore, the PA's maintenance of this high level of security coordination with Israel transcends the priorities of the Palestinian national project and constitutes the most immediate danger to the Palestinian reconciliation. This will consign the reconciliation, or any other Palestinian agreement, to failure and collapse at any moment, unless and until the Palestinian national interest supersedes all other considerations.

Conclusion

The signature of the reconciliation agreement by Fatah, Hamas and other Palestinian factions was probably the most important internal Palestinian achievement during 2011. But this agreement lacks the required mechanisms to implement it. The mere choice of a prime minister of a transitional government continued to be a source of contention for nine months, while the interim leadership framework was agreed upon after seven long months.

Meanwhile, other major issues related to the PLO, security forces, formation of the government and the social reconciliation were either delayed, faltered or saw hardly any progress, though the deadline for their settlement had already expired (3/5/2011–3/5/2012).

Hence, the internal Palestinian setting transferred from a status of dispute and schism to that of administering the schism. Put differently, it transferred from the status of “schism” to that of “apportionment.” The government of Fayyad administered the PA in Ramallah, while that of Haniyyah did likewise to the one in GS. Though contacts between Fatah and Hamas continued, the PLO was blocked from being effective by Hamas and the PIJ. Moreover, differences persisted between Fatah and Hamas on administering political affairs, the priorities of the national agenda, security coordination and other issues. There is an inherent conviction on both sides of their inability to overcome obstacles, particularly those related to administering authority under the Israeli occupation. Thus, reconciliation took the form of administration rather than resolution or termination.

There is an impression that Mahmud ‘Abbas had tactically employed the “reconciliation” to make the Palestinian scene appear united politically and geographically before a request to join the UN as a full member state was submitted. Moreover, ‘Abbas seems to have driven towards the reactivation of reconciliation in autumn 2011, only after the failure of the PA’s UN statehood bid and the rise of Hamas’ popularity after the detainees’ swap deal, by which Gilad Shalit was swapped for 1,027 Palestinian prisoners.

The Palestinian predicament is partly caused by the Oslo Accords that provided the basis of structuring the PA, where it has come to operate at the mercy of Israel, and therefore is ultimately controlled by it. Israel could delay or strangle the PA, destroy its infrastructure, arrest its political and popular leadership and delay its elections. In short, Israel is an effective factor in the PA decision making process, whether it likes it or not.

The Israeli strategy vis-à-vis the PA was instrumental in weakening it, and transferring into a functional authority that serves the Israeli security agenda. Despite the Palestinian aspiration to promote the PA into a full sovereign state, and whether Fatah and Hamas agree or disagree, no elections will take place without Israeli-American consent. Moreover, the drive of either Fatah, Hamas or other Palestinian resistance forces to transfer the PA into a national authority that doesn’t adhere to the occupation’s conditions—whether by terminating security coordination or by transferring the PA into a resistance authority—is bound to lead to an Israeli strike that obstructs or totally dissolves the PA. Thus the real problem lies not in naming the prime minister or members of his government,

nor in conducting elections, but rather in founding a national program that will confront Israel. This is what the Palestinian forces should concentrate on. Probably, this means that priority should be given to putting the Palestinian house in order, namely, restructuring the PLO. A new PLO would define national priorities, and reactivate role of the Palestinian people within Palestine and in the Diaspora.

The sweeping changes and revolutions in the Arab world gave strong impetus to the efforts at reconciliation and facilitated the incorporation of resistance forces in the PLO. These regional changes provided the chance for new strategic environment that would offer support to resistance, greater interaction with the Palestinian issue and would serve to reactivate the role of the Palestinian Diaspora. Though it may be too early to assess the overall impact of these changes and revolutions, it is possible to say that the prevailing environment appears to tilt toward the Palestinians and away from Israel.



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Chapter Two

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene

Introduction

The Israeli political arena did not see any crucial developments during 2011. With a tendency toward more right-wing and religious extremism, Israel pursued economic development with an emphasis on military matters. In spite of Israel's obstinate approach toward the peace process, it continued living in a state of anxiety and confusion caused by the changes and revolutions taking place across the Arab world, with so many potential repercussions for Israel.

This chapter discusses Israeli internal, demographic, economic and military conditions; it also considers Israeli aggression, Palestinian resistance, the Israeli position toward the internal Palestinian situation and the peace process.

First: The Internal Israeli Political Scene

The internal Israeli political scene during 2011 was marked by a high density of events; although none brought about radical changes or transformations. The most prominent feature of this year was the political parties' activities, in particular the disintegration of the Labor Party and subsequent attempts to re-form it; in addition, the prospect of parliamentary elections began to loom on the agenda. The year was also characterized by conflicts between and within the parties forming the Israeli government coalition. There was also criticism voiced by opposition parties against the policies of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

1. Opposition Parties Criticize the Netanyahu Government

With the words of its leader, Tzipi Livni, the Kadima Party directed harsh criticism at Netanyahu policies that caused deadlock in negotiations with the Palestinians.¹ Livni said that, by adopting certain policies, Netanyahu was causing great harm to Israel's security interests. She added that Netanyahu lacked both a plan and a coherent political agenda. Kadima tends to accuse Netanyahu of succumbing to the dictates of his Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, leader of the Yisrael Beitenu Party, particularly of submitting to Lieberman's attempts to



muzzle him. The Kadima Party tried to propose holding early elections for the Knesset, under the pretext that the Netanyahu government had failed to achieve progress in the negotiating process with the Palestinians, in addition to its failure to resolve the country's economic and social crises. The proposal failed when right-wing and religious parties sided with the government.²

Livni continued to accuse Netanyahu of causing Israel's isolation,³ with his adoption of the deadlock policy and his submission to Lieberman, who is globally unpopular and viewed as extreme. In return for the steps taken by Livni to diminish Netanyahu's popularity and depict him as a failure, the latter sought to break Kadima's unity by offering Kadima a place in the government coalition. There were voices within Kadima that supported this step; however, Livni and a number of Kadima's leaders put an end to this attempt by refusing to join the coalition. As a result tension increased inside Kadima between Livni and her second in command in the party Shaul Mofaz (who previously served as the Israeli army chief of staff). Charges of financial corruption were subsequently leveled against Livni by a number of her party's senior figures.⁴

2. The Disintegration of the Labor Party and the Rebuilding of What Remained of Its Fragments⁵

A conflict occurred inside the corridors of the Labor Party between those who supported staying in the coalition government headed by Netanyahu and those who opposed it and wanted to withdraw. Those who opposed staying claimed that the deadlock in the negotiation process with the Palestinians is not in Israel's interest, accusing Netanyahu of seeking to entrench it. Moreover, those who called for leaving the coalition were motivated by the fear that staying in government would inevitably lead to the erosion of the party's political capital among Israelis, and thus to its disintegration. To resolve this situation, Ehud Barak, the Israeli defense minister and Labor Party leader, indifferent to his party's collapse, took the initiative of deciding to split from the party and form a new faction under the name Atzmaut (Independence). Barak was hoping that Labor Party dissenters (those who would not join his initiative) would form their own independent faction, and thus cause the break-up of the Labor Party for good.⁶ With this move, Barak lost his leadership of the Labor Party but kept his position in the government within the framework of an independent breakaway faction. In the meantime, Labor Party ministers, who demanded withdrawal from the government, found themselves outside the coalition, without having taken the decision to leave.

It should be noted here that it was obvious to Barak that his new party could not survive in the next elections; so his joining the Likud Party was merely a matter of time. It is also worth noting that this method of thinking and planning on the part of Barak has not, up to the time of writing, received a positive or a negative response from Netanyahu, who has continued to keep silent about this step in order to maintain the stability of his coalition government.

In response to Barak's departure, the Labor Party launched a restoration and rebuilding process, holding preliminary internal elections that officially added several thousand new members to its ranks. A member of the Knesset, Shelly Yachimovich, was elected leader of the party, as she understood how to capitalize on the wave of social protests that swept Israel in the summer of 2011 to give her party a new look. Yachimovich has succeeded in attracting thousands of young people who see a chance for renewed hope in the Labor Party.⁷ There was speculation that if the Kadima and Labor parties contested the upcoming elections on one ticket, they would defeat Likud and the right, and the centrist parties would return to power in Israel. However, this is unlikely, according to the polls conducted in early 2012, the right would maintain its superiority over both the center and the left, as Israeli society continues to lean increasingly to the right. The Labor Party's new leadership was able, according to opinion polls, to at least halt the party's deterioration and maintain its position among the four biggest parties in Israel.

3. The Yisrael Beitenu Party Dominates the Coalition

The actions of Yisrael Beitenu's leaders revealed that the party was able to dominate the coalition government and exert great influence over the Israeli political scene. This was done through a number of steps; among them: proposing a set of laws to curb democracy and freedom of expression and association, and laws to make Israel look "more Jewish." Netanyahu and his party approved some of these proposals. Among the other proposed laws were: monitoring the funding of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), revoking the citizenship of those accused of security offenses, passing legislation giving Jerusalem the highest national priority status, which meant more Judaization operations in the city, expelling more Jerusalemites from their city,⁸ placing more restrictions on journalists and the media,⁹ confiscating hundreds of thousands of donums from Bedouin Palestinian Arabs in the Negev for the benefit of settlement projects planned by Israel¹⁰ and a law banning Palestinian family reunification.



Because of this extreme approach, the Yisrael Beitenu Party was targeted with a wave of criticisms from the Labor Party, which accused it of dragging Israel in to dead ends in its negotiation tracks with the Palestinians. Despite of its being a member of the government coalition, this party did not escape confrontations, of various severity, with Netanyahu and his Likud Party. For example: there were conflicts between Netanyahu and Lieberman over the appointment of Israeli ambassadors to a number of countries; there was the issue of appointing a new chief of staff to succeed Gabi Ashkenazi, and Netanyahu blocked the bill proposed by Yisrael Beitenu to investigate the funding of NGOs.

Many charges were leveled against Lieberman, among them fraud, breach of trust and witness tampering. The media circulated news about his alleged tax evasion and money laundering through companies registered in the name of his daughter.¹¹ His financial and administrative corruption file has become huge, without him being prosecuted, possibly for fear of the government disintegrating. Faced with these allegations and files, Lieberman did not resign, despite the demands of legal authorities and political parties in Israel. Israeli civil society seemed unwilling to come out and demand the fall of Lieberman, preferring to maintain the Netanyahu government.¹² Consequently, the prospect is of Netanyahu and Lieberman continuing to maneuver to prevent the toppling of the former's government, and to preserve the complex coalition of which he is the head.

4. Moves to Develop a New Party Map of Israel, in Preparation for the Coming Elections

During 2011, a series of opinion polls were published regarding the future of the party map in Israel. Most opinion polls indicated that, even if new parties and lists ran for the coming parliamentary elections, it would not be easy to defeat the right-wing parties, which would retain control of the situation on the domestic political scene in Israel.

A new leadership replaced Ehud Barak in the Labor Party and new elections were held on 27/3/2012 to find a leader for the Kadima Party, won by Shaul Mofaz. For his part, Yair Lapid,¹³ a presenter on Israeli Television (son of Yosef (Tommy) Lapid who founded the Shinui Party, and who completely disappeared from the political arena during the last elections), sought to establish a new party under his leadership, hoping to rise with it and join the list of major parties. As for Aryeh Deri (a former minister and past leader of the Shas Party, who distanced himself from the

political scene, after having served a jail sentence because of financial corruption), he started formation of a new party, with the hope of winning 6 seats. Opinion polls conducted in the period between December 2011 and April 2012 indicated that the Likud Party would win 30 seats, while the Labor Party could hope for 16–19 seats. After electing Mofaz as its leader, the Kadima Party's expected number of seats dropped from 17 to 13; and the Yisrael Beiteinu Party is expected to win 13–17 seats; Yair Lapid Party, 10–14 seats; the Shas Party, 8–9 seats; and Meretz Party about 5 seats.¹⁴ According to this picture, the center and leftist parties in Israel would not be able to form a new government; which means that new elections would not bring about change in the Israeli domestic political scene, as some hope.

There is no doubt that the complex Israeli party map, especially the large number of political parties and lists are the root of the Israeli governments' instability. Moreover, they are the reason for the perennial threat of early elections for the Knesset before the end of its term (this has been ongoing for over a quarter of a century).

Facts on the ground indicate that the Israeli right is gaining strength, and that racial and religious extremism have become the daily bread of large sectors of Israeli society. Racial extremism is directed against Palestinian Arabs in Israel, who hold Israeli citizenship and ID; this is done by imposing restrictive laws, flagrant funding discrimination in budgets, and more routine daily exchanges that are discriminatory and racist. Religious extremism has been growing within Israeli society. In the second half of 2011, such extremism intensified the rift in Israeli society; the issue that really ignited the situation was the exclusion of women from the religious Haredi communities (ultra-Orthodox and puritanical). Despite the widening rift, the Netanyahu government did not attempt to halt it or find a solution, in spite of Netanyahu's public opposition to excluding Jewish women from the public sphere.¹⁵ Fear of a breakdown of the fragile coalition is again the reason for the situation being allowed to deteriorate.¹⁶

5. Social Justice Protests, a Tempest in a Teacup¹⁷

2011 revealed the inability of the Israelis to bring the government down politically, although the judiciary did succeed in punishing the former Israeli head of state Moshe Katsav, charging him with rape and sexual harassment; he was sentenced to seven years in prison.

Protests started in Tel Aviv among segments of the middle class, young couples and intellectuals. The main concerns of these were their inability to pay the high rent rates of their homes and the exaggerated fees charged by daycare centers and nursery schools, while their salaries were static. These social protests did not go beyond the limits of the Tel Aviv squares, some major Israeli cities, and development towns, particularly those in the periphery that suffer from shortages in their budgets, including development budgets. Protest tents and bowers were set up; however, the Eilat Operation, which the resistance executed on 18/8/2011, killing eight Israelis and injuring 29 others, was sufficient to divert thousands of protesters back to their fear for Israel's security.¹⁸ So, these protests did not rise to the prospects of bringing about real change in the Israeli political domestic scene, as many had predicted in light of the revolutions in the Arab world. They also failed to engender chaos in Israeli political life. Instead they were merely a tempest in a teacup. Netanyahu's government has succeeded in passing this test; it seemed destined to survive for a long period to come.

6. Netanyahu's Reading of the Internal Political Scene and Its Connection to Events in the Region

Despite the deadlock in negotiations with the Palestinians, and the fact that the Palestinian issue had been relegated to a lower rung on the ladder of the Middle East's daily news agendas, it seems that Netanyahu understood the political scene and what could affect his government's future first and foremost, and his Likud Party secondly. In light of this reading, he surprised his party's members by calling for early Likud primaries to select the party's candidates and to form its list for the coming elections. This step of his opened the door to intense competition inside the party. Subsequently, the domestic political arena, which was somewhat stagnant in the final quarter of 2011, began seeing a flurry of activity in preparation for the possible fall of the government or for early elections.¹⁹

Several factors influence decisions on bringing forward or delaying elections. One of these factors that could extend the life of the Netanyahu government is if the leadership of the PLO went ahead with its bid to the UN Security Council,²⁰ the UNGA and other international institutions to recognize Palestine as a full member of the UN.²¹

Second: The Most Prominent Demographic, Economic and Military Indicators

1. Demographic Indicators

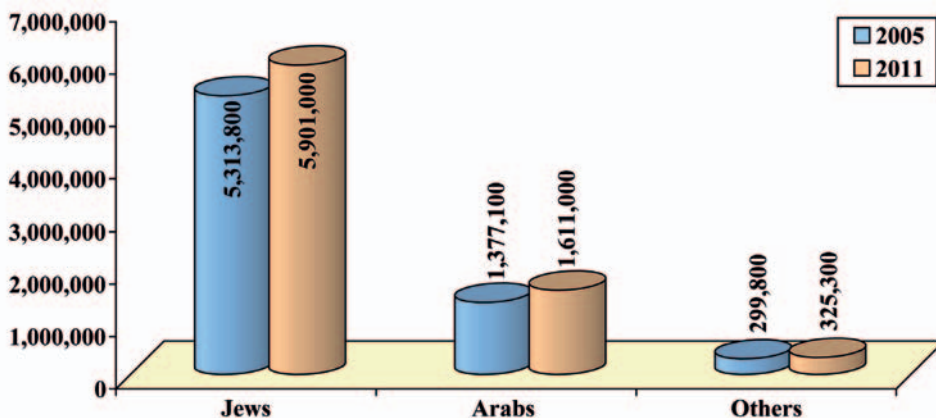
According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), Israel's population at the end of 2011 stood at 7.837 million; of these, 5.901 million are Jews, 75.3%. The CBS classified about 325 thousand as "others," 4.1% of the population; these are mostly immigrants from Russia, the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, who are not recognized as Jews, who tend to deal with Judaism as a nationality rather than a religious affiliation and are non-Jews or non-Arab Christians. The number of Arab citizens, including the inhabitants of occupied East Jerusalem and the occupied Golan Heights was estimated at 1.611 million, 20.6% of the population.²² If we subtract the number of East Jerusalem residents (about 292 thousand)²³ and Golan Heights residents (about 25 thousand), the number of what are known as the 1948 Palestinians (those Palestinians who remained in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1948) becomes 1.294 million, 16.5% of the population.

It is hard to obtain updated official statistics on the number of Jewish settlers in the WB. However, Ya'akov Katz, a member of the Knesset and the head of a parliamentary bloc representing the settlers, mentioned in early 2011 that the number of settlers in the WB, excluding Jerusalem, had reached 328 thousand;²⁴ The Israeli Population Registry Department stated in July 2011 that their number came to 334 thousand having increased during a 12 month period by approximately 14 thousand settlers, a growth rate of 4.3%. According to these estimates, the number of Jewish settlers in the WB, at the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, had reached 342 thousand,²⁵ excluding East Jerusalem where the number of settlers has reached approximately 200 thousand.²⁶ This puts the total number of Jewish settlers in the WB at 542 thousand.

Table 1/2: Population of Israel 2005–2011²⁷

Year	Total population	Jews	Arabs (including the population of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights)	Others
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
2011	7,837,300	5,901,000	1,611,000	325,300

Population of Israel 2005 & 2011



In 2011, the population growth rate in Israel was 1.8%, which is almost the same rate it has been since 2003. According to CBS, 16,892 immigrants came to Israel during 2011 compared with 16,633 in 2010 (see table 2/2). The average reverse migration continues to be between 10–15 thousand annually.²⁸

It is worth mentioning that, according to the Jordanian *Addustour* newspaper, Israeli statistics indicate that, at the beginning of 2011, about 150 thousand foreigners were residing in Israel without permits or visas; among them, 33 thousand were illegal infiltrators from Eritrea and Sudan and approximately 100 thousand others were tourists without valid visas, most of whom had come from the former Soviet Union.²⁹ Additionally, according to the Quds Press International News

Agency, Israeli statistics indicate that, during 2011, there were 45 thousand infiltration incidents,³⁰ compared with 14 thousand in 2010 and five thousand in 2009.³¹

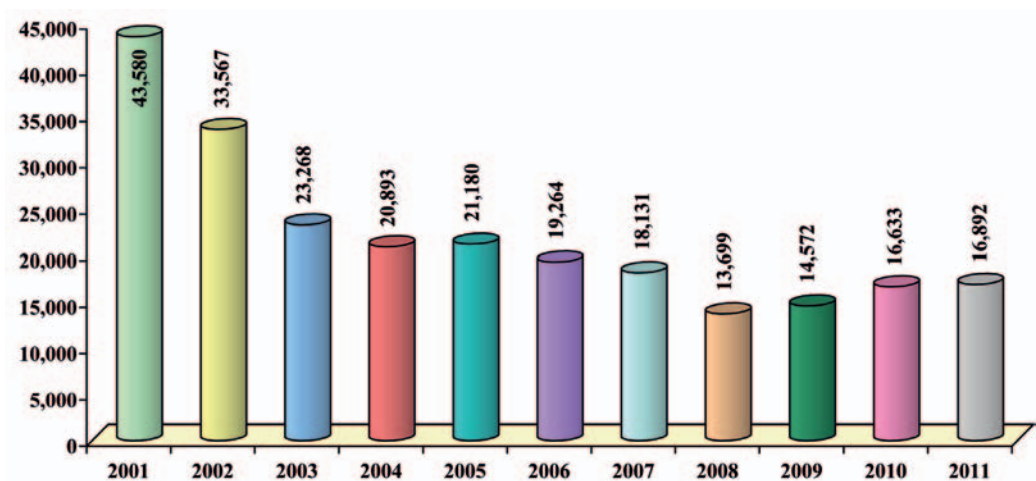
Table 2/2, below, reveals the extent of the decline in Jewish migration to Israel during the period 1990–2011. We can deduce from this table that the number of immigrants had declined during the last five years (2007–2011) to about 13.1% of the total number of immigrants in the period 1990–1994. The reason for this decline lies in the fact that the nineties witnessed a large wave of immigration to Israel following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist system in Eastern Europe. With the depletion of this source of people, and the stable and improving conditions in former Soviet states, the rate of immigration declined to less than 20 thousand annually.

Table 2/2: Numbers of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2011³²

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	2011	Total
No. of immigrants	21,180	19,264	18,131	13,699	14,572	16,633	16,892	1,262,997

Numbers of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 2001–2011

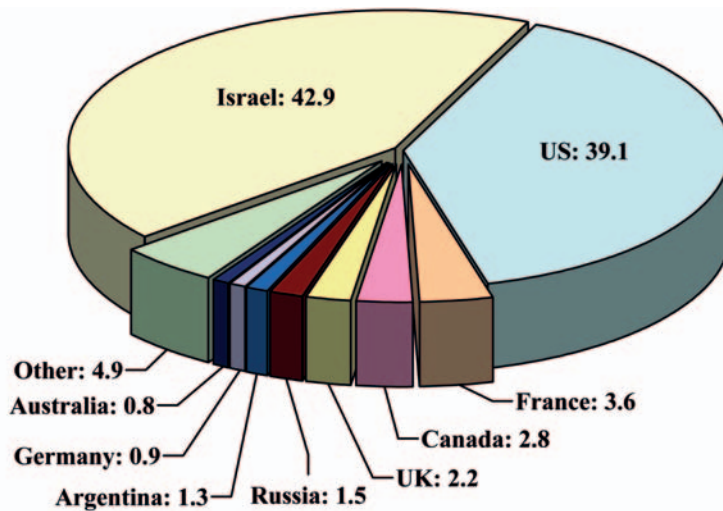


As for the world Jewish population, the 2010 CBS figures show a total of 13.508 million. Jews in the US number about 5.275 million, 482 thousand in France, 375 thousand in Canada, 291 thousand in the United Kingdom (UK), 199 thousand in Russia, 182 thousand in Argentina, 119 thousand in Germany, and 108 thousand in Australia. The Jewish population sees very slow population growth; the world Jewish population in 1970 was 12.63 million; meaning that, over a period of 40 years, the population grew by only 6.95%, with an average annual growth rate of 0.17%. This is due to the rise in the number of intermarriages, low birth rate, and assimilation into other societies. Therefore, no significant increase in the Jewish population was expected during 2011 and 2012.

Table 3/2: World Jewish Population by Country 2010³³

Country	Israel	US	France	Canada	UK	Russia	Argentina	Germany	Australia	Other	Total
Estimate (thousands)	5,803	5,275	482	375	291	199	182	119	108	674	13,508
Percentage (%)	42.9	39.1	3.6	2.8	2.2	1.5	1.3	0.9	0.8	4.9	100

World Jewish Population by Country 2010 (%)



The 1948 Palestinians continue to suffer as a result of living under Israeli policies of racial discrimination. A report on discrimination in Israel indicated that, during 2011, the Israeli Knesset continued its discussion of 24 drafts of discriminatory laws.³⁴ A poll conducted in 2009 by the Guttman Center for Surveys

of the Israel Democracy Institute for the AVI CHAI–Israel Foundation, with its results published in early 2012, indicated that 70% of Israelis believe that the Jews are the “chosen people.” Fully 61% of respondents said that public life should be conducted according to Jewish religious traditions. Ironically 65% of Israeli Jews, according to the same poll, believe that the Torah and precepts are “God-given.” This meant that those Jews who believe that they are the “chosen people” exceed the number who believed in the Jewish religion itself!³⁵

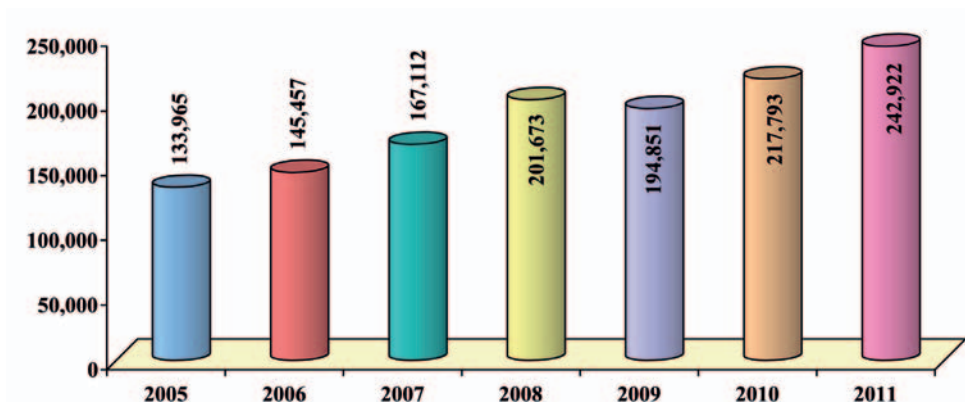
2. Economic Indicators

In 2011, Israeli Gross Domestic Product (GDP) amounted to \$242.92 billion, compared with \$217.79 billion in 2010.³⁶ It should be noted that the shekel’s exchange rate against the US dollar increased 20% between 2005 and 2011 according to reports by the Bank of Israel; which identified economic growth and an improving performance in the Israeli economy.³⁷

Table 4/2: Israeli GDP 2005–2011 at Current Prices³⁸

Year	GDP (million shekels)	GDP (\$ million)	Shekel exchange rate (according to Bank of Israel)
2005	601,208	133,965	4.4878
2006	648,228	145,457	4.4565
2007	686,512	167,112	4.1081
2008	723,562	201,673	3.5878
2009	766,273	194,851	3.9326
2010	813,021	217,793	3.733
2011	869,199	242,922	3.5781

Israeli GDP 2005–2011 (\$ million)

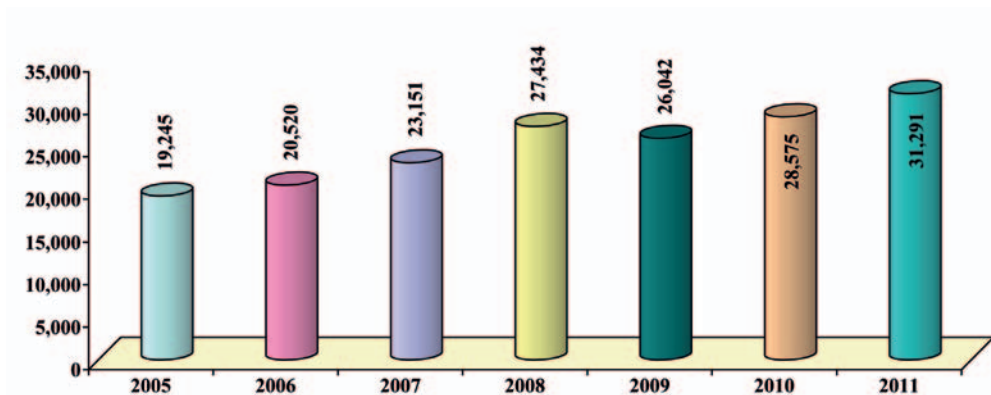


According to the CBS, Israeli per capita income (the average per capita GDP) rose from 106,669 shekels (\$28,575) in 2010 to 111,963 shekels (\$31,291) in 2011.

Table 5/2: Israeli GDP per Capita 2005–2011 at Current Prices³⁹

Year	GDP per capita (shekels)	GDP per capita (\$)
2005	86,366	19,245
2006	91,449	20,520
2007	95,105	23,151
2008	98,429	27,434
2009	102,414	26,042
2010	106,669	28,575
2011	111,963	31,291

Israeli GDP per Capita 2005–2011 (\$)



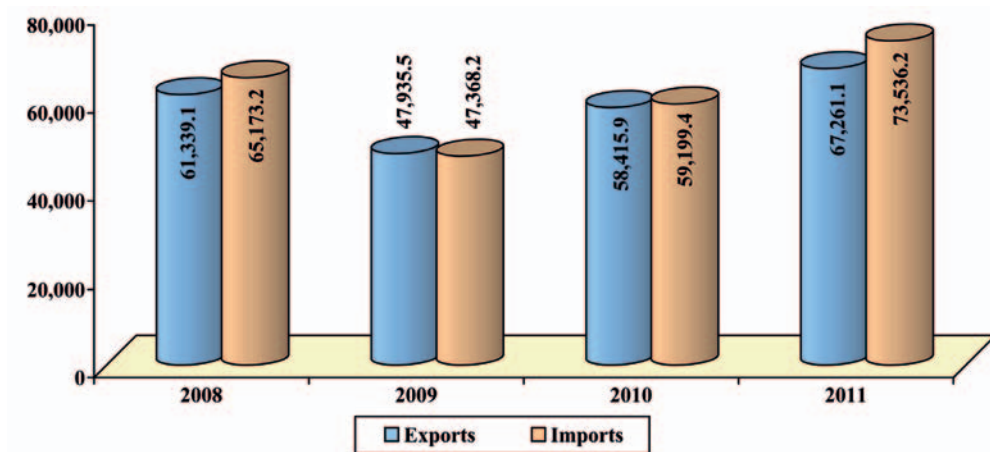
The Israeli government's public expenditure for 2011 amounted to 271.191 billion shekels (\$75.792 billion), while its public revenues for the same year totaled 251.314 billion shekels (\$70.237 billion), a budget deficit of 7.9%, or 2.3% of the GDP.⁴⁰

In 2011, Israeli exports totaled \$67.26 billion, compared with \$58.42 billion in 2010, an increase of 15.1%. In 2011, imports totaled \$73.54 billion, compared with \$59.2 billion in 2010, an increase of 24.2%; these figures do not include foreign trade exports and imports services. This performance reflects a significant expansion in Israeli economic activity, although Israel had not yet managed to overcome its trade deficit.

Table 6/2: Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2008–2011 at Current Prices
(\$ million)⁴¹

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011
Exports	61,339.1	47,935.5	58,415.9	67,261.1
Imports	65,173.2	47,368.2	59,199.4	73,536.2

Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2008–2011 (\$ million)



Manufactured goods topped the list of Israeli exports in 2011, accounting for 78.5% of all exports, a slight decline from 79.8% in 2010. Diamonds accounted for 19.1% of all exports in 2011 and agricultural commodities 2.3%. When classifying manufacturing exports by technological intensity, we find that, in 2011, high technology industries constituted 47.2% of such exports, compared to 49.5% in 2010. Regarding imports, we see that raw materials topped the list in 2011, with 36.3% of all imports; while investment and consumer goods made up 16.9% and 13.8% respectively.⁴²

Table 7/2: Israeli Exports by Commodity Group 2010–2011 (\$ million)⁴³

Year	Agricultural	Manufacturing	Diamonds		Others	Total
			Polished	Rough		
2010	1,326.8	40,607.1	5,871.9	3,063.8	9	50,878.6
2011	1,352.7	45,206.9	7,488.6	3,534.7	8.1	57,591

Table 8/2: Israeli Imports by Commodity Group 2010–2011 (\$ million)⁴⁴

Year	Consumer goods	Raw materials	Investment goods	Fuels	Diamond rough and polished	Others	Total
2010	8,689.9	22,687.2	8,525.8	10,447.9	7,999.3	354.4	58,704.5
2011	10,039.8	26,405.6	12,313	13,638.2	10,156.5	193.7	72,746.8

The US continued to enjoy its standing as Israel's leading trade partner; Israeli exports to the US totaled \$19.36 billion in 2011, 28.8% of total Israeli exports. Israeli imports from the US in 2011 totaled \$8.71 billion, 11.8% of total Israeli imports. Israel offsets its trade deficit with most of its trading partners with its trade surplus of \$10.66 billion with the US, a vital support to the Israeli economy.⁴⁵

Belgium regained its status as Israel's second largest trading partner. Israel's exports to Belgium in 2011 amounted to \$3.75 billion while imports from Belgium were \$4.47 billion. As usual, trade in diamonds and precious metals helped place Belgium in this advanced position. China dropped to third place, narrowly below Belgium, as Israeli exports to China were valued at \$2.71 billion, while its imports were \$5.45 billion. Hong Kong came next, with the Israeli exports totaling \$5.33 billion, and imports \$1.86 billion. It seems that the high volume of Israeli exports to Hong Kong is due to the latter being a center for re-exporting Israeli goods to various parts of the world. Nevertheless, mentioning Hong Kong in Israeli statistics as a destination for Israeli goods does not mean that all these goods get re-exported, for they may merely pass through in transit, as they do through Cyprus or any other transit point. Germany retreated to fifth place in the list of Israel's major trade partners, as Israel's exports to the country amounted to \$1.94 billion, and its imports \$4.57 billion.⁴⁶

In addition to the above-mentioned, there were other prominent countries in 2011 to which Israel exported namely the UK (\$3.38 billion), India (\$3 billion), the Netherlands (\$2.13 billion), Turkey, France and Switzerland. As for the most prominent countries from which Israel imported in 2011, these were Switzerland (\$3.97 billion), Italy (\$3.06 billion), the UK (\$2.78 billion), the Netherlands, Japan, Turkey and India.⁴⁷

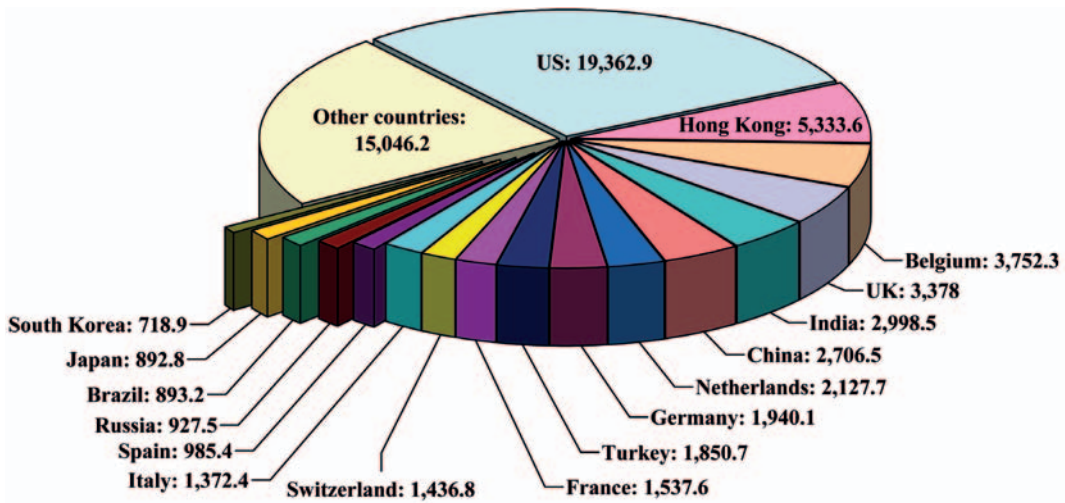
The following table shows the Israeli trade exchange volume, exports and imports, with selected countries during the period 2010–2011, not including trade with the territories under the PA, to where Israeli exports totaled \$3,093 million, and Israeli imports from them totaled \$491 million, according to Israeli figures for 2010.⁴⁸

Table 9/2: Volume of Israeli Trade, Exports and Imports to/ from Selected Countries 2010–2011 at Current Prices (\$ million)⁴⁹

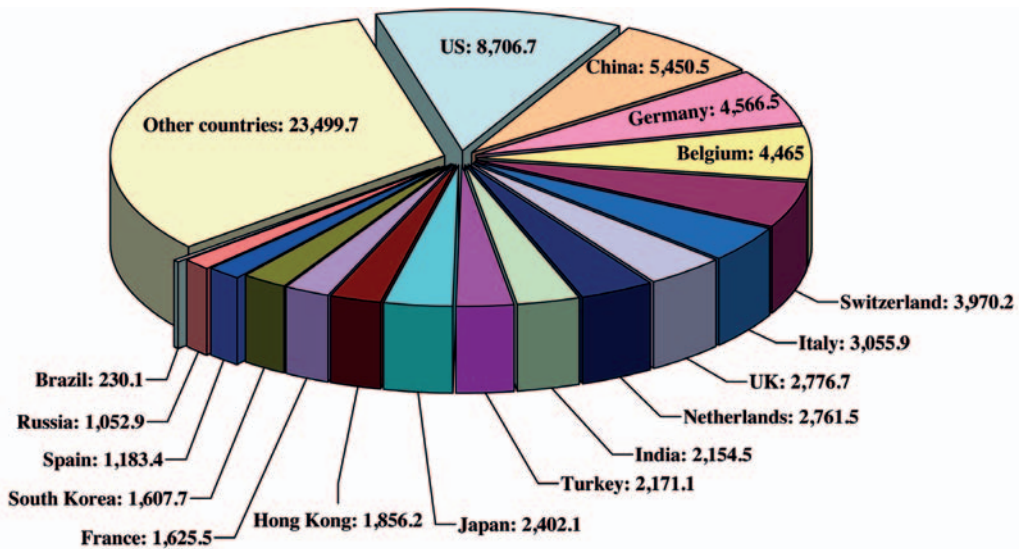
Country	Trade volume		Israeli exports to:		Israeli imports from:	
	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010
US	28,069.6	25,189.2	19,362.9	18,488.2	8,706.7	6,701
Belgium	8,217.3	6,693.2	3,752.3	3,116.8	4,465	3,576.4
China	8,157	6,783.6	2,706.5	2,046.8	5,450.5	4,736.8
Hong Kong	7,189.8	5,313.8	5,333.6	3,915.2	1,856.2	1,398.6
Germany	6,506.6	5,380.2	1,940.1	1,701.4	4,566.5	3,678.8
UK	6,154.7	4,514.5	3,378	2,268.1	2,776.7	2,246.4
Switzerland	5,407	4,267.7	1,436.8	1,047.5	3,970.2	3,220.2
India	5,153	4,736	2,998.5	2,890.4	2,154.5	1,845.6
Netherlands	4,889.2	3,920.1	2,127.7	1,818	2,761.5	2,102.1
Italy	4,428.3	3,679	1,372.4	1,253.2	3,055.9	2,425.8
Turkey	4,021.8	3,110.8	1,850.7	1,310.7	2,171.1	1,800.1
Japan	3,294.9	2,436.8	892.8	657.2	2,402.1	1,779.6
France	3,163.1	2,783.7	1,537.6	1,266.5	1,625.5	1,517.2
South Korea	2,326.6	1,951	718.9	850.3	1,607.7	1,100.7
Spain	2,168.8	2,007.2	985.4	1,031.8	1,183.4	975.4
Russia	1,980.4	1,602.8	927.5	818.2	1,052.9	784.6
Brazil	1,123.3	1,193.6	893.2	934.8	230.1	258.8
Other countries	38,545.9	32,052.1	15,046.2	13,000.8	23,499.7	19,051.3
Total	140,797.3	117,615.3	67,261.1	58,415.9	73,536.2	59,199.4



Israeli Exports to Selected Countries 2011 (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from Selected Countries 2011 (\$ million)



Although Israel is considered one of the world's rich and developed countries, it still receives annual financial aid from the US. In 2011 this aid totaled \$3.029 billion, of which \$3 billion was in the form of military assistance; compared to \$2.804 billion in 2010, of which military aid accounted for \$2.775 billion. Thus the total amount of assistance that Israel received from the

US during the period 1949–2011 was \$112.031 billion, according to the final outcome calculated in a report by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) (see table 10/2).

During 2011, the US Congress appropriated additional assistance to Israel worth \$415.115 million to help it build its missile defense system bringing total US aid to Israel in 2011 to \$3.444 billion.⁵⁰

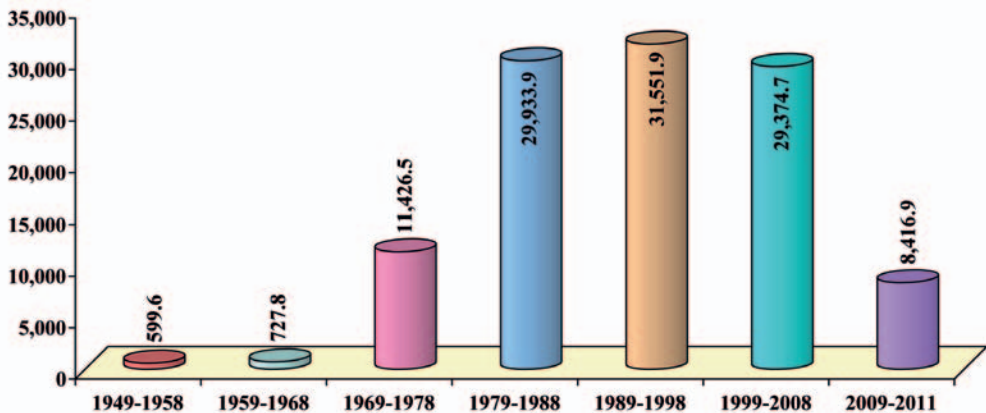
In 2012 the US Congress has approved assistance to Israel of \$3.095 billion, of which \$3.075 billion is military aid. This is in addition to another \$235.7 million to support its missile defense system; meaning that US aid to Israel in 2012 is \$3.331 billion.⁵¹

Table 10/2: US Bilateral Aid to Israel 1949–2011 (\$ million)⁵²

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

Period	1999–2008	2009	2010	2011	Total
Total	29,374.7	2,583.9	2,803.8	3,029.2	112,031.3

US Bilateral Aid to Israel 1949–2011 (\$ million)



Despite the generally improved performance of the Israeli economy, it suffered a number of imbalances and problems during 2011; among these were the disruption of the supply of cheap gas to Israel from Egypt after the revolution and after Egyptian gas pipelines were subjected to more than 10 acts of sabotage. This came as Egyptians demanded the halting of the pumping of gas to Israel and called for a review of their agreement with Israel in order to reach “fair” commercial contracts.

The Chief Executive Officer of Israel Electric Corporation, Eli Glickman, stated that Egypt's failure to provide Israel with the quantities of gas agreed upon in 2011 would raise the ceiling of Israeli payments by about 4.3 billion shekels (about \$1 billion) and will lead to the price of electricity rising by about 15–30%.⁵³ The company Oil Refineries Ltd. (Bazan) was compelled to sign a contract to buy natural gas at higher prices than they would for Egyptian gas, in order to compensate for the shortfall in the market.⁵⁴

Moreover, the imbalances in the Israeli economy had a bearing on the erosion of the middle class, sending thousands of Israelis to the streets in 2011, protesting high prices and exorbitant taxes and demanding improvement in their socio-economic conditions. At the same time the number of rich people in Israel grew. For according to the 15th annual World Wealth Report, released by Merrill Lynch Global Wealth Management and Capgemini, the number of Israeli millionaires in 2010 reached 10,153.⁵⁵ Furthermore, a report by the National Insurance Institute of Israel revealed that, in 2010, around 20% of Israeli families were living below the poverty line.⁵⁶

On the other hand, the discovery of gas fields off the Israel's north coast will, to a great extent, meet Israel's energy needs; as production in the Tamar gas field will start in 2013, in quantities that will meet Israel's needs for the next 15 to 20 years.⁵⁷

3. Military Indicators

The events, changes and revolutions taking place in the Arab world since early 2011 have cast a shadow over Israeli military and security behavior. If these changes continue to proceed in a positive direction that reflects the will of the people, establishes free democratic systems, and allows Islamic movements to lead or participate in governing countries, then, from a strategic angle, an environment will be created that fosters resistance and allows a more robust response in the face of Israeli aggression. In the long run, such an environment may have an impact on the equation which allowed Israel to come into being and continue to exist, namely the weakness, fragmentation and backwardness of those surrounding it. This would mean the emergence of a new equation based on the ability of the strategic space surrounding Israel to evolve and possess elements of power, and to enter into integration and unity projects that may lead to tipping the scales of the conflict in favor of the Arabs and Muslims.

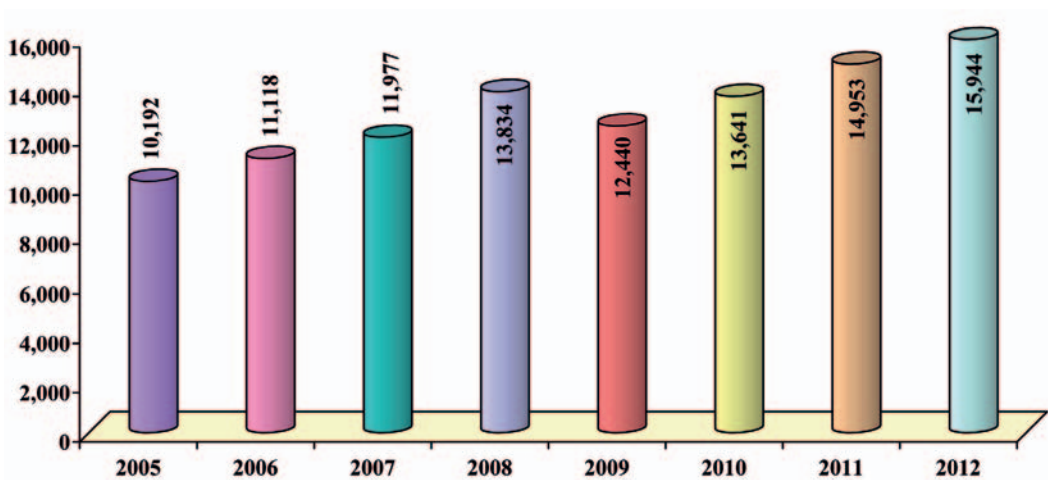
When the Arab revolutions started, Israeli conduct was characterized by worry and confusion. Shaul Mofaz, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, described what is happening as “a strategic warning for Israel”;⁵⁸ while Minister Moshe Ya’alon described it as “a historic earthquake.”⁵⁹ Hence, some Israeli army commanders said that the army would carry out changes on its military doctrine to begin preparing for possible engagement in an all-out war with more than one Arab country. The Israeli army conducted military operations to assess the situation, especially in light of the changes in countries with common borders with Israel, most notably Egypt, in which real prospects for the establishment of an authority hostile to Israel have emerged.⁶⁰

This prompted Ehud Barak to say that, over the next few years, Israel may ask for additional military and security aid of \$20 billion from the US, to deal with successive events in the Arab world.⁶¹ It should be noted that the Israeli military budget approved for 2011 was originally 53.5 billion shekels (about \$14.95 billion),⁶² while the military budget originally approved for 2012 was 60 billion shekels (about \$15.9 billion).⁶³

Table 11/2: Israeli Military Consumption 2005–2012 at Current Prices⁶⁴

Year	Military consumption (million shekels)	Military consumption (\$ million)
2005	45,739	10,192
2006	49,546	11,118
2007	49,202	11,977
2008	49,632	13,834
2009	48,921	12,440
2010	50,921	13,641
2011	53,502	14,953
2012	60,000	15,944

Israeli Military Consumption 2005–2012 (\$ million)



Knowing the real Israeli military budget is a problem that often faces researchers. For in addition to the approved annual budget, estimated at around \$15 billion, an increase may take place during the year on budget line items for various reasons. Furthermore, there are military items scattered in the budgets of the state's ministries and institutions, such as those related to the occupation and settlements. As noted earlier, Israel received US military aid worth \$3.415 billion in 2011; and it expects to receive US military aid worth \$3.311 billion during 2012.⁶⁵

During 2011, the Israeli government reactivated a plan to transfer Israeli army bases to the Negev, which had been delayed since 2005. And on 17/4/2011, it approved a budget of 19 billion shekels (about \$5.6 billion) to carry this out. A giant training base city will be built in the Negev, in which 11 thousand soldiers will serve, starting in late 2013. In addition, major military training bases will be evacuated, especially from the center of Israel. Most important among them are those of Zerifin, Tel Hashomer, and Ramat Gan; with work expected to be completed by 2018. The total cost of building the training city was estimated at 10 billion shekels (about \$2.9 billion).⁶⁶

Israeli military officials have revealed details of the Israeli army's new five-year plan, named "Halamish," which will replace the Tefen 2012 Plan. The plan talks about the development of the Israeli army in light of the threats facing Israel. It takes into account the changes taking place in the region, particularly in Egypt, and their impact on the Israeli army and its structure. It also considers that Israel

will face threats from Iran, Syria, Hamas and Hizbullah. The plan seems to focus on air defense and anti-missile systems, developing the capabilities of the infantry battalions. The army will also finalize a new multi-year plan aimed at setting up defense for critical military infrastructure that could be exposed to potential cyber attacks.⁶⁷

In the period 19–23/6/2011, Israel carried out the biggest civil defense drills in its history, named “Turning Point 5”; these were comprehensive home front drills based on the premise of Israel being subjected to an all-out war with Iran, Syria, Hamas in GS and Hizbullah in Lebanon. Their aim is to train “the people” to deal with the direst of circumstances. There was talk among politicians and the military that Israel faces grave dangers, even if not existential ones. In spite of the fact that the Minister of Home Front Defense Matan Vilnai, described these drills as a “resounding success,” the military affairs analyst on Israeli TV Channel 1 spoke of the disappointment of those in charge of the drills with the indifference of the Israeli public; no more than 15% of them responded when the sirens went off by going to the shelters, not the 50% they had hoped for.⁶⁸

Israeli leaders were keen to reassure the Israeli public, to allay any apprehension about the changes taking place around them in Arab countries; Netanyahu was keen to tell the population that Israel was now stronger than ever. Israeli army Home Front Command Major General Yair Golan said that Israel, throughout its July 2006 war with Lebanon, was targeted with 90 tons of explosives; while, during World War two, the UK was subjected to bombings of 206 tons daily, for nine weeks. He added that, in case of an all-out war with Iran, Syria, Hizbullah and Hamas, Israel would suffer damage but would not be destroyed; explaining that, over a period of one month, with 1,000–2,000 tons of explosives (about 33–66 tons daily)⁶⁹ Defense Minister Ehud Barak said, “On an average day of warfare around 50 tons of explosives are expected to fall on Israel from scattered weapons.” He also said, “We in turn are capable of firing 1,500 tons but in a very precise way.”⁷⁰

It has become clear that Israel is focusing on the deployment of missile defense systems, hoping that, by 2015, it will have completed the biggest network of such systems in the world, able to protect Israeli airspace from rocket and missile attacks, at a cost of \$2–2.3 billion. The Israeli plan includes deploying Arrow 3 which will intercept long-range missiles such as the Shihab 3 in the exoatmosphere. A “second level of defense is based on Arrow 2, which targets missiles that have already

entered the atmosphere.” Israel is also planning deployment of an interception system called Magic Wand, designed to thwart artillery and long-range missiles such as Syrian-made surface-to-surface missiles called M-600s, the Iranian designed Fajr, as well as cruise missiles. The plan includes the development of the Iron Dome rocket interception batteries, which are able to intercept short-range rockets. The systems described in Israeli plans rely on various radars, which will be united and linked to US and Israeli satellites as part of the layout.⁷¹

In addition to its usual annual military assistance, in 2011 the US approved an additional \$205 million to support the Iron Dome project, about \$58.955 million to support the Arrow 3 system, \$66.427 million to the Arrow 2 system, and \$84.722 million to support the David’s Sling system, sometimes referred to as Magic Wand, which brings the total to \$415.115 million. The 2012 defense budget appropriations for US-Israeli Missile Defense rose to \$235.7 million, distributed as follows: \$66.22 million for Arrow 3, \$58.955 million for Arrow 2, and \$110.525 million for David’s Sling.⁷² The US has essentially gone in as a strategic partner in the development of the biggest missile defense system in the world.

On 27/3/2011 Israel deployed a unit of the Iron Dome System near its borders with GS.⁷³ It placed another unit in the same area in early June 2011;⁷⁴ and a third unit was deployed near Haifa late in the same month.⁷⁵ Israel needs 15 units of the Iron Dome system to complete its defense installations on its borders with GS and on its northern borders with Lebanon.⁷⁶

The Iron Dome’s performance during 2011 was not promising, despite Ehud Barak saying that it would change the face of future wars. He described it as an “exceptional Israeli technological achievement.”⁷⁷ However, Israeli army Home Front Command Major General Yair Golan and Tzvi Fogel, former head of Israel’s Southern Command, sought to play down hopes pinned on the Iron Dome.⁷⁸ There were conflicting Israeli statements on its performance. Some military circles stated that the Iron Dome was successful 75% of the time during the three escalation periods with GS in 2011 when Tamir missiles were used, succeeding in 33 interception operations out of 44.⁷⁹ However, Israeli sources acknowledged the difficulty of dealing with mortar shells and Palestinian homemade rockets. According to a report published by the Israeli Foreign Ministry, during the period 7–10/4/2011, the Palestinian resistance launched 65 rockets and 67 mortar shells

and the Iron Dome system succeeded in intercepting only eight of them. The same report stated that the Iron Dome succeeded in intercepting one Grad rocket out of a total of 18 rockets and 11 mortar shells fired during the period 8–10/12/2011.⁸⁰ The Israeli army acknowledged the existence of technical difficulties that led to the failure of the Iron Dome system to perform all the tasks expected of it in full.⁸¹

The Iron Dome's problems do not stop at its lack of efficiency; there is also its high cost when compared to the resistance's rockets. For while a single system costs about \$60 million, and a guided missile fired to intercept a rocket costs \$40 thousand, the resistance's rocket costs only few hundred dollars; or in the case of the Grad rocket, a few thousand dollars.⁸²

At the time of writing, no specific statistics were yet available regarding Israeli arms sales in 2011. However, a report issued in June 2011 by Israeli industries said that the total military sales in 2010 totaled \$9.6 billion; \$7.2 billion of them military exports; the rest were sold to the Israeli army. In 2009, military exports amounted to \$6.9 billion. The top four Israeli military companies announced that, in 2010, they had signed contracts worth \$19 billion to be implemented over the next few years.⁸³

Third: Aggression and Resistance

Israel proceeded with its aggression on the Palestinian people throughout 2011. Despite the unofficial truce on the borders with GS which was represented in only a limited number of missiles being launched from the Strip towards Israeli cities and towns, mostly in retaliation to Israeli attacks, Israel continued its military operations through attacking targets within the GS. These attacks almost led to the end of the truce. In the WB, Israel enjoyed a similar truce thanks to the continued coordination between the PA security apparatuses and the Israeli army. Israel also continued with its closure of most GS crossings and tightening the blockade in addition to frequent incursions and arrests in the WB.

1. The Killed and Wounded

According to the statistics of the Shabak, the number of rockets and mortars launched from the GS during 2011 towards Israeli towns and cities amounted to 676, compared to 365 in 2010 and 858 in 2009. In the WB,

including East Jerusalem, the Shabak recorded 562 operations in 2011 compared to 455 in 2010. It is worth mentioning that most of these operations consisted only of stone throwing and firebombing.⁸⁴

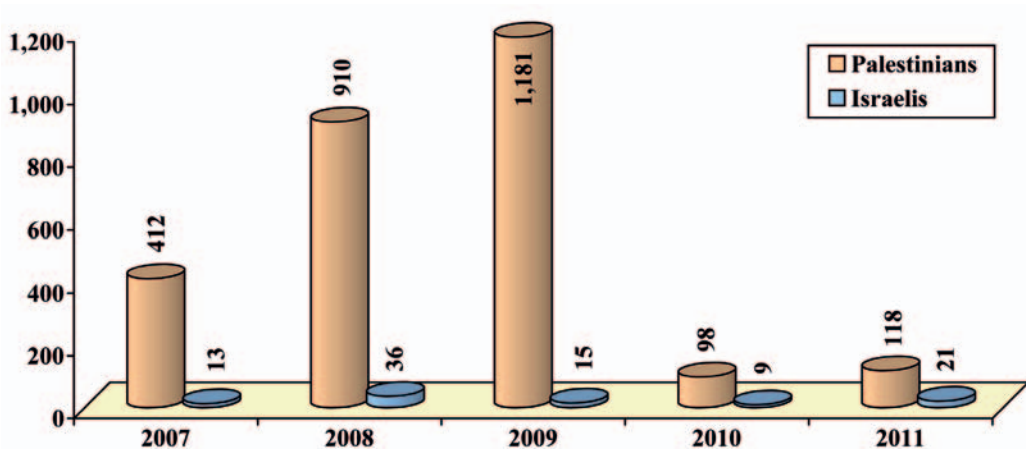
During 2011, the Israeli military and Jewish settlers shot dead a total of 118 Palestinians, 100 of whom were in the GS and the other 18 in the WB. In addition, around 554 Palestinians were wounded, including 41 children and 45 foreign solidarity activists.⁸⁵ During its offensive on GS, Israel targeted residential areas with artillery and aerial bombardment 60 times.⁸⁶ In 2011 the Shabak recorded the killing of 21 Israelis and the injuries to 122 others as a result of operations executed by Palestinians.⁸⁷

Table 12/2: The Killed and Wounded Among Palestinians and Israelis in the WB and GS 2007–2011⁸⁸

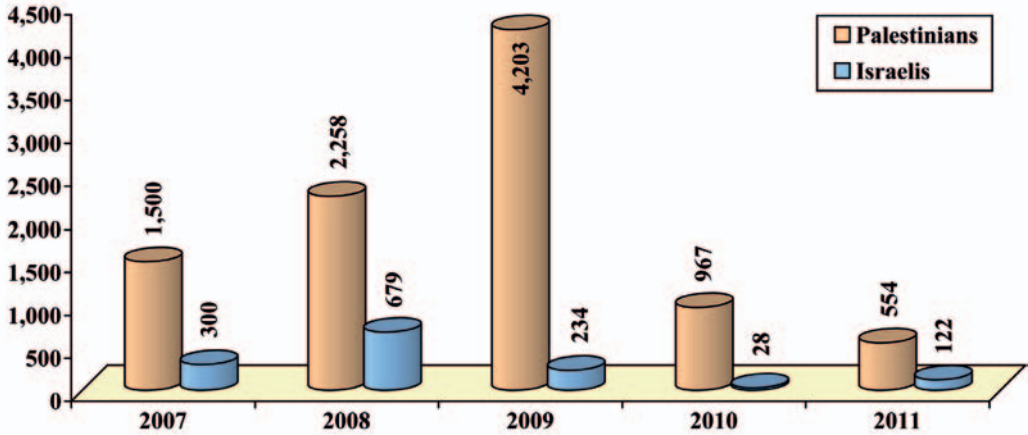
Year	Killed		Wounded	
	Palestinians	Israelis	Palestinians	Israelis
2007	412	13	1,500	300
2008	910	36	2,258	679
2009	1,181	15	4,203	234
2010	98	9	967*	28
2011	118	21	554*	122

* Including international supporters.

Palestinians and Israelis Killed in the WB and GS 2007–2011



Palestinians and Israelis Wounded in the WB and GS 2007–2011



The 63rd *Nakbah* anniversary witnessed an uprising by Palestinian refugees along borders with Israel, the largest scale protests being those on the Lebanese and Syrian borders. In the WB, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians participated in the anniversary on 15/5/2011 and there were violent clashes with the Israeli occupation forces which led to hundreds being wounded, especially at the Qalandiya military checkpoint. In the GS, a Palestinian was killed and more than 70 others were wounded as result of clashes with the Israeli forces stationed to the north and east of the Strip. In Lebanon, around 45 thousand participated in the Return to Palestine March and dozens tried to break through the border fence. Israeli forces opened fire on the marchers, killing 11 Palestinians and wounding 112 others. In Syria, dozens of marchers succeeded in penetrating the borders and Israeli forces killed four, injuring 170 others.⁸⁹ Marchers headed towards the occupied Golan anew on the anniversary of the *Naksah* (setback) where the Israeli forces confronted them with live ammunition, killing 23 and injuring 447.⁹⁰

These marches conveyed a strong message from the Palestinian people at home and abroad that they are one people that still holds on to the refugees' right to return to the land that they have been forced out of since 1948. Regardless of the inevitable political exploitation of the issue by some sides, the marches conveyed a message stressing the Palestinians' keenness on restoring their rights and their willingness to sacrifice to restore them.

2. The Prisoners and Detainees

The year 2011 witnessed relative ease regarding the issue of the Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli prisons. This ease was primarily due to the prisoners' swap deal, "Devotion of the Free," that saw the release of 1,027 prisoners in return for the release of the Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit who was captured by the Palestinian resistance in GS on 25/6/2006. The prisoners were released in two stages, the first of which was completed on 18/10/2011 and included 450 men and 27 women. Among these were six prisoners from the territories occupied in 1948, 318 from the WB including 45 from East Jerusalem, 125 prisoners from GS and one prisoner from the occupied Golan. According to the deal, 40 prisoners were exiled to Turkey, Qatar, Syria, and Jordan for varying periods of time, while 163 prisoners were exiled from the WB to GS, 17 of whom would be allowed to return home after three years. 315 men and five women of the released had been serving life sentences, amounting to around 37% of total prisoners sentenced to life in Israeli prisons (see section 4 in chapter 1).⁹¹

For the second phase, the Israeli authorities released 550 prisoners on 18/12/2011. Among those released were 507 prisoners from the WB including two from East Jerusalem, 41 from the GS and two prisoners from Jordan, yet no prisoner was exiled during this phase.⁹² The released prisoners included 55 prisoners aged under 18 and six women, as well as Salah Hamouri who holds French citizenship. The released included 113 prisoners detained in 2011, 109 prisoners arrested in 2010, 172 detained in 2008–2009, 99 prisoners in 2006–2007, 19 in 2004–2005, 26 in 2002–2003, seven prisoners held since 2001 and two from 1999.⁹³

Speaking about the deal, Khalid Mish'al declared it a major achievement, saluting the unique outcome that was achieved since it included the release of prisoners from the GS, WB, Jerusalem, the 1948 lands, the Golan and the Diaspora. In addition, it was a manifestation of the unity of the Palestinian people through its inclusion of all factions.⁹⁴

Those kept in Israeli prisons had been suffering repressive measures and restraints imposed by the Israeli authorities in 2010 and 2011.⁹⁵ To protest these punitive measures, they declared a hunger strike in late September 2011, suspending the strike until the completion of the first phase of the prisoner swap deal. This step came after the Israeli authorities approved some of the prisoners' demands such as accepting that they meet their families without handcuffs and leg

irons, prisoners of different sections and rooms would be able to visit each other and allowing the satellite channel Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation and some other Arab channels to re-broadcast.⁹⁶

By the end of 2011, there were 4,315 prisoners in Israeli prisons including six women and 132 children. Among the prisoners were 3,856 from the WB, amongst whom 198 were from East Jerusalem, and 459 from the GS,⁹⁷ in addition to dozens of prisoners from different Arab countries. There are still 532 prisoners serving one or more life sentences in addition to 122 prisoners held since before the establishment of the PA in 1994. The Israeli authorities continued their arrest campaign in 2011, with total arrests amounting to 3,312.⁹⁸

The number of administrative detainees held by Israel without any charge or trial reached 307 by the end of 2011, compared to 219 by the end of 2010.⁹⁹

Table 13/2: Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Prisons 2011

No. of detainees on 1/1/2011	No. of detainees on 31/12/2011	No. of detainees during 2011	No. of women by the end of 2011	No. of children by the end of 2011
7,000	4,315	3,312	6	132

The prisoners gave unique examples of patience and sacrifice in pursuit of their rights while attempting to expose the oppression they have been subjected to. The most notable example was the prisoner Khader ‘Adnan, the leader in the PIJ,¹⁰⁰ whom Israel held in administrative detention in ‘Arraba in the WB on 17/12/2011.¹⁰¹ ‘Adnan’s strike started on the day of his arrest,¹⁰² and lasted 66 days until 21/2/2012 when Israel agreed to release him on 17/4/2012.¹⁰³ Another notable example was Hana Yahya al-Shalabi, also of the PIJ, and whom Israel arrested in Burqin in the WB on 16/2/2012 after she had been freed in the prisoner swap deal.¹⁰⁴ Hana ended her 44-day hunger strike when the occupation authorities agreed to release her on condition of deportation to the GS for three years starting on 1/4/2012.¹⁰⁵

In March 2011, Israel kidnapped engineer Dirar Abu Sisi, the operating manager of GS’s sole electrical plant, during his visit to Ukraine. The Israeli authorities accused Abu Sisi of involvement with Hamas-affiliated Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades and having a key role in the development of “deadly missiles” with a range of 6–22 km and other anti-tank missiles. However, Abu Sisi denied all accusations.¹⁰⁶

3. The Israeli Siege of the Palestinian People

Israel proceeded with its siege of the GS, Defense Minister Ehud Barak claiming there was “no humanitarian crisis in Gaza.”¹⁰⁷ It tried to enhance its credibility through the findings of the Turkel Commission (officially titled The Public Commission to Examine the Maritime Incident of 31 May 2010) which was formed in the aftermath of the attack on the Freedom Flotilla. The Commission concluded that the siege of GS and the attack on Mavi Marmara “were completely in accordance with international law,” and it considered that Israeli army “personnel acted professionally in the faces of extensive and unanticipated violence.”¹⁰⁸ For his part, Israel’s Ambassador to the US Michael Oren said that the siege of GS was a “matter of life and death.”¹⁰⁹

In March 2011, the Israeli authorities closed al-Mintar (Karni) crossing and adopted Karm Abu Salim as the only crossing open for allowing goods into GS in coordination with the Ramallah-based PA.¹¹⁰

In addition, intensive Israeli pressure succeeded in preventing Freedom Flotilla 2 from reaching GS after lobbying Turkish, Cypriot and Greek authorities to prevent the flotilla from sailing from their ports.¹¹¹ While most ships were disrupted, Israel intercepted Dignity, the only ship which succeeded in moving towards the Palestinian coasts, and dragged it towards Ashdod Port.¹¹²

Moreover, Israel deported around 400 foreign activists who arrived into Lod Airport (Ben Gurion International Airport) in July 2011 to express solidarity with the Palestinian people.¹¹³ On 4/11/2011, the Israeli navy intercepted a Canadian ship and an Irish yacht transporting activists trying to break the siege of GS.¹¹⁴

While Israel succeeded in tightening its naval siege of GS, it failed on the level of the land siege which was slightly mitigated after the collapse of Husni Mubarak’s regime. Indeed, Israel was concerned that Rafah crossing would be opened without any restrictions and Israeli officials warned that this would bring about new problems for Israel.¹¹⁵

On 15/3/2011, the Israeli navy took control of Victoria, a German ship bearing a Liberian flag, 320 km (200 miles) off the Israeli coast and dragged it to Ashdod Port. The Israeli authorities claimed that the ship was carrying weapons from Iran and Syria to GS, including Chinese C-704 anti-ship missiles, in addition to around 50 tons of ammunition.¹¹⁶

The tightened siege meant that Gazans had to resort to tunnels connecting GS with Egypt to smuggle goods into the Strip. These tunnels, which are estimated to be in their hundreds, mitigated the Gazans' suffering but they were targeted by the Israeli and Egyptian authorities as well as being vulnerable to collapse. These factors led to the death of around 36 Palestinians and injury to around 54 others throughout 2011.¹¹⁷ The Egyptian authorities positions are contradictory; on one hand Egypt shows relative tolerance regarding the tunnels but on the other it rejects the opening of the crossings. The tunnels also raise concern as they have been transformed into a kind of parallel economy; a source of wealth for some and of death for others. They also trigger questions regarding their political and social dimensions. Thus, fulfilling the needs of the Gazans through the tunnels should not be a pretext for the continuation of the blockade and it is the duty of all sides to take part in helping the GS restore its right to normal trade above, not under, ground.

Fourth: The Israeli Position Towards the Domestic Palestinian Situation

Notwithstanding Israel's contentment with its security coordination with the Ramallah-based PA, it was troubled by Palestinian national reconciliation which was conducted at a time when Israel was seeking to impose further pressure on Hamas to thwart or at least tame it.

Israel continued to view the PA in Ramallah as a key component in ensuring the security and stability the occupation has enjoyed in the WB for years.¹¹⁸ The head of Civil Administration in the WB, Moti Almoz, lauded the ongoing civil and security coordination with PA institutions, claiming that such coordination has served Palestinian interests.¹¹⁹ Ehud Barak praised the role of the security apparatuses in the WB in protecting the settlers and providing unprecedented levels of security for them through joint security coordination. He also called for providing the PA with more money, despite the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas, still convinced that the security apparatuses will work in Israel's favor.¹²⁰

The Israeli leadership relentlessly sought to worsen the internal Palestinian conflict while seeking to transform the PA into a functional body that would primarily serve Israeli interests. Thus, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman

claimed that “both Abbas and Salam Fayyad know that the great threat is not Israel and Zionism, but rather Hamas and Jihad.”¹²¹ Minister for Home Front Defense Matan Vilnai attested that “those blocking the creation of a Palestinian state are Hamas members,” and thus he said that the Palestinian leadership’s job “is to fight Hamas and to win that fight.”¹²²

In Israel, some sides demanded supporting ‘Abbas and the PA and providing them with incentives to proceed with security coordination and the peace process. Other sides, however, called for punishing ‘Abbas and the PA for signing the reconciliation agreement with Hamas and seeking recognition of the state from the UN. The government’s inclination, reflecting its extreme right make-up, was generally in favor of exercising more pressure on the PA. In this context, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed his discontent with the reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas and said that the “The Palestinian Authority must choose either peace with Israel or peace with Hamas. There is no possibility for peace with both.”¹²³ Netanyahu called on ‘Abbas to cancel the agreement with Hamas a day before it was due to be signed.¹²⁴ President Shimon Peres asserted that the agreement between Fatah and Hamas was “a fatal mistake which will prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state, and destroy the chances of achieving peace and stability in the region.”¹²⁵ In addition, Avigdor Lieberman stressed that “this agreement crosses a red line,” and he warned that “an array of measures could be taken against the Palestinian Authority.”¹²⁶

Prior to the official signing of the reconciliation agreement, the Israeli authorities suspended a routine handover of 300 million shekels (around \$88 million) in tax revenues collected on behalf of the PA.¹²⁷ Yet, it soon backed away from this punitive measure under American pressure, and maybe after it had realized that the reconciliation was not serious.¹²⁸ Again, Israel threatened the same measure in late November 2011 if ‘Abbas activated the agreement with Hamas and there were claims by Israeli Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz that ‘Abbas was betraying the peace process.¹²⁹ Moreover, Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon threatened to cut water and power supplies to GS if Fatah and Hamas agreed on the formation of a national unity government.¹³⁰

In the same vein, eminent Israeli experts publicly questioned the possibility of achieving genuine Palestinian reconciliation, including Israel’s Defense Ministry Diplomatic-Security Bureau Director Amos Gilad, who wondered how

the agreement would be translated in the security field.¹³¹ Also, former Security Shabak Head Yuval Diskin said that “the reconciliation agreement signed in Cairo between Fatah and Hamas will not last, and there will not be genuine Palestinian unity for years to come.”¹³²

The extreme right wing Minister Avigdor Lieberman went as far as attempting to blackmail Mahmud ‘Abbas when he said that ‘Abbas was the “greatest obstacle” to regional order, and it would be a “blessing” if he were to resign. Lieberman added that “anyone who succeeds him would be better for Israel.”¹³³ This declaration by Lieberman constituted a rather frustrating and humiliating message for ‘Abbas and his government, given the level of their collaboration with Israel, despite the latter’s attempts to humiliate its partners in the peace process. Ultimately, when the Israeli military leadership suggested making “a series of gestures” to the PA to counter-balance the benefits achieved by Hamas after the prisoner swap deal and to enhance the PA’s declining reputation, Netanyahu’s advisers and his inner government opposed such initiatives arguing that ‘Abbas “should be punished” for his unilateral bid for UN recognition of a Palestinian state.”¹³⁴

This hard-line Israeli policy towards the PA was opposed by some Israeli figures. In his statements to The Telegraph website and *The Independent* newspaper, Dov Weisglass, Ariel Sharon’s former political advisor, predicted that the determination of Netanyahu’s cabinet to punish the PA for seeking membership of the UN would harm Israel’s security. “I believe the policy of the present government of weakening the PA, if adopted, is both stupid and dangerous,” he said.¹³⁵ Yossi Beilin, one of the chief architects of the Oslo Accords and former foreign minister, criticized Netanyahu’s stance on Palestinian reconciliation. He said, “Israel often claims that Abu Mazen [‘Abbas] does not represent the entire Palestinian people, but once there is a unity government, that claim is invalid.” He added, “This gives Israel an advantage because it gives Abbas a new hold in Gaza. But anyone unwilling to promote the peace process will see this as an opportunity to do nothing. I assume that is what Netanyahu will do.”¹³⁶

The prospect of the reconciliation agreement being signed triggered Israeli concerns regarding Hamas’ possible win in the elections and its subsequent control over the WB, as was expressed by the Israeli President Peres,¹³⁷ and Foreign Minister Lieberman.¹³⁸ Talking to Meet the Press on Israeli Channel 10, Israeli Education Minister Gideon Sa’ar criticized the signing of the agreement. He also stressed

that Hamas constitutes a serious and imminent danger to Israel, particularly in light of the Arab Spring which provided an opportunity for victories for a number of Islamic movements. The well-known media personality Akiva Eldar said on the same show that Israel was paying for the blunder of Netanyahu's government which was responsible for the collapse of the negotiations and the peace process. Eldar warned that Hamas' victory in the coming elections would undermine the rule of 'Abbas and the PA in the same way that Islamists had undermined the rule of Israel's preferred leaders in other Arab countries.¹³⁹

Israeli leaders have acknowledged the intricacy of dealing with Hamas. Netanyahu described it as a "brutal enemy,"¹⁴⁰ while Chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee Shaul Mofaz said in interview with Israeli Army Radio that Hamas was one of the toughest "terrorist" movements Israel had to face and there remained an account to settle with the movement because of the operations it has conducted against Israel.¹⁴¹

Tzipi Livni, the then head of the Kadima Party and leader of the opposition, called for undermining Hamas, and even destroying it, while starting negotiations with 'Abbas before it was too late and before there was shift in the balance of power in the Arab world.¹⁴² Livni also warned against the dangerous political situation in Israel, stressing that "Hamas is gaining global legitimacy. The Gaza blockade is lifting slowly and Israel is getting weaker."¹⁴³

Fifth: The Peace Process

The year 2011 was par excellence the year of stalemate regarding direct, bilateral negotiations. After the collapse of negotiations one month after their resumption in Washington in early September 2010, and after three meetings between President 'Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu, Arab, American, European and international efforts aimed to revive the political track. Yet, these efforts faced with Israeli intransigence and an insistence on resuming negotiations without any Palestinian preconditions. In other words, Israel sought to proceed with establishing facts on the ground whether negotiations continued or not.

In this situation, it was difficult to resume negotiations as this would affect the credibility of the Palestinian leadership, who had declared that it would not be

possible to return to the negotiation table without a prior commitment by Israel to stop settlement expansion and recognize a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders. A third demand by the Palestinian leadership required the release of senior prisoners held in Israeli prisons since before the Oslo Accords.

These conditions reinforced the popular conviction that the peace process, which began with the signing of the Oslo Accords, had come to an end. A similar conclusion was reached in the findings of a study prepared by Zaki Shalom, a member of the research staff at INSS and the Ben-Gurion Research Institute at Ben-Gurion University.¹⁴⁴

This outcome could not be changed by diplomatic delegations or European and international initiatives carried forward by the Quartet. These efforts aimed to avoid having to declare the death of the peace settlement and prevent the emergence of a vacuum that might be filled by other political forces who may promote alternatives that would change the rules of political engagement in the region, steering matters away from the American-sponsored peace process. The most prominent proof in this respect is the existence of the Quartet itself, designed to circumvent the international community and thwart international law and UN resolutions while providing a cover for the practice of the successive Israeli governments of establishing facts on the ground to foil any future negotiations.

The deterioration of the peace process in 2011 was encouraged by the decline of American interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict after President Barack Obama had reneged on his promise to solve the conflict within two years of his election. Indeed, he gave up on his calls to stop settlement building and pursued his predecessor's policy of conflict management rather than resolution. The American retreat was clear in President Obama's State of Union Address which lacked any mention of the Middle East.¹⁴⁵

Waning American interest also appeared with the transferring of the file of the conflict in the region from the President and his Secretary of State to US Envoy George Mitchell, who in turn reduced his visits drastically until he resigned in May 2011, declaring the failure of his mission. Entrusting the file to Dennis Ross, who is known for his belief in the impossibility of resolving the conflict and his bias for Israel, and his later resignation, were further indicators of the deterioration of the peace process. Ultimately, transferring the file to US Envoy David Hill and Tony Blair implied that it was no longer a priority.

Concern with the Palestinian issue deteriorated further as a result of the Arab uprisings and the ouster of Hosni Mubarak, who had been a major pillar of the peace process in the region. Mubarak's expulsion also relieved the PA of the continuous pressure he had exercised on the Palestinians to persist with negotiations regardless of the losses suffered and the absence of any outcome.

The Course of Palestinian Negotiations

The year 2011 started badly for the Palestinian leadership when, on 23/1/2011, Al Jazeera television revealed previously-hidden facts related to the negotiations with Israel by publishing what was known as The Palestine Papers.¹⁴⁶ The leaked documents disclosed the Palestinian position and the extent of the concessions presented to Israel by the Palestinian negotiator concerning final status issues.

The published documents embarrassed the Palestinian leadership. However, they could have had even more serious consequences were negotiations still in process or had agreements been reached within the context agreed on by the Palestinian side in the negotiations held in 2008 during Ehud Olmert's tenure.

Although *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2010/11* tackled The Palestine Papers thoroughly, it remains important to address these documents in this report as the 2011 developments of the peace process would not be appropriately addressed without mention of the revelations in the documents. The documents shook the Palestinian leadership and Sa'ib 'Uraiqat, head of the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department (NAD), offered his resignation to President 'Abbas who refused his offer despite the magnitude of the mistakes committed.

The Palestine Papers showed that the PA had given up on demanding the removal of the settlements in East Jerusalem and expressed readiness to offer unprecedented concessions in *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the Armenian Quarter and the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. It also made huge concessions regarding the refugees issue by accepting a symbolic return of the refugees. In addition, it gave up on the 1967 lines through accepting the principle of land exchange even before Israel recognizes the state of Palestine and despite Israel's insistence that the lands occupied since 1967 were "disputed" rather than "occupied." Moreover, the PA agreed on various security arrangements including its consent for a demilitarized Palestinian state with international or foreign forces on its territories, and for settlers to remain under Palestinian sovereignty.¹⁴⁷

The PLO commented that the documents revealed on Al Jazeera were partial and were employed to distort facts and provoke anger against the Palestinian leadership. It also displayed what it called the “original” documents that demanded Palestinian rights, including achieving justice for the refugees.¹⁴⁸

In fact, The Palestine Papers have exposed the weakness of the official Palestinian establishment. They also triggered questions regarding transparency, monitoring and auditing measures as these concessions were presented without the knowledge of the PLO Executive Committee, and without its approval, without punishing the perpetrators, or learning the subsequent lessons.

It should be noted, however, that 2011 signaled the beginning of transformation in official Palestinian policy vis-à-vis negotiations. This manifested itself in a shake up of the rules of the negotiation process. There was the rejection by the Palestinian leadership of resuming negotiations before Palestinian demands were fulfilled and also its pursuit of other alternatives, such as: recourse to the UN, showing more, albeit limited, interest in achieving Palestinian reconciliation, adopting popular resistance, boycotting goods from the settlements and persistence with the building of institutions to end the occupation.

While it is true that the changes outlined above did not lead to the adoption of a new strategy to replace bilateral negotiations; however, there were at least threats by the PA to use alternative choices to apply tactical pressure that may improve the conditions for the resumption of negotiations.

Notwithstanding President ‘Abbas’s appeal to the UN, it seems likely that there will be a return to negotiations as, for him, the first, second and third option is always negotiations with Israel. Indeed, ‘Abbas conducted meetings with Israeli officials throughout 2011 including four with President Peres, two with Defense Minister Ehud Barak and one with Tzipi Livni.¹⁴⁹ In addition, he responded positively to all initiatives, including the Jordanian initiative presented by King ‘Abdullah during his visit to Ramallah on 22/11/2011.

Official Palestinian policy did not seek a comprehensive alternative strategy but instead the PA initiated a “state of rebellion” against the rules which have governed negotiations since they were launched at the Madrid Conference in 1991, and were cemented with the Oslo Accords in 1993, reinforced by the Annapolis Summit in 2007. The “rebellion” was demonstrated through raising the issue of settlement building in the UN Security Council despite the threats made and incentives offered

by the US which used its veto to nullify the 14 votes which endorsed the draft resolution.¹⁵⁰ It was also demonstrated in going to the UN and attempting to gain recognition of a Palestinian state in the Security Council as well from the highest possible number of states in addition to gaining full membership in the UNESCO. Another sign of a policy shift was the signing of the reconciliation agreement and the initial steps taken to fulfill its promise, including holding the first meeting of the PLO Committee to reactivate, develop and maintain the structures of the PLO, known as the interim leadership framework on 22/12/2011.¹⁵¹ This transformation would not have happened without the developments and uprisings at the Arab, regional and international levels which opened the door for strategic leeway for the Palestinian issue.

Arab countries and peoples have entered a transitional phase which could extend over a long period, parallel to their preoccupation with internal issues. This is a phase that could witness a conflict between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary powers; between the remnants of the old regimes and the emerging regimes. It might also witness regional and international interventions and covert interference, aiming to re-divide the region and contain the revolutions. It may plunge the region into sectarian strife and transform authoritarian regimes into ones that appear democratic while shifting their aims from seeking democracy and fighting Israel into a conflict between Iran and the Arabs, Shiites and Sunnis, Muslims and Christians and between the Arab majorities and minorities.

The Palestinian leadership's refusal to re-launch negotiations despite Israel's withholding of tax revenues and the US's temporary halt of aid is interesting, but should not be interpreted in isolation from the Arab uprisings, the Palestine Papers or the "Goldstone curse," which followed the Palestinian leadership's decision to delay a UN vote on the Goldstone Report and the bitter criticism it had to face as a result. Consequently, the PA could not pursue any action without taking into account the popular reaction that might be triggered.

The most remarkable development in the peace process was the Palestinian recourse to the UN in early 2011. Notable also was the Palestinian rejection of a deal presented by the American administration which would have entailed the issuance of a presidential statement from the UN Security Council including the elements of the draft resolution regarding settlement. The deal also proposed the formation of a fact finding mission from the Security Council members that would

visit the occupied territories and present its findings to the Security Council. In return, the PA would not present the settlements issue in the Security Council. According to *The Jerusalem Post* President Obama “made it clear to Abbas that the US would veto such a resolution so as not to jeopardize efforts to resume peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.”¹⁵²

Nonetheless, the resolution was presented to the UN Security Council and won the support of 14 members but not the US, who used their veto power to block Palestinian statehood.

In fact, President ‘Abbas had been keen, since early 2011, to reiterate that recourse to the UN was not an alternative to negotiations and that he would waive this option if presented with the chance of credible negotiations with Israel. He also declared that he would return to negotiations regardless the outcome in the UN, stressing that reconciliation with Hamas did not conflict with the attempts at resuming talks with Israel, but rather enhanced them and the prospects of peace.¹⁵³

It is worth mentioning here that Israel and the US used to view the geographic and political Palestinian division as a tool with which to exercise pressure on the PA and urge it to accept an agreement that would not have been possible if Palestinian decision makers were unified and strong. When this strategy failed, the division was used as an excuse to justify the American failure to mediate an agreement as well as to exempt Israel from its responsibilities to negotiate in good faith. In fact, the Israeli authorities were very much concerned about the implications of the Palestinian bid. Defense Minister Ehud Barak claimed that the international community’s recognition of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders a “tsunami.”¹⁵⁴

The Palestinian schism was also used by the US and other countries to justify their abstention or negative votes. Thus, they questioned whether the applicant had met the requirements of membership particularly in light of the division and the lack of a representative of the whole Palestinian people. Ending the division and restoring national unity was considered a priority and not a mere choice among others.

There were discussions on the Arab, Palestinian and international levels regarding the feasibility and form of the recourse to the UN and the damage that would befall the Palestinian state if it gained state recognition. In addition, there was much debate about the impact of such a step on the status of the PLO, which retains Palestine’s seat in the UN, refugees’ rights and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

The Palestinian, and later the Arab, decision was to seek full membership through the UN Security Council despite prior knowledge that the bid would most possibly fail to win the nine required votes. It was also known that the bid would be met with an American veto based on threats by the US president, secretary of state and the US administration to the Palestinian leadership throughout 2011, even during the meeting between Obama and ‘Abbas on the eve of presenting the bid to the Security Council.

However, the debate never determined whether it was more feasible to go to the UN Security Council or the UNGA to get observer status, or both. Although the Arab Follow-up Committee and the Arab League recognized the need to resort to the Security Council, as was decided in the meeting of the Arab League,¹⁵⁵ Arab pressure was exercised on President ‘Abbas warning him against going to the Security Council to prevent any American-Palestinian, and accordingly American-Arab, confrontation. In addition, the EU presented the Palestinians with a proposal to resort to the UNGA instead of the UN Security Council. In return, the EU would vote in favor of the resolution while the Palestinians would return to the negotiation table and refrain from presenting any application to the Security Council or any other UN body, including the International Criminal Court (ICC). However, the Palestinian leadership rejected the European offer and did not respond to the demands of some Arab countries. Nor did it succumb to American and Israeli threats to cancel the Oslo Accords, annex territories to Israel, expand settlements and withdraw VIP cards from Palestinian officials.

Although the bid was presented to the UN Security Council, it was not put to a vote for fear that it would not win nine votes, and to avoid confrontation between the Palestinian leadership and the US administration which was concerned about the repercussions of having to use its veto. The veto step would contradict previously declared US commitments, where Obama said that the establishment of the Palestinian state is “a personal priority,”¹⁵⁶ while US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen considered it “a cardinal interest.”¹⁵⁷ In addition, the US was afraid of the veto’s consequences on relations with Arabs and Muslims as the region witnessed change and the rise of forces that need to be contained rather than antagonized.

The bid was eventually presented to the UN Security Council and the expected confrontation did not take place. Rather, there was a minor confrontation as the

Palestinian leadership decided not to ask to put the bid to vote and did not present another application to the UNGA.

The decision on the Palestinian bid to join UNESCO, which had been presented earlier, changed the scene. Thus, President ‘Abbas did not consider deferment of the bid, fearing a reaction similar to that triggered by the postponement of the Goldstone Report. Accordingly, he ordered his team to proceed with the issue thus allowing the Palestinians to get full membership in UNESCO. This angered the American administration and Israel, both of whom imposed the sanctions they had threatened.

Yet, there was a Palestinian-American agreement to freeze the Palestinian bid in the UN Security Council and to not present any new bid to join other UN organizations while the Quartet was allowed until 26/1/2012 to present its initiative. Simultaneously, Israel and the Palestinian leadership would present their perception of borders and security, parallel to the releasing of tax revenues held by Israel and resumption of American aid.

Indeed, the Palestinian side presented a document to the Quartet in November 2011 disclosing its position on borders and security. This was the same document that had been presented to Olmert’s government during the negotiations held in 2008, which failed to reach any agreement despite the talks about tangible development being achieved. This document contained Palestinian consent to the principle of land exchange at 1.9% and a disarmed Palestinian state with international forces to be stationed on its soil.¹⁵⁸

Nonetheless, the Israeli government declined to present its vision on the borders and security, refusing to do so except through direct negotiations with the Palestinians. It also refused to receive the Palestinian document.

When the “exploratory talks” were held in Amman in January 2012, the Israeli delegate, Isaac Molho, refused to present any official document on the grounds that the borders are related to the level of security that could be provided by the PA, as well as its agreement to postpone the issue of Jerusalem and to practically give up on the return of the refugees.

‘Abbas’s Speech in the UN

The speech delivered by President ‘Abbas in the UN¹⁵⁹ presented a historical narrative that reflected the suffering of the Palestinians while stressing their rights

in a way not used since the signing of the Oslo Accords. As such, it would have been feasible to build on the speech to announce that a new phase of negotiations, with an unclear framework, was about to start. It would also have been possible to build on the speech to crystallize a comprehensive and strategic Palestinian alternative and to depart from the verbal threats that had included the dismantling of the PA, the resignation of the president and pursuing limited steps regarding reconciliation which all tend to be turned into empty gestures. However, 'Abbas's speech soon lost its rigor as the Palestinian leadership chose to limit its resort to the UN to presenting the bid to the Security Council without putting it to vote, and to abstain from going to any UN affiliated organization or reactivating former resolutions, including the authoritative edicts of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Goldstone Report.

The same outcome was repeated with the approach to popular resistance with all factions, including Fatah and Hamas, adopting it as a motto without outlining a comprehensive plan that could incorporate the capacities of the Palestinian people in popular resistance with its endless forms in which everyone can participate.

Israel and the Peace Process

The Arab Spring and the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, followed by their expansion to Yemen, Libya and Syria, and their repercussions on other Arab countries amounted to an earthquake for Israel. This is because the Arab scene, generally characterized by weakness and fragmentation for decades, started to collapse after long years of rule during which Israel was given wide interests and allowed to maintain military superiority while persisting with its occupations of Palestine and the Golan. It was also allowed to sign two peace agreements with Jordan and Egypt and maintain relations with seven other Arab countries. Despite the general concern in Israel regarding the changes sweeping the Arab world, the positions towards these changes in Israel were divided into two major tracks:

First Track: The prevailing track which is supported by the prime minister and the foreign minister and believes that the changes in the Arab world enhance the need for Israeli policies which rely on power and more power. This policy is what allows Israel to keep the Arab and Palestinian lands under its occupation, giving it strategic and geographic dimensions in addition to political, security and economic advantages. It also allows Israel to exercise Judaization measures and confiscate more land in order to annex them when conditions are ripe.¹⁶⁰

In fact, Israeli concerns were so intense that Netanyahu talked about renewed eastern front, especially after the American withdrawal from Iraq and the talk about an alliance including Iran, Iraq and Syria and which might extend to Jordan, in addition to the intensified risks after the collapse of the Mubarak regime, the trusted ally of Israel.

Second Track: Represented by the Israeli President Shimon Peres and the remaining left as well as some former military and security leaders, this track believes in the necessity of speeding up the peace settlement with the Palestinians based on the establishment of a Palestinian state. The second track believes that this would undermine the repercussions of the Arab Spring and allow the US, Europe and Israel to form international alliance that would be joined by Arab countries, particularly Gulf countries, to face Iran and to prepare for a comprehensive attack against it to prevent it from developing a nuclear bomb, and to curb its influence in the region.¹⁶¹

The Prospects of Peace Process

The factors that contributed to the failure of all efforts aimed at resuming negotiations throughout recent years are still intact. To these reasons should be added the fact that 2012 is the year of presidential elections in the US. Consequently, the American administration was busy with internal matters and showed more bias to Israel in order to secure Jewish and pro-Israeli votes and funding. In addition, Molho's offer to 'Uraiqat during the "exploratory meetings" in Amman showed that the Israeli conditions have not altered. Rather, they became more radical as demonstrated in the Israeli insistence on recognition of Israel as a "state for the Jewish people," absolving the occupation state from any responsibility regarding the refugees' plight and rejection of their return in compliance with the right of return. At the same time, Netanyahu's government kept hold of Jerusalem while stressing the need to impose security and settlement arrangements that go beyond the Separation Wall and annex settlement posts and maintain the Jordan Valley for unspecified period of time. Moreover, it would retain safe zones on the Jordan River and the Green Line while establishing security and military regions and roads linking the settlements. It would be impossible for any Palestinian leadership, no matter how supine it was, to accept such humiliating conditions.¹⁶²

The declarations on the Palestinian side, however, fell short of countering Israeli rhetoric. Thus, it was not enough to talk about taking decisions that would

change the face of the Middle East, as expressed by Nabil Abu Rudaina,¹⁶³ or that the PA could not remain an authority that has no real authority, as declared by President ‘Abbas.¹⁶⁴ Nor was it sufficient to say that the current situation of the PA would be seriously addressed next year, including making strategic decisions, as Sa’ib ‘Uraiqat had promised.¹⁶⁵ And while ‘Uraiqat did not reveal the nature of these “strategic decisions” which the PA would make, it is likely that they could include the following:

- Continued Palestinian attempts to achieve full UN membership.
- Recourse to the UN Security Council, UNGA and international institutions to convict Israel and seek to impose measures against it on the basis of its persistence with land confiscation, settlement building and expansion and its continued occupation, especially in Jerusalem.
- Calling on Switzerland, the founder and sponsor of the Fourth Geneva Convention 1949, to urge signatories to implement this convention and provide protection for the Palestinian people.
- Activating popular resistance especially after it had become a consensual issue after the agreement between President ‘Abbas and Khalid Mish‘al in their meeting in Cairo on 24/11/2011 and after Mish‘al had said that popular resistance was as strong as a tsunami, especially with the backdrop of the Arab Spring.

However, what was not officially said by the Palestinian leadership was implied in individual and dispersed declarations. Thus, Hanan ‘Ashrawi, a member of the PLO Executive Committee, said that withdrawal of the recognition of Israel might be considered if all other options were exhausted, although such withdrawal was never promoted for discussion in the PLO.¹⁶⁶ Mohammad Shtayyeh, a member of Fatah’s Central Committee, pointed to the possibility of cancelling the agreements signed with Israel including mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. He also added that the PA would not then differentiate between Ramallah and Jaffa.¹⁶⁷ For his part, Mohammad Mustafa, the chairman and chief executive officer of the Palestine Investment Fund (PIF) and economic advisor to President ‘Abbas, and once a candidate for premiership, repeatedly demanded the cancellation of the Paris Protocol.¹⁶⁸ President ‘Abbas declared that he would not run in the next election or remain a president for an authority that had no authority, serving as a mayor while Israel has undermined the two-state solution. For his part, Sa’ib ‘Uraiqat threatened the adoption of one-state solution.

The indicators above reveal the end of the phase of the Oslo Accords and bilateral negotiations, in addition to the unilateral American sponsorship of the “peace process” in light of the decline of the role of the “false witness” played by the Quartet. They also show that a new phase is imminent and there is need to prepare for it.

The continued talk about alternative options without their adoption has led, and would later lead, to the return to negotiations, under even worse conditions, referred to as proximity, exploratory or indirect talks. The Palestinian position and its credibility would be undermined as external pressure would increase, especially from the US and Israel. Hence, it is essential to work on raising the Palestinian ceiling and to focus on ending the state of division and restoring unity in addition to the reform of the PLO on a national and democratic basis and through genuine partnership with all political factions. Equally important is the need to reconsider the form, role and commitments of the PA which has to manage services and administrative tasks while leaving the political role to the PLO itself.

However, if Israel tried to foil the PA’s role after it changed its form and function, it would have to bear the consequences. The PA should demonstrate resilience and work from its position as an interim body within the context of ending the occupation, establishing the Palestinian state and serving the Palestinian people rather than being subject to Israeli conditions that effectively make it a security and economic agent of the occupation. In addition, it is not acceptable for national reconciliation to reproduce futile options, especially bilateral negotiations; the importance of national unity is that it makes choosing new alternatives a feasible process. The Palestinian people do not need reconciliation to be a pretext for resumption of bilateral negotiations and the return to this vicious circle that has been exploited by consecutive Israeli governments to establish new facts of occupation that make the Israeli solution the only internationally acceptable and possible solution.

The aforementioned does not mean that the available options are limited to the persistence of the status quo or the resumption of negotiations. Rather, there are other options which were posed by current Israeli officials demanding a long-term, multi-stage transitional solution entailing the establishment of a state with provisional borders. Moreover, Israeli security and military officials have previously called for a unilateral step from both sides that would pave the way for

agreement when the time is suitable and foil possible reverberations in case the stalemate continued to govern the Middle East region. There are voices in Israel calling for exchange of land and population and the establishment of alternative home in Jordan or the establishment of “the Palestinian state of Jordan.”

Mahmud ‘Abbas has shown great flexibility when faced with Israel’s intransigence. He unilaterally agreed on the Road Map for peace despite Israel presenting 14 reservations, effectively rejecting it. He also accepted security coordination with Israel and reestablished the security apparatuses in the WB to fulfill this role. ‘Abbas also accepted to participate in Annapolis Summit and entered unconditioned, direct negotiations with the Olmert government in 2008. Then, in 2010, he resumed proximity talks that were transformed to direct negotiations launched in Washington which lasted for one month. Additionally, he agreed on the French initiative, Obama’s speech on 9/5/2011, and the Quartet’s initiatives including the initiative it presented after ‘Abbas UN speech. Yet, Israel’s position remained an obstacle to any genuine move towards fulfilling the peace process, even within the framework of international legitimacy.

Conclusion

No major developments were seen on the Palestinian-Israeli scene in 2011. Still, it is possible to say that it was affected by the following factors:

- The inclination of Israeli society towards right-wing radicalism and religious extremism.
- The state of fragmentation and reconstruction of the Labor Party.
- The middle-class demonstrations protesting high prices and the increasing cost of living.
- The state of Israeli confusion as a result of the Arab uprisings and the likeliness of the emergence of environments hostile to Israel due to the rise of Islamist and nationalist movements.
- Israeli persistence with the continuation of the policy of settlement and Judaization in the WB and the siege of the GS, the foiled peace process and the PLO leadership’s resort to the UN Security Council to attain full membership in the UN.

- The Israeli inclination towards increased militarization and security measures to face the changes in the region and the entitlements that might ensue upon reaching a dead end on the peace process.

It does not seem that any core changes are likely to be witnessed regarding Israel in the foreseeable future. It is more probable that Israeli society will head towards more right-wing and religious extremism while the current rightist Israeli government's chances of winning the coming elections are high and it may even increase the size of its parties in the Knesset. As Israelis anxiously follow developments in the Arab region, they will try to enhance their military and security power and steer the events in a way that serves their interests. They will also continue with their Judaization and settlement policies, establishing facts on the ground with little concern over the failure of the peace process.

Endnotes

- ¹ See *Haaretz*, 5/1/2012.
- ² *Almustaqbal*, 18/1/2011.
- ³ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 12/9/2011.
- ⁴ In an interview with the Israeli Channel 1, Itzik Hadad, Kadima ex-treasurer said that Kadima has begun to resemble an organized crime ring, see site of Global-Report, 9/12/2011, <http://www.global-report.com/disillusion/a1626>
- ⁵ See Summary of 2011, site of Nana10, 30/12/2011, www.nana10.co.il (in Hebrew)
- ⁶ Some Israeli leaders considered Barak's move an opportunistic one, see *al-Hayat*, 19/1/2011.
- ⁷ Israeli analysts said that there was a very tough competition between the Labor Party's veteran leaders—Amram Mitzna, Amir Peretz and Isaac Herzog—and Shelly Yachimovich. The social protests in Israel in the summer of 2011, supported Yachimovich's economic and social positions that call for the end of the monopolies of the rich people who control the Israeli economy. She calls for the protection of workers' rights. Her election meant the return of the social-democratic trend and the return of the Labor Party to the center left, see Avi Dabush, "Primaries Here: How Social Protests Affect the Labor Party," site of Mako, 12/9/2011, www.mako.co.il (in Hebrew)
- ⁸ *Arabs* 48, 29/7/2011.
- ⁹ *Al-Hayat*, 23/11/2011.
- ¹⁰ A Bedouin Sheikh in Negev, stated that Prawer Plan is disastrous for them, see *Haaretz*, 4/10/2011, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1488724>; and Ben Youngster wrote an interesting article on the same subject under the title "Prawer Plan: An Additional Plan for Looting, Stealing and Segregation," site of Socialist Struggle Movement, <http://maavak.org.il/maavak/?article=832> (in Hebrew)
- ¹¹ *Maariv* mentioned the names of those involved with Lieberman, see *Maariv*, 14/4/2011. See also *Asharq Alawsat*, 15/4/2011.
- ¹² Haim Baram indicates that Lieberman controls the Israeli society through a transparent figure called Benjamin Netanyahu, and realizes his dreams through more oppression even if that would lead to diplomatic isolation of Israel on the international level just like what happened in the wake of the Israeli attack on Mavi Marmara which was sailing in a convoy with other ships towards GS in 2010, see site of Haggada, www.haggada.org/2011/09/09
- ¹³ A war of opinion polls started since Netanyahu declared his intention to advance his party's primaries. Thus, Lapid presented himself as a candidate, and so did Deri and Noam Shalit, the father of Corporal Gilad Shalit (he will join Labor Party list as a party member), see *The Marker*, 9/1/2012, <http://www.themarker.com/news/1.1612476> (in Hebrew)
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- ¹⁵ In a speech delivered in the Knesset in retaliation to the opposition's accusations against his policies, Netanyahu said: "We will not accept women being spit on in the street." His remarks came after the spread of women isolation within the ultra-orthodox society (Haredim) whose influence within the Israeli society is on the increase, see PM Netanyahu's Speech at the Knesset 40 Signatures Session, site of Prime Minister's Office, 28/12/2011, <http://www.pmo.gov.il/MediaCenter/Speeches/Documents/40SIGNeng281211.doc>
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- ¹⁸ See Johnny Mansour, "Strategic Reading of the Eilat Operation," *Middle Eastern Studies Journal*, Amman, vol. 15, issue 57, Autumn 2011; and Israel Security Agency—ISA (Shabak), Monthly Summary—August 2011, <http://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionImages/english/TerrorInfo/reports/aug11report-en.pdf>
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Chapter Three

The Palestinian Issue and the Arab World

The Palestinian Issue and the Arab World

Introduction

A year into the outbreak of the Arab Spring uprisings, exaggeration seems to be still heavily present in discussions about the possible Arab approach (or approaches) to the Palestinian issue. In fact, the transformations of the new strategic environment have ushered in changes which we are still exploring. At the same time, some of the old features have remained intact and are still active, albeit to a limited extent. This compound duality (sustaining the old alongside the new elements) in the light of an Arab situation which is still open to a sundry possibilities, makes it more difficult to predict future outcomes, particularly long term repercussions. Such predictions need much political imagination, and a great deal of realism in order to present possible approaches to the future, policies and relations of the involved actors without promising to provide definite answers.

The 2011 uprisings undoubtedly brought to an end the political stalemate suffered in the Arab world over several decades. However, they have not led to strategic changes in Arab policies regarding the Palestinian issue similar to those witnessed in the aftermath of the first Arab revolutionary tide in the 1950s. The Egyptian uprising, which stimulated the most important changes in the region, succeeded in overthrowing the head of the ruling regime and many of its symbols; nonetheless, it retained its institutions including those assigned to manage the country's foreign policy. Consequently, the changes in the Egyptian approach towards the Palestinian issue and Egyptian-Israeli relations (which are intertwined), have not exceeded a limited tactical change. Such change represents the limit permissible in light of the strategies pursued by these institutions which are still primarily concerned with achieving stability and minimizing external problems as much as possible, in light of the critical transitional conditions in Egypt.

The wave of change witnessed throughout the Arab world in 2011, whether in the form of revolutions or popular movements demanding reform, struck a limited number of Arab regimes and did not lead to the revolutionizing the League of Arab States. The direct and immediate result of this wave did not stop traditional forces

from controlling the reins of power and reproducing of the “axis of moderation” within the League itself, while revolting forces were busy with developments in their countries.

In this context, there has been no significant change in the Arab approach to the peace settlement as the Arab Peace Initiative was neither withdrawn nor consolidated. This is true for the countries where the revolutions overthrew the old regimes and those whose regimes have, to date, survived the uprisings.

However, the Arab uprisings brought about an important development as they gave impetus to a strategic actor previously absent, or absented, from the Arab political scene. This actor is the Arab people, able to rediscover their great ability to work together and influence events. This is equally true for those people that formulated their own model of the Arab Spring and those that were inspired by the revolutionary spirit and consequently raised their demands for reform in the face of the ruling elites.

The uprisings also led to the rise of Islamic movements in many Arab countries including Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Kuwait. This resulted in a major change in the map of Arab-Palestinian relations, where it was necessary for many Arab regimes (the reasons varying with each country) to show relative openness towards Hamas.

The bottom line is that the new Arab strategic environment throughout 2011 was (and remains at the time of writing) rife with competing elements pushing each other in contradictory directions. Thus, while some factors push towards the maintenance of the conditions which prevailed before the outbreak of the uprisings, others try to create strategic, rather than tactical, changes in policies pertaining to the Palestinian issue. It is likely that this situation will continue as long as there is political mobility, lack of stability and a state of skepticism prevailing in the region. However, it remains important to remember that uncertainty is a common characteristic of all revolutions and if the people succeed in imposing their will, then it is not improbable that the conflict with Israel will see a restoration to its essence, with its Arab, Islamic and humanitarian dimensions, becoming a conflict over existence rather than borders.

First: The Stance of the League of Arab States

1. The Stance on the Peace Settlement

The new Arab strategic environment failed in its immediate developments to either revolutionize the Arab state system or allow the post-revolution forces (in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya) to control the system's epicenter. This is because the revolutions have not yet achieved their objectives or institutionalized their new regimes on political, constitutional, economic or military levels. It is also likely that the transitional phase might have led, at least temporarily, to a contradictory outcome by increasing the relative power of the Gulf states whose regimes have so far escaped the tide of the uprisings.¹

The Gulf states rushed to reap the benefits of the new opportunities created before any of the new developments had crystallized in to a new status quo and before the major Arab countries, such as Egypt and Syria, had even come close to putting their houses into order. At the same time, the Gulf regimes sought to consolidate their control over the major junctures of the League of Arab States, which represents the official Arab system. Worth mentioning in this context is the statement by the Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani, in an open session attended by Arab foreign ministers, in which he said that Qatar would preside over the Arab League Council in its 136th regular session instead of Palestine. Notable also was Kuwait's success in pushing towards the issuance of a resolution to assign three of its diplomats to high level posts formerly occupied by three Egyptian diplomats. One of the Kuwaiti diplomats was Ambassador 'Adnan 'Issa al-Khudair who was appointed as assistant secretary-general for financial and administrative affairs although he could not be appointed during the tenure of 'Amr Musa.²

The change in the relative power of the actors in the Arab political system is one of the reasons for the dwindling possibility of fulfilling the idea of "an international peace conference" based on international legitimacy and aiming at resolving the conflict rather than managing it. This was the idea proposed by Nabil al-'Arabi when he was serving as Egypt's foreign minister.³ However, it was never put on the Arab League's agenda even when al-'Arabi assumed his post as its secretary-general in May 2011, although the Arab Peace Initiative Follow-up Committee continued to hold its meetings regularly throughout 2011. It is incorrect,

nonetheless, to blame this stalemate to the prevalence of the Arab uprisings on the policies of the Arab League.*

In fact, the Arab League granted the PA President Mahmud ‘Abbas, through the Arab Follow-up Committee, the freedom to pursue the strategy he deemed appropriate. It further supported (despite the reservations of some regimes) the Palestinian bid for statehood in September 2011 which was perceived as a shift in the PA strategy vis-à-vis the peace process. Later, however, the PA seemed more inclined towards the option of negotiations and the move at the UN proved to be a tactical move within the context of augmenting the conditions for negotiations. It was never a step to establish a new Palestinian strategy based on achieving reconciliation, stopping security coordination with the Israel, redefining the PA as a PLO resistance tool, or engaging the Palestinian Diaspora and following the model of the Arab Spring.

The Arab League did not take a position different from or opposed to that of the PA when it accepted, in January 2012, the initiative of the Jordanian King to conduct “exploratory talks” with Israel on resuming full peace negotiations. And even when those talks failed,⁴ the Arab side adopted a vague stance at a meeting of foreign ministers’ held at the Arab League headquarters on 12/2/2012 where they called for an international conference to look at the Palestinian issue.⁵ The call can be viewed as an attempt to escape essential responsibilities, since a similar conference called for by Russia had failed to convene after the Annapolis Summit of 2007 and relevant powers (especially the US) did not seem enthusiastic about such a conference. On top of that, holding such a conference would likely be a mere political-media maneuver, unable to enhance the peace process or evolve into a real breakthrough in the Arab world.

The decision of the Arab foreign ministers in the above mentioned meeting to provide a financial safety net for the PA worth of \$100 million per month⁶ (in case Israel decided to withhold the funds of the PA) falls in the same context. This is because it reflects the Arab regimes’ keenness on the continuation of role of the PA and their fear that its collapse, in conjunction with increased vulnerability of the region, might lead to undesirable alternatives.

*On another hand, it is important to note that enthusiasm for holding international peace conferences has declined since the 1991 Madrid Conference in favor of bilateral talks through which Israel and the US can attempt to impose their agendas and avoid international pressures and obligations.

Thus, the Arab League in 2011 adhered to the constants of the Arab approach to the peace settlement, clinging to the futile bilateral negotiations track. It is likely that it will hold on to this position as long as the PA sticks to it and it will not move towards an effective and unified position before the current developments evolve towards either an escalation with Israel or the adoption of a new Palestinian strategy.

Put differently, Arabs are waiting for the national and unified decision of the Palestinians which should be taken by the Palestinians themselves. Until then, the Arab League will follow the logic: “we agree on what the Palestinians agree on.”

2. The Stance on the Palestinian Schism

The Arab Spring has created a new political environment embracing Arab-Palestinian interaction with a new openness to all parties, with the decline of the commonly used traditional classifications of Arab states into “moderate” and “refusal front” states. This change may well help to develop new alliances between the Arab and Palestinian sides.

In this context, it is possible to state that one of the direct outcomes of the 2011 Arab uprisings has been the clear need for many Arab regimes to show more openness to Hamas, albeit for reasons varying from one country to another. Consequently, the Arab League’s attitude towards Hamas changed, especially when Islamic movements rose in a number of Arab countries including Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and Kuwait.

As part of the new political climate, the Arab League Secretary-General Nabil al-‘Arabi plainly said that he had entrusted Khalid Mish‘al, the head of Political Bureau of Hamas with a message for the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad regarding conditions in Syria, during a meeting between al-‘Arabi and Mish‘al in the Arab League headquarters on 7/1/2012.⁷ This mediation upset the PLO which filed an official complaint to the Arab League considering that it was not Mish‘al’s right to take on this prestigious role, according to the statement of PLO Executive Committee Secretary Yasir ‘Abed Rabbo.⁸ The PLO’s rejection, which came within the framework of the struggle over the legitimacy of foreign representation, reflects the high sensitivity shown by the Ramallah-based PA towards the development of relations between many Arab countries and Hamas following the growth in prominence of Islamists in a number of countries and the consequent support to

their Islamist brethren in Palestine. At the same time, there are no indicators that the Arabs are about to change their stance which recognizes the PLO as the only representative of the Palestinian people.

Second: The Stances and the Roles of Some Key Countries

1. Egypt

a. Changes in the Egyptian Approach to the Peace Process and Relations with Israel

The most controversial question since the outbreak of Egypt's January 25th Revolution could be that of its impact on the Egyptian approach to two files: the peace settlement and relations with Israel. This is the case because a change in foreign policy and external relations for a country like Egypt does not usually happen according to a simple pattern. Rather, this change is the result of a cumulative and compound process and the interaction of a number of variables such as the public opinion's ability to make a change, the nature of the political system and the political will of the new political players. In addition, there is the impact of the status quo which limits the chances of a strategic change in the foreseeable future for a number of reasons:

First: The experience with the impact of the public pressure on foreign policies makes it necessary to distinguish between two issues: the ability of the different forms of demonstration to establish and reinforce the basis of the state's foreign policy on one hand, and their ability to urge the decision maker towards resolving certain issues or adopting a policy different from that already in place, on the other. Recalling many experiences, the first issue is likely while the other usually fails to be achieved. The clear example in this respect is the attack on the Israeli Embassy in Cairo which, despite its intensity and violence, failed to produce any strategic change in Egyptian-Israeli relations. However, it urged the Egyptian government to reconsider its relations with Israel⁹ and to consider the weight of public opinion which was expecting tangible outcome. Indeed, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak officially stated that "Israel regrets the deaths of the Egyptian officers that occurred during the attacks along the Israeli-Egyptian border," which occurred in Eilat on 18/8/2011.¹⁰ The very same incident has convinced the Egyptian government of

the danger of any possible escalation on the Palestinian front, in the aftermath of the Eilat operation and subsequent incidents, besides any possible popular reaction that would get out of control. This convinced SCAF Chairman Field Marshal Muhammad Hussein Tantawi to address a strongly worded message to the Netanyahu government, stating that Israel's resort to a military operation against the GS would force the Egyptian government to sever ties with Israel and cause significant damage to the peace agreements between the two countries.¹¹

Thus, public opinion can be a major motivation for decision makers to focus on the Palestinian issue or to take tactical decisions such as the reconsideration of arrangements for opening the Rafah crossing. But when taking strategic decisions such as severing or restricting Egyptian-Israeli relations and shifting towards alliance or partnership with Hamas, it would be a mere catalyst.

Second: The conditions which allowed the political rise of Islamists in Egypt are the same conditions which lay restrictions on foreign policies and which are not likely to be overcome easily, at least in the foreseeable future. The most important among these conditions are the following:

1. The nature of interaction between major political forces sharing power in Egypt has not yet crystallized. Although the SCAF had earlier vowed to hand over power immediately after the legislative and presidential elections, it seems that the council will continue with its role regarding major files, at least in the short term. This means that the influence of new actors on such files requires determining their relative power within the new governance equation, which is unattainable for the time being.

2. The Islamic movements which gained their popularity before the revolutions, on the basis of their stance towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and rejection of the unfair terms of peace settlement, need to reconsider their priorities and rhetoric, and perhaps give up on their call for Pan-Islamism. Now, they need to focus on two factors: achievement; which includes putting an end to lawlessness, improving the economic situation of their countries and enforcing the humanitarian gains of the uprising, besides the completion of the democratization process. This persuaded the Islamic movements to present a more moderate speech which did not antagonize international powers who can still offer economic support necessary to build post-uprising economies. This could be concluded from the change in the rhetoric of the MB after Mubarak

stepped down. Seven days prior to Mubarak's stepping down, MB's Deputy General-Guide Rashad Bayoumi, declared that an interim coalition government formed of the MB and other opposition forces was to undertake the abolition of the peace treaty with Israel after Mubarak's departure.¹² However, a week following Mubarak's ouster, the MB reiterated, through its spokesman who currently heads the Foreign Relations Committee at the People's Assembly, 'Issam al-'Aryan, that any decision regarding the peace treaty with Israel be taken by the Egyptian people, promising that the MB Movement would not impose its view.¹³ In the same vein, the MB (and the Salafi Movement) declined participation in the Friday protest that expelled the Israeli ambassador, following the attack on the Egyptian soldiers on the borders in August 2011. They also officially rejected prompting such ideas as the "march to Gaza," stressing that any popular initiatives for supporting the Palestinian people should be through coordination with the Egyptian authorities without breaching the political security of Egypt.¹⁴ In addition, the Building and Development Party, the political arm of al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah in Egypt, declared through a member of its founding committee, Tariq al-Zumar, that the movement was committed to the agreements with Israel.¹⁵

These statements and positions do not herald the beginning of strategic changes that are likely to occur in the positions of the Egyptian Islamic movements towards Israel and the Palestinian issue as much as they represent these movements' need for more time to consolidate and redefine their priorities. They also reflect the impact of the temporal and objective circumstances which urged these movements to draw a line between their overt and covert positions.

It should be noted that the Islamists' preliminary positions towards the Palestinian issue continued albeit with less prominence. MB's General-Guide Muhammad Badi' declared that Israel would not know calm or stability and security as long as it underestimates the Palestinians' rights. He also said that the Arab uprisings which were overthrowing corrupt, authoritarian regimes pave the way for putting an end to the "Zionist oppression and arrogance" and for the liberation of the holy sites.¹⁶ Badi' further asserted that the MB considered Palestine its first and foremost concern, while the previous regime had been unfair to the issue and had abandoned it in favor of the Israeli-American project, stating that this was one of the reasons behind the outbreak of the uprising in Egypt.¹⁷

Muhammad Mursi, the chairman of Freedom and Justice Party, the political arm of the MB, also asserted that the Palestinian issue was a major motive behind the revolution of the Egyptian people.¹⁸ MB Spokesperson Mahmud Ghuzlan confirmed the Movement's rejection of the Israeli presence in Palestine stressing its demands for the liberation of Palestine from the river to the sea.¹⁹

3. Egypt's January 25th Revolution only overthrew the president while the state apparatuses and structure continued to operate through the same old system with minor changes of some leading figures. Thus, the Islamic elements sought not to fill the void but to integrate with long-standing bureaucratic institutions and try to make a change from within. Islamists' keenness on change might also be faced by strong bureaucracy that might even succeed to accommodate the new members and rehabilitate them politically.

However, when the potential of a change in the Egyptian position towards peace with Israel is excluded, that does not necessarily mean that old policies towards the Israeli-Palestinian peace process will be reproduced. The role played by Mubarak has ended, and this role had included his exploitation of the Palestinian issue in favor of increasing personal power, or exercising pressure on the PA and PLO leaders to urge them to enter negotiations lacking even the minimum conditions for success. The dilemma of the current stage is not only related to the absence of options for the Egyptian players but it is also related to the Palestinian delay in identifying an alternative strategy which would replace the peace process. It appears that once the Palestinians succeed in finding this strategy they will definitely find the necessary political support.

b. Egyptian-Palestinian Relations

Relations with the Hamas Movement

In light of the success of the Egyptian uprising in overthrowing Mubarak, it is no longer politically acceptable for the new Egyptian government to proceed with old policies, especially those which triggered popular discontent. One of these policies is Egypt's relation with Hamas in the GS and arrangements related to the Rafah crossing. The former regime's fear of a political force with Islamic affiliations on its borders meant that it attached high importance to state security interests when determining its relationship with Hamas.²⁰ This approach has put Egypt in crises which almost caused the explosion of the whole security situation

in Sinai similar to when the Rafah border fence was blown up in January 2008. The former regime also damaged its reputation due to its mismanagement of Gaza aid convoys and the steel wall crisis in January 2010.

Following the revolution, Cairo pursued an interesting policy in its approach towards the GS. It needed to take action which would show that Egypt has started to restore its regional role and influence. This was even more necessary after it became more representative of popular will which has always expressed its discontent with the Egyptian policies regarding the GS. First were the declarations by Nabil al-‘Arabi, the current Arab League secretary general and former foreign minister, stating that Egypt’s position towards the war on GS was shameful and tantamount to a war crime²¹ in addition to his official statement confirming Egypt’s moral obligation to end the siege on GS.²² Cairo needed to coordinate with Fatah and Hamas so that the Rafah crossing would not become a source of accusations that Egypt was enhancing the division with the Palestinians. Last but not least came the announcement regarding new security arrangements for the crossing’s management and for signing the reconciliation agreement in early May 2011.

Moreover, Cairo needed to show it had broken with the policies of the former regime. Hence, it made a sovereign decision to replace the old mechanism of opening the crossing in presence of European monitors and without any coordination with the Israeli, American or European sides. Nonetheless, the Egyptian administration, still operating with its old staff, cannot overnight transform the crossing from one for the passage of persons to a commercial crossing. Such a transformation is considered a strategic change rather than a tactical one, and that might lead to an international crisis with Washington and Israel, and perhaps with the PA.

The above shows the positive transformation in the relations between Egypt and Hamas, although within a tactical framework. This is a reflection of another shift inside Egypt represented in the granting of political legitimacy to Islamic movements, especially the MB. These shifts were in Hamas’ favor, boosting its Arab legitimacy, which it had lost since it won the PLC elections in January 2006. These transformations encouraged Hamas to confide in the new Egyptian administration and sign the Egyptian reconciliation paper, a step which came in compliance with the prevailing regional circumstances.

Relations with the Fatah Movement and the PA

Since Egypt's January 25th Revolution, relations between Egypt and the PA in the WB have undergone a new stage characterized by the following:

1. The collapse of the Mubarak regime stripped the PA of its strongest Arab ally which had provided it with support and legitimate cover for entering negotiations time and again. The new Egyptian regime, regardless of its structure, will be less willing to provide this political support.

2. The Egyptian regime will be more open to Hamas, the PA's rival in the GS, without recognizing the legitimacy of Isma'il Haniyyah's government. In this context, and according to information revealed by the Journalist Ibrahim al-Derawi, Kamal al-Ganzouri, the prime minister of the national salvation government, declined to meet with Haniyyah during his visit to Cairo on 9/1/2012, because PA sources had expressed reservations on the meeting.²³ However, al-Ganzouri, denied in a phone call with *Asharq Alawsat* newspaper, his and the foreign minister's rejection of the meeting Haniyyah whose visit to Egypt came at a time when al-Ganzouri was abroad. Al-Ganzouri further stressed that Haniyyah was received by Egyptian officials including Grand Imam of al-Azhar Dr. Ahmad al-Tayyib. In reply to a question regarding the possibility of receiving Haniyyah in future visits to Egypt, al-Ganzouri said that there should be no problem in this respect.²⁴

The emerging role of the MB and other Islamist forces in decision making in Egypt will definitely work in favor of Hamas, albeit gradually.

3. The new form of Egyptian-Palestinian relations will most probably be far from absolute alliance or hostility. Instead, it will be closer to a balanced approach towards both Hamas and Fatah. Even if we assume a major role for Islamists in foreign relations, it is not likely that Egyptian foreign policy will be entirely contradictory to that pursued during Mubarak's rule and show absolute support for Hamas and complete hostility towards Fatah.

2. Jordan

a. Stance on the Peace Settlement

The uniqueness of the Jordanian-Palestinian case, based on geographic and demographic considerations, makes the Palestinian issue strongly intertwined with

Jordanian internal policies. That's why any Jordanian approach to the repercussions of internal demands for reform is closely related to the Jordanian approach to the Palestinian issue, and especially to the peace settlement.

The dilemma today is that Jordanian-Palestinian unity in the Jordanian context is facing problems both from home and abroad. The demonstrations witnessed in Jordan throughout 2011 have exacerbated the problems of the Jordanian regime which still suffers because of the stalemate in the peace process and the dangers of sliding towards a Jordanian solution à la the Israeli formula. In theory this threat was supposed to rush the Jordanian regime into following the Palestinian debate concerning the next strategy to be adopted after the collapse of the futile negotiations process, by that point in its third decade. It was supposed to push towards the adoption of a new Palestinian-Jordanian strategy. However, this did not happen as Jordan got involved in extending the term of the negotiations option while it was in its final throes. It is likely that the Jordanian government has not realized that the "timeout strategy" is enhancing the naturalization "conspiracy" rather than defeating it.²⁵

In this context came the initiative of the Jordanian King 'Abdullah II who called on the Palestinian and Israeli sides to engage in what was known as exploratory talks to discuss the possibility of resuming negotiations in January 2012. This initiative was taken with the belief of the PLO and Israel in the need for positive interaction at this time, for tactical reasons, regardless of the ability or readiness of each side to make the initiative succeed.

Whatever the reasons were that prompted the PLO to participate in these talks, Jordan's sponsorship of the initiative showed that its government was attempting to fill the vacuum left by the fall of the Mubarak regime. Jordan also wanted to perform some valued role, fearing a future Egyptian departure from the peace process as MB power increases. Ultimately, Jordan fears the future Egyptian approach to the Palestinian file might further complicate the situation for the Jordanian government especially if it is added to the hurdles created by the Israeli right which rejects the peace settlement and proceeds with its settlement building policy, the Judaization of Jerusalem and the Jordan Valley as well as altering the geography of the WB.

On top of that, this initiative confirmed that the Jordanian leadership's policies continue to be based on a package of options:

First: The peace process did not collapse completely and it is possible to maintain it as a strategic option regardless whether it is the only option or not.

Second: The situation in Jordan and in the region is still not apt for taking strategic risks that would threaten the Jordanian-Israeli peace and have repercussions on the relationship between Jordan and Washington. Here it becomes clear why traditional regimes prefer tactical changes to strategic changes as the former could be changed with only minimal losses should they threaten the regime or its interests, although the latter might offer root solution to stalled problems. In this context, the regime in Jordan is strongly concerned about some potential developments such as the dissolution the PA or the outburst of a third *Intifadah* in the WB. The impact of such scenarios on the Jordanian internal arena, where Palestinians constitute a high proportion of the population, would be difficult to predict. Indeed, an *Intifadah* would undermine the regime's ability to cope with the pressure exercised by Jordanian opposition groups to suspend the peace treaty with Israel especially as these pressures intensified with the popular demonstrations in 2011 when the demands of the Jordanian street coincided with the demands of the traditional opposition including the Islamic Labor Front (ILF) and the Jordanian left.²⁶

Third: The PA will not pursue any options that undermine the current goal of bilateral negotiations unless the internal situation is destabilized. Therefore, Jordan needs to coordinate more with the PA to help ensure that negotiations would not be blocked even if they are currently stalled by Israeli policies. The point here is that Jordan prefers to keep the negotiations option open for as long as possible in anticipation of other scenarios which represent a greater threat to the stability of the regime.

Worthy of mention in this respect is the important surprise visit by the Jordanian King 'Abdullah II to Ramallah on 21/11/2011,²⁷ his fourth visit to the PA administered territories since 1994, the second to Ramallah and the first during Abu Mazin's tenure. The visit was intended to boost the position of the PA after it lost the first round of the application for full membership in the UN and its subsequent organizations. In addition, it was a reassuring message for President 'Abbas, the PA and the PLO implying that improved relations with Hamas will never be at the expense of the Jordanian regime's commitment to "Palestinian legitimacy," Jordan retaining its position of only acknowledging the PLO (and consequently the PA in Ramallah) as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Fourth: The bet on the pragmatism of the Hamas leadership which would prevent it from getting involved in criticizing the Jordanian regime for assuming this role, especially at a time when Hamas was trying to restore its official presence in Amman. Hamas was also maintaining its inclination towards moderation in the context of the new conditions brought about by the Arab Spring.

Jordanian policy reflecting its determination not to block negotiations, has created an Israeli reaction which reveals Tel Aviv's understanding of the critical situation Jordan is undergoing in light of the new conditions prevailing in the region. Despite its consistent position regarding the peace process with the Palestinian side, the Netanyahu government realized the seriousness of the current situation for the Jordanian regime which became susceptible to the dangers of escalating protests among the Jordanian people. These dangers increase with each Israeli violation in Jerusalem and its holy sites, which are still under the administration of the Jordanian Ministry of Awqaf, Islamic Affairs and Holy Places.

In fact, Israel has no interest in aggravating the situation, with and against the Jordanian regime, especially when Israel is facing regional isolation in the wake of the revolutions and after the disturbance in its relation with Turkey following its attack on the Freedom Flotilla. Ultimately, Netanyahu's last minute decision to postpone the demolition of the Mughrabi Gate ramp in the Old City came after Egyptian and Jordanian warnings that it would cause instability across the Arab world.

Also interesting was the unplanned visit by Israeli President Shimon Peres to Amman on 28/11/2011 before which he met with Netanyahu to discuss the importance of strengthening strategic ties between Israel and Jordan.²⁸ In the same vein, the Israeli Foreign Minister, Avigdor Lieberman, considered a hawk, issued a statement in which he stressed that "stability in Jordan is in Israel's interest." He also criticized those who say that "Jordan is Palestine," saying that this "would create a continuous Palestinian state which would endanger us. It's in our interest for this not to happen."²⁹ This statement could not be considered a shift in Israel's right-wing vision, because it is not issued by the Knesset. It is a statement of a foreign minister who, according to one Israeli analyst, often gives meaningless declarations.³⁰ Nevertheless, it revealed Israel's need to calm the situation in Jordan by silencing the "Jordan-is-Palestine" logic which has always triggered instability as well as mitigate any tension in the relations between Israel and Jordan.³¹

b. Jordanian-Palestinian Relations

Introduction: The Dilemmas of Change in Jordan and the Approach to the Palestinian Issue

Within Jordanian circles calling for change and reform, the Palestinian issue affects several topics:

1. The priorities of reform vary between two sides: the first side, located in areas of Palestinian majority such as Amman, Irbid and al-Zarqa, gives priority to political reform based on equal rights between citizens; the second side, mainly from East Jordan, gives priority for economic reform and justice and is mainly concentrated in the southern regions including Karak, Ma'an and Tafila.

2. The Jordanian regime's dual challenge: political and economic. This gives the Jordanian regime major problems, as the joining of the opposition by East Jordanians makes economic reform a political priority. Consequently, Jordan was pushed towards rapprochement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in order to secure financial support for the faltering economy. This step was pursued although it might strip the King of maneuvering space.³² It may even deprive him of the freedom to pursue political reform in order to satisfy the demands of Palestinian-origin Jordanians and those who have influence on Jordan's economy, who seek adequate political representation within the Jordanian political system.

3. The conflict between citizenship and identity: The political reform that Palestinian-origin Jordanians are demanding is to be granted full rights in decision-making processes and within governmental institutions, without having to consider Jordan their alternative homeland, relinquishing their right of return or detracting from the righteousness of the Palestinian cause. This equation is hard to attain while East Jordanians retain their fears over possible Israeli and western strategies to end the refugee issue.

These concerns, which are related to demographic duality, were the main reason for the opposition failing to agree on a single reform agenda; this allowed some government agencies to warn against reform.

In this context, regime members sought to generate concerns about the MB within the Jordanian community through a media campaign, and attempted to

incite tribes against the MB on the grounds that they are a Palestinian organization active within the Jordanian arena.³³ This and other similar campaigns were aimed at preventing the emergence of genuine national coalition pushing for real change in Jordan.

Some Jordanian groups have taken advantage of the agreement between the Palestinian factions—who are participating in the PLO activation committee held in Amman on 15/1/2012—regarding the exclusion of Palestinians residing in Jordan from participating in upcoming PLC elections. Hence, these sides focused on the Jordanian-Palestinian issue although the resolution was primarily aimed at sparing the Jordan the consequences of the controversy about who is considered Palestinian and who is considered Jordanian.

Relations Within the Amman-Fatah-Hamas Triangle

The Arab Spring moved Jordanian politics from its complete bias to one Palestinian side to normalization with Hamas. However, this does not mean that Amman would change its alliances or position but rather pursue a balanced approach, as was expressed by many Jordanian officials on different occasions. This indicates that the Jordanian regime has become convinced, in light of the new conditions, of the need to draw a line between its desire to maintain a strong relation with the PA and its approach to Hamas.

Regarding Jordan's relations with Hamas, Prime Minister 'Awn al-Khasawneh said that the deportation of Hamas leaders from Jordan constituted a "political and constitutional mistake." He also added that Jordan's relations with all Palestinian factions, including the PA and Hamas, should be balanced and normal.³⁴ These remarks reflect the fact that the Jordanian state, and not only the prime minister, has come to a conclusion that Jordan cannot play a role in a changing Middle East in which the MB enjoys increasing influence, without maintaining strong relations with them in the different countries involved in the Arab Spring. It is not even possible for Jordan, in light of the new developments, to assume a pivotal role in the Palestinian issue while alienating a major player like Hamas with all its influence in the Palestinian arena and among the Palestinians in Jordan, not to mention its extensive relations on the regional and international levels.³⁵

Nonetheless, Jordan had two conditions for its renewed relations with Hamas. The first was to draw a clear line between Hamas as a Palestinian faction and

the Jordanian arm of the MB. The MB Consultative Council in Jordan in early January 2012 decided upon financial and organizational disengagement from affiliated bureaus in Gulf countries and joined the Palestinian MB (Hamas). However, this was not in response to Jordan's conditions but rather the will of Palestinian MB to rearrange their cards abroad in accordance with their organizational structure and the developments of the Palestinian issue alongside the changes in the region. The Consultative Council's decision was preceded with a decision by the Guidance Office on 23/11/2011 that the bureaus would join the Palestinian MB Movement.

The second condition set by Jordan was for Hamas to abstain from any political activity in Jordan. This was rejected outright by the movement when Deputy Head of Hamas' Political Bureau, Musa Abu Marzuq reiterated the party's right to be present in all Arab capitals, particularly in Amman, since most of its leaders hold Jordanian citizenship. Abu Marzuq added that nobody could prevent Hamas from undertaking political work since it aimed at protecting the rights of the Palestinian people and he wished that Jordan reconsider its decision.³⁶

However, restoring relations between the two sides started in November 2011 through allowing families of Hamas leaders coming from Syria to enter Jordan. Following this was Khalid Mish'al's long awaited visit to Amman on 29/1/2012 and his meeting with Jordan's King in the presence of the Qatari Crown Prince, which practically means the end of the state of estrangement between Jordan and the political leadership of Hamas which had lasted 13 years. The visit allowed the prospect for an imminent development in relations between Jordan and Hamas, even if it fell short of a major breakthrough.

As for Jordan's relations with Fatah, it seems that the Jordanian inclination towards normalizing relations with Hamas was accompanied by Jordanian keenness on showing support towards Fatah, the PA and the PLO. This was demonstrated through the participation of the PM 'Awn al-Khasawneh in Fatah's 47th anniversary which was held at Al-Ahliyya Amman University on 5/1/2012. This was the first time that a prime minister had sponsored such an occasion in the presence of three of Fatah's Central Committee (Uthman Abu Gharbiyyah, Jamal al-Muhaisen and Jibril al-Rajjoub) and with the participation of distinguished Jordanian personalities led by the Senate Speaker Taher al-Masri, and deputies and representatives of political parties and civil society institutions.³⁷

Jordan's hosting of an unprecedented meeting between 13 Palestinian factions on 15/1/2012 was also very significant. The meeting was held to discuss the electoral system of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) and was attended for the first time not only by the factions of the political coalition leading the PLO but also those who intend to be part of the organization (Hamas and the PIJ) and those seeking to return to it (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) and al-Sa'iqah).³⁸

The meeting, which was led by Salim al-Za'nun and held at the PNC headquarters, re-asserted the legitimate representation of the PLO and its subsequent institutions. It also reflected Jordan's shift towards receiving all Palestinian factions without embarrassment or intervention as well as facilitating their entry and stay in the country. This step was a message from Amman to all sides that its decision to change its approach towards the various Palestinian factions was based on Jordan's exclusive recognition of the PLO, its institutions, embassies and decisions.

3. Syria

a. Relations with Israel

The internal Syrian arena witnessed significant developments from mid-March 2011 and the ruling regime became occupied with confronting increasing demands for change, reform, and the end of the regime. The regime accused its opponents of being part of a conspiracy targeting Syria's steadfastness, resilience and its support for the resistance. However, opponents of the regime stressed their right to establish a democratic system that will reflect the free will of the Syrian people.

The state of turmoil engulfing Syria and the disintegration of the Refusal Front do not necessarily mean the door is open for a peace settlement with Israel. In addition, the state of instability in Syria, whether or not regime collapses or remains in place, means that the whoever rules the country would be too occupied with stabilizing the internal situation to focus on the potentially controversial of either peaceful settlement or escalation with Israel.

It is possible to say that the marches along the borders with the occupied Golan on 15/5/2011 (*Nakbah* anniversary) which led to the deaths of four and the injury of 170,³⁹ as well as the marches on 5/6/2011 (*Naksah* anniversary) which ended with the death of 23 and the injury of 447, killed by Israeli forces⁴⁰ were triggered by motivations beyond the issue of the Palestinian refugees in Syria. In fact,

not all of those who participated in the marches were refugees; there were also Syrian activists in what seemed to be an attempt by the regime to shift focus to the conflict with Israel. Most probably, the Assad regime was not an organizer of these marches, but neither did it find any reason to prevent them, seeing them as a way to relieve public stress and tension. Ultimately, this could be an indicator that repeating these marches in the future remains likely as long as the deadlock continues in the occupied territories. It could also herald a deterioration of the situation unless there is quick agreement regarding the format of the regime in Syria under which a unified, stable government could be formed. However, the prospects of such a government are slim since there is increasing division among the opposition, at home and abroad, and the change in tactics of the uprising, from peaceful to militarized, with the possibility of international military intervention open. Syria might undergo a phase of instability, poor governance and perhaps the dismantling of state bodies if things continue in the way they are at the time of writing. Such a development would limit the ability of any new regime to enter any confrontation with Israel or risk agreeing a long-term peace settlement, which would be the preferred outcome of Israeli government.

Even if we assumed that a quick agreement between the Syrian factions on the new form of governance could be made, the regime's need for foreign support would limit its choices, possibly narrowing them down to peaceful settlement as the only option. In this context, it is possible to interpret the declarations of Burhan Ghalyoun, the head of the Syrian National Council (SNC), which stressed determination to restore sovereignty over the Golan through negotiations and international legitimacy.⁴¹

The gloomiest scenario regarding Syria's future, however, is the country plunging into total chaos. This scenario assumes the collapse of the regime and the division of the Syrian army and security forces while the opposition fails to agree on clear objectives. Consequently, Syria might fall in an alarming state of chaos in which sectarian fighting and skirmishes on the border would not be unexpected. Also dangerous is Israel's probable exploitation of the situation to strike Syrian military installations, in addition to civilian targets and the Palestinian refugee camps in Syria under the pretext that these targets are under the control of militants hostile to Israel. This would ultimately lead to the dismantling the Syrian state, dividing it into mini-states, turning Syria from an influential regional player into

a source for producing sectarian conflicts among Sunnis, Shiites and Druze as well as Palestinian refugees. Tension could spread quickly to Syria's borders with Israel, Lebanon and Iraq.⁴²

b. The Syrian Revolution and the Palestinian Peace Settlement

Western and Israeli voices have warned against the price which Israel would have to pay for the continued stalemate in the peace process in light of the new Arab revolutionary atmosphere. These voices have urged Israel to enter into instant negotiations with the Palestinian side to reach a swift, final settlement of the Palestinian issue, before the stalemate turns into a strong justification of the emergence of radical inclinations that would be adopted by new Arab forces. However, these voices declined after the outbreak of the revolution in Syria. Further, the prevailing climate of uncertainty turned into a strong justification for the Israeli government to postpone the peace process, while some voices stressed the futility of any peace agreement with any Palestinian side which could be ousted at any time,⁴³ once the Palestinian territories witness an uprising similar those across the region.

Therefore, the peace process has probably been affected by developments in Syria which remains one of the key actors in the region. As the new revolutionary Arab environment would be unwilling to accept anything short of a just peace settlement agreed on by the Palestinians, the future "stable" Syrian regime would have to be careful, taking into consideration Palestinian developments and its ability to increase international pressure on Israel.

c. Syrian-Palestinian Relations

Since Hamas' leadership settled in Syria in 2000, the movement has received wide support on popular and official levels alike. Although Hamas has always remained committed to the policy of noninterference in the internal affairs of Arab states, it was obliged to take a position under pressure from the Syrian people and the regime. During the first few months of the uprising, Khalid Mish'al spared no effort to try to reconcile the two sides, seeking national consensus on the process of reform without any foreign intervention. Nonetheless, the widening schism between the regime and the opposition forces made reconciliation impossible.

Hamas issued a statement on 2/4/2011 stressing its support for both the Syrian people and government. It acknowledged Syria's support of the Palestinian people

and its embrace of Palestinian resistance, especially Hamas. It hoped that the Syrian people would overcome the current circumstances by achieving their aspirations in a way which also preserved Syria's stability and strengthened its position towards resistance.⁴⁴

Clearly, the statement issued by Hamas was drafted carefully and although it did not completely satisfy either side, it helped clarify Hamas' critical position and its embarrassment as an ally. And while it recognized the support of the Syrian regime, it could not deny the fact that the Syrian people had embraced the resistance. Hamas had also to adhere to its principles regarding respecting peoples' will and their right to freedom and liberty.

With the continued deterioration of the situation in Syria including the disturbance of political processes, Hamas found it better for its leaders to quietly leave the country without provoking the regime. This continued over months until most leaders had left the country by the end of January 2012. At the same time, Hamas kept many of its field cadres in Syria to follow up on the movement's affairs and the needs of the Palestinian people. According to Hamas, its leaders' departure from Syria was to be expected in light of the urgent need to continue its work without being disrupted by events. In addition, these leaders originated outside the country and have no obligation to stay. Thus, Hamas kept its official presence and institutions in Syria although many of its leaders and figures left the country.

Hamas maintained its "balanced" position and did not issue any further official statements for a while. However, at the end of 2011 and in early 2012 statements were issued showing more inclination and support for the Syrian uprising, especially from Hamas leaders in the GS. Most significant among these was Haniyyah's speech in al-Azhar Mosque, on 24/2/2012, when he said, "I salute all people of the Arab Spring, or Islamic winter, and I salute the Syrian people who seek freedom, democracy and reform."⁴⁵ Additionally, Khalid Mish'al, who left Syria in January 2012, expressed no desire to return under the ongoing situation.

Although the movement did not officially announce its departure from Damascus, by the time it happened it was almost inevitable, as a resistance movement would not survive the political fall out of supporting the regime's crackdown against its own people. The delay in announcing such a decision was based on the need to minimize the repercussions of departure.

Each of the scenarios regarding the future of a “post-Bashar Syria” has its impact on Syrian-Palestinian relations. The scenario of chaos and expansion of internal fighting might bring the Palestinians in Syria in to the conflict, when the social fabric breaks down into sectarian and ideological groups. However, the stability scenario, which would be achieved after the collapse of the regime through the agreement of different opposition forces on new political formula, would determine Syrian-Palestinian relations, dictated by the nature and inclinations of the new regime. Its relations with international players, particularly the US, together with regional and Arab forces, and its convictions and approach to the dilemma of having a part of Syria under occupation, will also impact these relations.

Some expect that the stalemate in the Syrian-Israeli peace process to continue, and any new regime will find no quick solution to the occupation dilemma. Thus, maintaining the strong relationship with the Palestinian resistance factions might be necessary in order to enhance the regime’s internal legitimacy.

Another scenario is the political rise of the MB in Syria as the most organized opposition group, which would enhance the possibility of a regional alliance among the Arab Spring countries. This alliance would use the Palestinian angle not only to enhance its influence in the region but also to stay in harmony with its ideological and political vision vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue. In such a scenario Syria’s relations with the Palestinian resistance factions will acquire a strategic dimension. The leader of the Syrian MB, Mulham al-Droubi, expressed the movement’s stance towards the Palestinian resistance, saying it would find more support under a free Syria, in which it would be completely independent, not used as a means of pressure by any side.⁴⁶ For his part, Zuhair Salem, the spokesperson of the Syrian MB, said that the brothers in Hamas and other Palestinian brethren will visit Syria, where they would be considered a part of one people, sharing the same cause.⁴⁷

However, away from such scenarios, which all depend on various factors, it is necessary to point out that the new Syrian regime, regardless of its form and nature, would probably need a transitional period to rearrange itself before it establishes stable relationships with the Palestinian factions.

4. Lebanon

Lebanon did not witness any uprisings in 2011 similar to those in the Arab Spring countries. This is principally because of its unique sectarian geopolitical

position, the high degree of freedoms enjoyed by the population, its particular kind of democracy, and the Spring it witnessed in 2005; these factors combine to work against root or revolutionary changes. Yet, the ongoing turmoil in Syria is very likely to influence the Lebanese arena, especially if the situation deteriorates further and the Syrian state split up due to the outbreak of sectarian conflicts. Ultimately, any government led by either March 8 or March 14 would face serious limitations upon running the country with all its currents and intertwined situation.

The government formed of Prime Minister Najib Mikati, which won a confidence vote on 7/7/2011, continues to receive support from Hizbullah and the Free Patriotic Movement (FPM). His government seemed inclined throughout 2011 to understanding the regime in Syria, although its desire to maintain the ruling coalition puts limits on its support for the Syrian regime.

The Lebanese reaction to the Arab revolutions and popular demands for change was generally supportive and sympathetic. For example, Hizbullah stressed that the Egyptian revolution was a great service to the Palestinian issue. The party also congratulated Egypt which sponsored reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, hoping for Egypt to resume its leading role in adopting the nation's issues and supporting them.⁴⁸ Hizbullah's Secretary-General Hasan Nasrallah, attested that the situation in the whole region has changed, stating that developments in Egypt are a blow to the US and Israel.⁴⁹ However, Hizbullah expressed a different position regarding the events in Syria, with Nasrallah stating that the collapse of the regime there would serve American and Israeli interests. According to Nasrallah this is because there are plans to replace the Assad regime with another moderate regime, friendlier to Israel.⁵⁰ Nasrallah also stressed the importance of Syrian support for the Palestinian issue and as a guardian against Palestine's liquidation. Nasrallah added that Syria, mainly through its leadership, has always supported the resistance in Lebanon and Palestine. He further stressed that all those who love Palestine and Jerusalem want a Syria that holds fast to its nationalistic position as well as a Syria that implements reform and fosters progress.⁵¹

As for the civil rights of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, the issue continued to be governed by political disputes in line with the traditional positions of the different political parties. It is always accompanied with arousing the fear of naturalization of the Palestinians in Lebanon. Some officials called for granting the Palestinians their civil rights including Social Affairs Minister Wa'il Abu Fa'ur,⁵² Prime Minister Najib Mikati⁵³ and al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah MP 'Imad al-Hout.⁵⁴

Others, however, focused on warning against the dangers of naturalization of the Palestinians, such as Samir Geagea, the leader of Lebanese Forces,⁵⁵ and Amine Gemayel, the leader of the Lebanese Social Democratic Party (*al-Kataeb*).⁵⁶

In line with the approval by the Lebanese Parliament of the motion to amend the Social Security Law on 24/8/2010, the Director-General of the Social Security National Fund (SSNF), Muhammad Karaki, released the informational memorandum number 437 on 23/5/2011. The memorandum provides that Palestinian refugees working in Lebanon and registered at the Directorate of Political and Refugee Affairs (DPRA) of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities are subject to the provisions and benefits of Lebanese Social Security Law, End of Service Indemnity Branch, as of 2/9/2010.⁵⁷

On 22/2/2012, Labor Minister Charbel Nahhas issued decision number 26 by the virtue of which the Palestinian refugees registered at the DPRA of the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, can obtain work permits valid for three years without requiring an employment contract. In addition, Palestinians would be able to practice professions previously held exclusively by Lebanese citizens, although a number of professions remained off limits.⁵⁸

On 13/2/2012, the Ministry of Interior launched the DPRA Guide and the Palestinian Refugees Documents Computerized Archiving Process in order to clarify and facilitate transactions associated with the personal status of the Palestinian refugees. It also announced the beginning of a process of archiving all records and documents of the DPRA to avoid their loss and preserve their content.⁵⁹

Regarding the health of the Palestinian refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) agreed with the Lebanese Ministry of Health in March 2011 that it would ensure that medicine for incurable diseases and cancer drugs would be provided to Palestinian patients with price reduction of 63%.⁶⁰

On 28/10/2011, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman signed the first batch of nationality withdrawal decrees from people who had acquired Lebanese nationality, but it was later discovered that they did not deserve it according to the State Consultative Council. The Lebanese daily *Assafir* mentioned that the first batch included around 180 people, mostly Palestinians who were shown to be still registered with UNRWA, and this is contrary to the provisions of the constitution, especially its preamble which rejects any form of naturalization.⁶¹

Lebanon made a positive step towards the recognition of the Palestinian state as the government decided in its 10/8/2011 session on the beginning of implementation of the ministerial decision number 2 of 27/11/2008, which provides for the establishment of diplomatic relations with the state of Palestine.⁶² On 17/8/2011, Prime Minister Mikati and Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas inaugurated the Palestinian embassy in Beirut.⁶³ In addition, President Suleiman showed support for the Palestinian bid for statehood in his speech before the UNGA in New York on 21/9/2011.⁶⁴

As a result of the Lebanese recognition of the state of Palestine and the establishment of diplomatic relations with it, the Lebanese government issued a directive demanding all public administrations and institutions and municipalities to adopt PA documents related to issues of personal status,⁶⁵ with the continued adoption of documents issued by the DPRA and any other documents adopted previously.⁶⁶

The Palestinian Situation in Lebanon

Fatah held its second conference on 9/10/2011 to elect its new leadership in Lebanon. The conference ended with the election of 15 members to the movement’s leadership in Lebanon.⁶⁷ Ref‘at Shana‘a was elected as “*Amin Sir al-Iqlim*,” i.e., the secretary of Fatah’s civilian organizations in Lebanon, while Mahmud al-Assadi was elected as his deputy, Munzer Hamzeh became central finance officer, Abu Iyad Shaalan Secretary-General of Popular Committees, Hussein Fayyad became head of the militia, and Youssef Zamzam took stewardship of recruitment and organization.⁶⁸ Fathi Abu al-‘Ardat was appointed as “*Amin Sir Qiyadat al-Saha*,” i.e., Fatah’s secretary in Lebanon.

Apparently, Fatah witnessed internal debate regarding the merger of the military units and formations within the framework of a “civil and social police.” Fatah leader, Munir al-Maqdah explained that Fatah’s core problem would be the fate of some seven thousand members, cadres, officers and chiefs of staff and how these would be accommodated.⁶⁹ In late March 2012, Fatah Leader Mahmud ‘Abbas, endorsed the integration of all military and security institutions within the Palestinian National Security Forces headed by Brigadier-General Subhi Abu ‘Arab, who was charged with the final restructuring of the forces.⁷⁰

The Hamas representative in Lebanon, ‘Ali Barakah, called on the Palestinian factions to facilitate the establishment of a unified political frame of reference in Lebanon which would undertake dialogue with the Lebanese government and the involved local and international sides while supervising security and people’s committees in the refugee camps and works on addressing all suspended issues to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people in Lebanon.⁷¹ Barakah also asserted that tackling the Palestinian issue solely from a security perspective is wrong and does not help resolve the Palestinian predicament in Lebanon.⁷²

On the security level, the situation in ‘Ein al-Hilweh came to the fore after an escalation of sporadic security incidents within the camp. On 14/12/2011, Ashraf al-Qaderi, one of the bodyguards of Palestinian Armed Struggle Chief, Mahmud ‘Issa, who goes by the nom de guerre of al-Lino, was killed.⁷³ On 18/12/2011 another bodyguard of al-Lino, the Palestinian ‘Amer Fostoq, was also killed.⁷⁴ PLO factions, the Islamic forces and the coalition of the Palestinian forces in Lebanon condemned the assassinations and all forms of tension in ‘Ein al-Hilweh. All parties stressed the importance of uncovering the perpetrators and holding them accountable to prevent any side from exploiting the camp in agendas which ultimately serve only Israel.⁷⁵

The situation in the Palestinian refugee camps triggered concern among different Lebanese movements and parties that voiced worries that incidents in the camps could be exploited by actors with local and regional agendas. Such positions were expressed in the statements of General Ashraf Rifi, the Internal Security Forces (ISF) Director-General,⁷⁶ Nawfal Daou, the member of the March 14 Secretariat General,⁷⁷ Sami Gemayel, al-Kataeb MP⁷⁸ and Samir Geagea, the leader of the Lebanese Forces.⁷⁹

After the arrest of six members of the “terrorist network” which included two soldiers from the Lebanese army, and the escape of its head, Toufic Taha to ‘Ein al-Hilweh camp, Geagea demanded the removal of all weapons inside and outside the refugee camps, even saying that if it was necessary, the country would take drastic action, as it did in Nahr al-Bared in 2007. In an interview with Voice of Lebanon Radio, Geagea called on the Lebanese government to do whatever it takes to bring to court those in charge of the “terrorist network.”⁸⁰ Geagea’s talk about a “new Nahr al-Bared” was a provocation to all Palestinian forces and some Lebanese movements, especially given that the Palestinians had paid for the Nahr al-Bared tragedy without originally being its perpetrators.

‘Azzam al-Ahmad, the member of Fatah Central Committee who is in charge of the Palestinian file in Lebanon, responded to Geagea’s calls. He said that the problem is not with the Palestinian refugee camp since it is well known that the cell included members of the Lebanese army, other Lebanese members and only one Palestinian.⁸¹

Lebanon and Israel

On 15/5/2011, the Palestinian situation in Lebanon witnessed a significant development when the Return to Palestine March was organized to commemorate the 63rd anniversary of *Nakbah* Day. The march headed to the Palestinian borders at Maroun al-Ras with the participation of more than 45 thousand Palestinians from different Lebanese regions.⁸² Israeli soldiers shot at the protesters when they approached the barbed-wire fence, 112 participants were wounded and 10 killed.⁸³ Hizbullah and other pro-resistance movements seemed to back the march which was also supported by the Syrian government, possibly in an attempt to relieve the pressure being exerted on the Assad regime and shift the focus to the Israeli enemy. The Palestinians in general enthusiastically supported the marches towards Palestine as a way to activate the issue of the refugees and alert the world to their plight.

Following the Maroun al-Ras massacre, various Lebanese sides denounced the assault and the Lebanese permanent mission in New York filed a complaint against Israel before the UN Security Council. Lebanon stated that the aggression “constituted an act of hostility and stresses again the violation of the Lebanese sovereignty by Israel and its disregard of the U.N. resolutions.”⁸⁴ Hizbullah hailed the Palestinians for their sacrifices, whether in Maroun al-Ras, occupied Palestine or the occupied Golan, and it condemned Israeli barbarism.⁸⁵ For its part, al-Jama‘ah al-Islamiyyah issued a statement stressing that the blood which flowed on the borders of Palestine had foiled all plots being prepared to abolish the right of return.⁸⁶

The *Naksah* anniversary also witnessed preparations to organize a march similar to that on *Nakbah* day. However, the Israeli massacre in Maroun al-Ras was a major factor in the decision to cancel the Return to Palestine March II. The Lebanese army confirmed its rejection for such marches on the borders and declared the border region a military zone.⁸⁷

Escalating Israeli rhetoric and threats against Hizbullah and Lebanon continued during 2011 especially after the discovery of gas fields in the Mediterranean. In face of these threats, Lebanese President Michel Suleiman called for defending Lebanese sovereignty and natural wealth including the gas and oil fields discovered off the Lebanese coast.⁸⁸ In response to Netanyahu's threats to strike Lebanon, President Suleiman said that despite Lebanon's lack of military and financial support of the type enjoyed by Israel, Lebanon was the only country which had defeated Israel militarily.⁸⁹

In retaliation to the Israeli threats to reoccupy Lebanon, Nasrallah assured that if Israel declared war on Lebanon, resistance fighters would be ready to liberate the Galilee in the north of occupied Palestine.⁹⁰ He also said that should Israel decide to launch a war, it would start from Tel Aviv rather than northern settlements, adding that the surprises prepared by the resistance would change the face of the region.⁹¹ Nasrallah also warned that Israel and anyone else who tried to damage Lebanese infrastructure would only bring damage upon their own infrastructure. He affirmed that Lebanon is capable of striking back and also able to protect the oil companies that would drill for oil and gas off the Lebanese coast.⁹²

Israel Defense, the Hebrew magazine specialized in military and security affairs, mentioned that the special military units in Hizbullah were conducting exercises which simulate the use of widespread long-range missiles that party has. The magazine added that the fighters were preparing launch pads with missiles targeted at Israel. It also said that among other things, Hizbullah wanted to set missiles in these points which cover a range of 400 km.⁹³ Additionally, *Yedioth Ahronoth* mentioned that Hizbullah was preparing for the post-Assad era by transferring weapons from Syria to Lebanon in anticipation of the fall of the Assad regime and the halt of the arms supply to Hizbullah.⁹⁴

On the security level, the Hizbullah secretary-general stated that the party's counter-espionage unit had detected three cases of collaboration with hostile intelligence within the party. He also divulged that two of the detainees were collaborators with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).⁹⁵

As for field developments, the Israeli army announced on 29/11/2011 that two Katyusha rockets had been fired at the western Galilee from Lebanon. *Yedioth Ahronoth* said on its website that the Israeli army Northern Command had been placed on high alert following the incident. The military stressed that Israel held

the Lebanese government responsible for the incident. A military spokesperson reported that the military had responded with artillery fire on Lebanon. A group calling itself ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam Brigades—Al-Jihad Base claimed responsibility for firing the rockets.⁹⁶

Overall, there is no sign of an imminent Israeli attack on south Lebanon. Nor are there any signs that Hizbullah wants to wage a war against Israel. However, the possibilities of escalation on the borders remain intact especially with the developments of the situation in Syria and its possible repercussions within Lebanon.

5. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Countries

a. The Stance on Peace Settlement

The Gulf countries’ approach to the peace settlement file still supports bilateral negotiations and the PA’s policies; the approach remains “we agree to what the Palestinians agree.” Thus, there were no new developments in 2011 in this respect, with the exception of the Qatari stance which will be tackled in detail because of its importance.

It seemed that the Gulf countries were unaware of the dire need for new alternatives concerning negotiations with the Israelis, which are at a dead end. This is due to three factors:

First: The apparent calm and stability in the Palestinian interior. Indeed, the Palestinian territories have not witnessed escalation since the collapse of the statehood bid in the UN Security Council, otherwise it would have impacted the overall Arab approach to the peace settlement file.

Second: Developments of the Arab strategic environment have moved the epicenter of the Arab system (at least temporarily) to the Gulf region. Consequently Gulf countries used the Arab League as mechanism to pass their preferred policies without embarrassment and without assuming direct responsibility for representing Arab popular opinion.

Third: Gulf countries, especially the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), were engaged with the uprisings in Yemen and Bahrain as well as with Syrian. They made tireless efforts to secure Arab and international resolutions which undermine the Assad regime and push towards Arab and international military intervention in Syria. Therefore, less energy was afforded to Palestinian- related files.

b. Relations Between the Gulf Countries and the Palestinians

A year prior to the outbreak of the Arab Spring, in early 2010, relations between the Gulf countries and Hamas witnessed some positive developments (cold relations had prevailed since the collapse of the Mecca Agreement). The KSA agreed to receive Khalid Mish'al in early 2010. Mish'al was conducting an Arab tour along with several Hamas leaders, and it included visits to the Gulf states of the UAE, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain. The relative Saudi openness to Hamas came when the KSA realized that persistence in isolating Hamas (after Cairo has started building the steel wall) might lead to the explosion of the Palestinian situation with repercussions that reach across the region, not only Egypt. It also recognized that the complex issues facing the Arab world dictated that Palestinian reconciliation was in need of Arab support not limited to Egypt. The Gulf, KSA in particular, reflected the Gulf leaders' keenness on controlling Hamas' relationship with Iran and blocking the ability of the latter from undertaking what they perceive as the "manipulating" of the Palestinian situation.

In the context of repositioning Gulf policy after the Arab Spring, certain developments will effectively determine the nature of relations between Hamas and the Gulf states. The most important among these are:

1. The deterioration of Iran's regional role which is one of the determinants of the approach of the Gulf countries, especially KSA, to relations with Hamas. This deterioration is mainly a result of the situation in Syria. Moreover, Hamas' noninvolvement in supporting the Syrian regime, in contrast to the vocal support of Hizbullah and its secretary-general, caused Iran to question its future relationship with the movement. This means that Iran's special relations with Hamas before the Arab Spring, which motivated the Gulf states to urge Hamas to adjust its relations with Iran, have entered a grey area. This development might encourage the Gulf states to reach out to Hamas without prior concerns about the movement and its relations.

2. The MB Movements enjoy wide influence and advanced political positions in the "new Middle East," and it is difficult to predict whether or not the Gulf countries approach to Hamas will be affected by the aggressiveness and sensitivity those regimes have for the MB. Therefore, on one hand the Gulf countries will continue to hold cautious position towards Hamas, but on the other hand, the establishment of regimes affiliated with the MB, especially in a pivotal country

like Egypt, might encourage Gulf countries to pursue more positive stances towards Hamas. In addition, the Palestinian issue could be on the verge of explosion as a result of Israeli practices and the deterioration of the prospects of peace, and this might mitigate KSA's negative stance towards Hamas. Moreover, assuming an effective role in the Palestinian file requires maintaining a certain level of relations with a major Palestinian faction like Hamas, especially in light of the continued decline of Fatah in the Palestinian arena. Additionally, it requires Hamas to match words with actions by practicing non-interference in the internal affairs of countries and by distancing itself from the new alliances that arise in the region.

3. Gulf states strategic choice to proceed with peace settlement means supporting the pro-peace settlement camp while putting limits on relations with the resistance movements, including Hamas. This means that mutual relations will be subject to Hamas' stances, how it will reposition itself in light of new facts, developments in Palestinian reconciliation, the nature of the relationship with the new actors after the political reemergence of the MB, and the changing nature of the Arab regimes.

c. Qatar

1. The Stance on Peace Settlement

The Arab Spring has given Qatar opportunities to come to the fore of the Arab diplomatic scene. Doha strongly sought to benefit from the new Arab climate using its huge diplomatic and financial capabilities alongside its famous media tool (Al Jazeera news network) to enhance its role and regional status in different files, primarily mainly Libya after the revolution, then Syria and the Palestinian issue.

Qatar's diplomacy, which was always controversial because of its pragmatic approach, has given the state more freedom to work on different files simultaneously. Thus, it was able, until recently, to combine its support of the peace process with media and financial support of Hamas, while at the same time it maintained relations with Israel in contravention to the position of the GCC vis-à-vis normalization with Israel. Strikingly, Qatar maintained distinguished relations with both Damascus and Tehran!

Qatari diplomacy since the outbreak of the Syrian revolution has been characterised by the total severance of relations with the Syrian regime. The Qataris also tried to fill the vacuum created by absents this regime, by assuming a greater regional role, achieved by being a stronger presence on the Palestinian track, particularly the peace settlement.

Some sides believe that Qatar's involvement in the peace settlement file would further complicate the attempts to crystallize a new Palestinian strategy. This is mainly because Qatari diplomacy will not depart from the strategic position of the moderate Arab camp. Usually quoted in this respect are the statements of the Qatari Prime Minister Hamad Bin Jassim, in January 2012 during his meeting with the members of the SNC in Cairo where he said that Hamas had ended as an armed resistance movement.⁹⁷ This was strongly denied by Hamas MP in the PLC, Isma'il al-Ashqar.⁹⁸ Bin Jassim's declarations are considered to reflect the Qatari will to push Hamas towards moderation and peace settlement with Israel.

It might be difficult at this early stage to envisage the repercussions of this issue or speculate on the future policies of Qatar towards the Palestinians mainly because of the pragmatism that characterizes Qatari foreign policy and the difficulty of predicting a greater Qatari role regarding the peace settlement. The matter becomes more intricate in light of the fragility of the Palestinian interior and the difficult financial situation.

It should be noted here that Qatari diplomacy, in coordination with Turkey, played a role in urging Hamas to hasten the exit of its political figures from Damascus in December 2011 and January 2012.⁹⁹ Moreover, this diplomacy had a role in the mediation between Hamas and Jordan as the preliminary agreement on Mish'al's visit to Amman was achieved during King 'Abdullah II's visit to Qatar and his meeting with Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Prince of Qatar. Indeed, Qatar was insistent on an active role so it would be part of the solution while Jordan's King welcomed Hamas' return and it was agreed to set a specific date for the visit.

One of the indicators of the revival of the relations between Jordan and Hamas was the announcement that King 'Abdullah II had called Mish'al's family residing in Amman to check on his sick mother.¹⁰⁰ Following this announcement, Jordanian newspapers mentioned that Mish'al would visit Jordan accompanied by Qatari Crown Prince Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani, and that was after Mish'al had

called Jordanian Prime Minister-Designate, ‘Awn al-Khasawneh, to congratulate him on the formation of the government.¹⁰¹ However, the visit was postponed more than once as the sides fixed an appointment which suited Jordan, Qatar and Hamas.¹⁰²

On 29/1/2012, the visit was conducted and the Jordanian King met with the Qatari Crown Prince and Khalid Mish‘al and his accompanying delegation in Amman. During the meeting, there was a review of recent developments on the Palestinian scene and King ‘Abdullah II stressed Jordan’s support for the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to accomplish their aspiration and establish a Palestinian state on Palestinian soil, a high priority for Jordan. For his part, Khalid Mish‘al stated that the meeting had been a chance to express Hamas’ commitment to Jordan’s security, stability and interests. He also said that the movement respected the framework of the political relationship which, like all human relations, is a matter of mutual consent. Mish‘al added that Hamas rejected naturalization and the idea of alternative homeland, and insists on the restoration of full Palestinian rights so Palestine would be Palestine, Jordan would be Jordan, the Palestinian state would be the Palestinian state and the Jordanian state would be the Jordanian state.¹⁰³

The delegation accompanying Mish‘al included Deputy Head of the Hamas Political Bureau, Musa Abu Marzuq, besides the Bureau members Sami Khatir, Muhammad Nazzal, ‘Izzat al-Rishq and Muhammad Nasr. On the Jordanian side, there was the Jordanian Prince Ali Bin al-Hussein, Royal Court Chief Riyadh Abu Karaki, Director of the King’s Office ‘Imad Fakhoury, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Lieutenant-General Mish‘al Muhammad Zabin.¹⁰⁴

Striking, however, was the absence of the General Intelligence Department (GID) chief from this meeting while these relations were previously organized through the GID. Such an absence might reflect the discontent of some sides in the GID with the visit, whereas the presence of the army chief conveyed a message from the King stressing his will to complete the visit and his control over decision-making in the country.

In the same context, at the opening session of the International Conference on Jerusalem, hosted by Qatar, on 26–27/2/2012, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani submitted a proposal aimed at requesting the Security Council “to adopt a

resolution setting up an international commission of inquiry that would investigate all the actions taken by Israel since the 1967 occupation of Arab Jerusalem to obliterate its Islamic and Arabic identities.” This call was met with immediate approval from President Mahmud ‘Abbas in the presence of Hamas delegation and tens of Palestinian figures. It was also commended by the Arab League Secretary-General Nabil al-‘Arabi and Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu, the Secretary-General of the OIC.¹⁰⁵

This call appeared like an attempt by Sheikh Hamad (as the head of the Arab Summit) to activate the implementation of the resolution of the Sirte Summit regarding Jerusalem, which had been postponed for the second year in light of the developments of the Arab Spring. However, there is no reason to believe that the strategy suggested by Sheikh Hamad for protecting Jerusalem will face a different fate from that which is faced by supporting events and the funds of *al-Aqsa* and *al-Intifadah* which remain almost empty in light of the state of weakness and fragmentation in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

2. Qatari-Palestinian Relations

One of the most important developments of the Arab approach to Palestinian reconciliation was the signing of a new agreement between Mahmud ‘Abbas of Fatah and Khalid Mish‘al of Hamas. The agreement, the Doha Declaration, was signed in Qatar on 6/2/2012 under the auspices of the Qatari Prince, and it provided for the formation of a national unity government headed by ‘Abbas. The agreement sparked *controversy* among Palestinians and Arabs and suspicions regarding the possibility of its implementation. However, the following factors mark the importance of the agreement:

First: The agreement is tantamount to a declaration that Qatar has become involved in Palestinian reconciliation which had been almost monopolized by Egypt.

Second: The signing of such an agreement in Qatar under the auspices of the Qatari Prince with the efforts of the Crown Prince and the follow up by the prime minister means the continuation of distinguished relations between Hamas and Doha. At the same time, it means the end of the disagreement between Qatar and the PA after different disputes which witnessed mutual criticism and reached a peak after Al Jazeera published internal documents from the Israel-Palestine negotiations “The Palestine Papers,” in January 2011.

Worthy of mention is that Qatar is considered today one of the major supporters of the PA. A report issued by the Arab League Secretariat in June 2011 revealed that Qatar had given around \$76 million in aid for the PA. The report also showed that Qatar contributed to the Palestinian budget by \$15.86 million, the amount decided at the Beirut Summit of 2002, then increased by \$1 million. The report also revealed Qatari support for the Palestinian economy by exempting all Palestinian exports to Qatar from customs duty, making Qatar the 13th Arab country to implement such a decision.¹⁰⁶

Third: Developments of Normalization

Since early 2011, changes in the Arab world posed important questions regarding the normalization of Arab relations with Israel. Indeed, there are some signs showing that after the relative victory of the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen and their continuation in other countries, there is popular consensus to reject all forms of normalization with Israel, and thus any prospects for it are unlikely.

The Egyptian gas export to Israel was among the first corruption issues posed, perhaps even before the ouster of President Mubarak. In fact, Egyptian officials still deal with the issue as one of corruption, and not from a political perspective. Nonetheless, there was a major shift in the popular approach from a mere rejection to practical prevention, when the pipeline supplying natural gas from Egypt to Israel was blown up 13 times throughout 2011 and until 5/3/2012. It is widely believed that these bombings were conducted by popular and national forces opposing normalization with Israel.

In addition, reconsidering the gas treaty is considered one of the few issues to have garnered consensus among all political forces and parties in Egypt. It seemed that normalization with Israel cannot be accepted by any political movement, even if all movements declared their “respect” for the Camp David Accords, vowing to deal with it through constitutional methods. This was the position of the Renaissance Party or *Nahda* in Tunisia which won the most seats in parliamentary elections and which also stressed that the government to be formed by the party would cancel the treaties signed with Israel by the regime

of Zein al-Abidine Ben Ali.¹⁰⁷ In addition, Mustafa ‘Abdul Jalil, the chairman of the National Transitional Council of Libya (NTC), denied any attempts by the council to normalize relations with Israel.¹⁰⁸

The possibilities for cooperation between Israel and the Arab regimes that have not witnessed uprisings have declined, and the continuation of normalization for those that have already signed treaties with Israel has become more difficult. This is due to the Arab Spring which boosted the relevance of the popular will, even in countries witnessing limited popular action, in addition to Israel’s rejection for the provisions of the Arab Peace Initiative that promise full normalization with Israel should it withdraw from all the lands it occupied in 1967.

Despite the growing atmosphere of animosity against Israel in the Arab world, the volume of trade between Jordan and Israel remains striking. According to Israeli statistics, it improved by 36.6% in 2011 as compared to 2010 when the Israeli exports to Jordan increased from \$185.6 million in 2010 to \$209.3 million in 2011, a 12.8% increase. Israeli imports from Jordan increased from \$94.1 million in 2010 to \$172.9 million in 2011, an 83.7% increase (see table 1/3).

However, Jordanian statistics provide different figures showing that Jordanian exports to Israel in 2011 amounted to Jordanian Dinars (JOD) 53.2 million (\$75.1 million) compared to JOD 64.2 million (\$90.7 million) in 2010, a 17% decrease. Statistics also showed an increase in the volume of Jordanian imports from Israel by 8% in 2011, where it amounted to JOD 68.2 million (\$96.3 million) compared to JOD 63.2 million (\$89.3 million) in 2010. This means that the volume of trade between the two countries decreased from JOD 127.4 million (approximately \$180 million) in 2010 to JOD 121.4 million (\$171.4 million) in 2011 by 5% (see table 1/3).

In fact, it is not possible to reach clear conclusions regarding the disparity between the Jordanian and Israeli statistics but it is clear that the Israeli figures show a lower decline in the volume of trade.

Table 1/3: Volume of Trade Between Jordan and Israel According to Jordanian and Israeli Statistics 2010–2011 (\$ million)¹⁰⁹

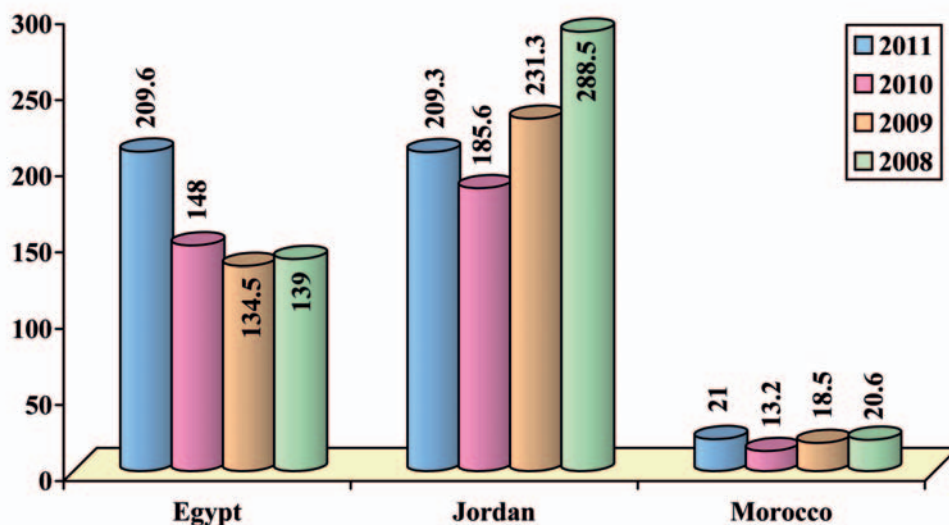
Year	Jordan's exports to Israel		Jordan's imports from Israel		Trade volume	
	Jordanian statistics	Israeli statistics	Jordanian statistics	Israeli statistics	Jordanian statistics	Israeli statistics
2010	90.7	94.1	89.3	185.6	180	279.7
2011	75.1	172.9	96.3	209.3	171.4	382.2

As for Egypt, the indicators of decline in normalization are not completely consistent with the widespread popular antagonism towards Israel. Thus, notwithstanding the decline in volume of trade between Egypt and Israel by 22.9% in 2011 compared to 2010, the volume of Israeli exports to Egypt increased from \$148 million in 2010 to \$209.6 million in 2011, a 41.6% increase. However, according to Israeli figures, Israeli imports from Egypt declined significantly from \$355.1 million in 2010 to \$178.5 million in 2011, a 49.7% decrease.¹¹⁰

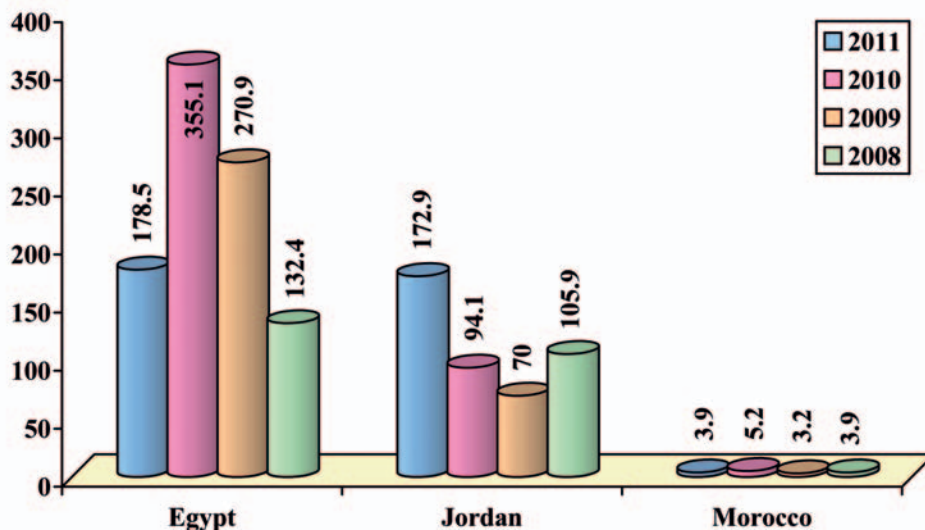
Table 2/3: Israeli Exports and Imports to/ from Some Arab Countries 2008–2011 (\$ million)¹¹¹

Country	Israeli exports to:				Israeli imports from:			
	2011	2010	2009	2008	2011	2010	2009	2008
Egypt	209.6	148	134.5	139	178.5	355.1	270.9	132.4
Jordan	209.3	185.6	231.3	288.5	172.9	94.1	70	105.9
Morocco	21	13.2	18.5	20.6	3.9	5.2	3.2	3.9

Israeli Exports to Some Arab Countries 2008–2011 (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from Some Arab Countries 2008–2011 (\$ million)



Fourth: The Arab Public's Position

1. The Masses Return as Pivotal Actor

The uprisings of 2011 helped boost a strategic actor which was previously absent, or absented, from the Arab political scene. This actor is the Arab people who were able to rediscover their ability to act and be influential, whether they succeeded in creating their own model of the Arab Spring or they only took to the streets to demand reform and change.

This development was immediately reflected in Arab foreign policies which, during the first months of 2011, sought to appease the interior.¹¹² This transformation, despite its positive connotations, requires more pressure to make strategic shifts in the vision of foreign policy decision makers, because these shifts are the result of interplay of a number of variables.

The absence of a common agenda for the popular forces, as manifested in the Egyptian case in particular, reduced the possibility for such shifts and even had a negative impact. For example, during the crisis of the killing of the Egyptian soldiers on the borders in August 2011, a serious public discussion took place for a while regarding the reformulation of security arrangements under the Camp David Accords. This debate was likely to be turned into an urgent popular demand were it not for the division of the political forces in this regard and the repercussions of the attack on the Israeli embassy in Cairo which diverted attention away from the main issue and contributed, at least partially, to deferring the discussion on this matter.

Nonetheless, the growing role of the political street indicates the harbingers of the formation of popular policies separate from official Arab policies and parallel to them. This might transfer the Palestinian issue from the hands of the regimes and their conservative strategy to the hands of the peoples and their strategy of seeking victory, freedom and popular pressure to achieve interests and circumvent outside pressures.¹¹³ One of the examples of popular political practices was the campaign launched by some Facebook activists after the Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal al-Ganzouri declined to receive Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah during his visit to Egypt in December 2011. The campaign, entitled "We will not let you down like al-Ganzouri government did," called for a popular reception for Haniyyah at Cairo airport during his second visit to Egypt on 9/1/2012,¹¹⁴ and received a great response.

2. The Dilemma of the Increase of Traditional Actors and Their Fragmentation

In the new Arab environment, the final political decision is no longer monopolized by a limited number of ruling elites or even the head of the state. In the coming stage, external political actors will have to deal with a large number of internal actors who do not necessarily share homogeneous visions.¹¹⁵ Although this is natural in democratic systems, it is a problem in countries which undergo their first battle to establish pluralistic democracies.

Under a democratic system, the multiplicity of visions is a guarantee of making decisions that are closer to the national interest. This is because multiplicity is governed by constants to which all actors adhere. However, in light of the uncertainty in the region, this diversity might turn into a bomb that might explode in the form of covert or overt political conflict. Ultimately, it will lead either to maintaining the policies of former regimes and deferring the discussion of such files to the post-transition phase until the prevalence of stability in the region or it could lead to confused decisions and statements which might cause political crises with external actors.

The likeliness of the second scenario is enhanced in the case of the spread of divisions among political forces and their extension beyond the transitional phase without reaching societal consensus on specific a charter that defines the ceiling of national interest. In the Egyptian case, political schism in 2011 was no more limited to traditional competition between liberal, national, Islamic and leftist currents, but it rather extended into one current, thus dividing it into two parties, one closer to pragmatism and moderation and another closer to revolutionary radicalism.

The Palestinian issue was always one of the most important topics of political discussion and action and one of the most effective means often used by most, if not all, movements to oppose the former Egyptian regime and embarrass it. Thus, it was only natural for political parties to use this issue and Egyptian-Israeli relations in their publicity campaigns. This lesson was well understood by presidential candidates and it seems that cancelling Egypt's gas deal with Israel and ending the siege of GS were two common themes in their statements

The most dangerous aspects of this transformation are the possible attempts of radical movements to challenge moderate ones or to inflame the situation in

the Sinai Peninsula near the border with GS and Israel thus embroiling Egypt in ill-timed confusion.

As a matter of fact, following the Eilat attacks, which were coordinated between Palestinian and Egyptian groups, Israel devised a new plan to secure the Egyptian borders that were known after the operation as the “threat borders.”¹¹⁶ Additionally, Israeli research centers conducted different strategic assessments that were presented to the Israeli security and defense leaders, in which scenarios were presented regarding possible options to deal with such threats.¹¹⁷

3. Greater Role for al-Azhar and the Popular Diplomacy

The scene after the Egyptian revolution clearly showed that al-Azhar al-Sharif is seeking to exercise a greater political and national role than the one it had assumed before the revolution. Regardless of the debate in Egypt and in the corridors of al-Azhar concerning this role, the return of al-Azhar to serve the nation’s interests means opening new horizon for institutionalizing popular diplomatic work and employing its offices and imams around the world to activate popular diplomacy that would serve the Palestinian issue. More important is employing the religious status of al-Azhar in the minds of broad sectors of the Arab and Islamic world to mobilize efforts and public opinion behind the causes it supports, especially as al-Azhar heads towards achieving more independence in its decisions and resource management after the Egyptian revolution.

The most notable aspect of al-Azhar’s “return” is its stance regarding the Palestinian issue and Egyptian-Israeli relations. The Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayyib launched an international campaign, in the presence of the PA Mufti Muhammad Hussein, to break the siege on Jerusalem. The campaign aimed at studying the features of the Judaization plan targeted at swallowing up all Jerusalem and eradicating its Arab aspects, cultural symbols, historical institutions, the legal rights of its people, and more importantly, started to put together an alternative plan to methodically protect the holy city based on realistic strategy.¹¹⁸

Al-Azhar started to receive Jerusalemites in The Jerusalem Support Forum which was held in Cairo for the first time on 15/2/2012. The objective was to study their needs including the health needs, movement and work needs of all Arabs in Jerusalem; children’s needs regarding books, schools and education, in addition to the needs of the youths for sports clubs, social institutions and special care in order to provide them with decent living.¹¹⁹

Al-Azhar also sponsored the initiative called the Fund for Dignity and Pride which is dedicated to the Palestinians. It also sponsored Sheikh Muhammad Hassan's initiative suggesting dispensing with American aid. Isma'il Haniyyah chose al-Azhar Mosque for its symbolism to address public opinion in the presence of thousands of Egyptians who gathered to receive him during his visit to Egypt in February 2012.

4. The Future of Partnership with the New Palestinian Movements

The Arab Spring cast light on essential transformations within public sphere in Egypt and the Arab region. Most notably, it highlighted the impact of social media on authoritarian regimes which have always demonstrated flexibility and ability to adapt and overcome the most daunting challenges they faced whether from inside the country or outside. Apart from determining the exact impact of this tool, which is still subject to study and research, there is no argument over the scope of freedom granted by social media to organize work and share experiences.

An example of this role is represented in the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, where virtual groups active on the Internet employed these media to find networks for communication. These networks transcended traditional barriers of work; party regulations and governmental censorship. Ultimately, they were able, through effective mechanisms, to mobilize society towards revolution.

The prototype developed by Marc Lynch, in a study entitled "After Egypt: The Limits and Promise of Online Opportunities Challenges to the Authoritarian Arab State,"¹²⁰ considers the five most important impacts of the new social media: individual competencies (politicization), relationships between groups (networking between groups), collective web action, the regime's policies against online activism, and the ability to mobilize other media on the internet and in reality. Despite the fact that these new tools open broad horizons of change for political work, there are some weaknesses. For, although they are advanced tools, they are still tools whose effectiveness depends on the objectives and stances of their users in addition to users' ability to employ the tools in an influential manner. This means that the human factor remains the most influential in this respect. This partially interprets the disparity in popular response to the events regardless of their gravity. It also explains the difference between the ability of the actors to mobilize for

protests and their ability to promote a specific political program which deals with the challenges of post-regime change.¹²¹

Social media, moreover, assumed a distinguished role in covering the events of the revolutions and in some cases they were the main source supplying different media outlets with information, pictures, video and audio recordings of the events which could not be reached by traditional press coverage. This development transfers the individual from being a receiver to an active user of social media, including the traditional tools like television and press. Indeed, we have witnessed the birth of citizen journalism which transformed the communication process from the traditional linear pattern between a sender and a receiver to circular pattern in which different sides exercise the role of the sender and receiver and, perhaps, the maker of the event.

The aforementioned developments open new horizons for the popular role in the Palestinian issue. In light of expansion of the political street to include the wider public of the satellite channels and social networks, and in light of the continued popular concern about the Palestinian issue, it is likely that those interested would develop cross-border links and networks forming blocs supportive of the Palestinian issue in every Arab country. The harbingers of these blocs are seen in the forces of the Arab Spring, which are joined by many Arab revolutionary forces and which originally aimed to support revolutionary forces fighting dictatorships and autocracies.¹²²

Although we cannot be certain about the ability of these networks to influence interactions inside Palestine, this is an important development in popular common Arab work. It transcends the oppression of the regimes and the barriers of working on the ground and provides an important method for exchanging experience between Arab and Palestinian revolutionary forces regarding organizing protests. At the same time, it can be turned into a means for promoting specific stances agreed upon by the Palestinians and their Arab partners, thus enhancing the former's position and providing it with the Arab momentum that it has always missed.

Conclusion

The Arab Spring has not blossomed in Palestine yet. However, the change in the strategic environment surrounding Israel, together with the establishment of Arab regimes with national and Islamic spirits reflecting the popular will, heralds a change in the conflict equation and its balances. Thus, should the changes succeed; this would mean the creation of an environment supportive of the Palestinian issue and more sympathetic to the resistance movements and more intransigent about the peace process.

The countries which have witnessed change will be, for the foreseeable future, busy with their internal affairs and establishing their constitutional and institutional stability. This might mean a distraction from the Palestinian issue, albeit temporarily. In addition, the new regimes will seek to assure the West that their Islamic and national frame of reference does not necessarily mean entering conflicts and wars with the West nor does it mean rushing into a confrontation with Israel. Yet, at the same time, it might adopt more positive policies towards Palestine and towards putting the Palestinian house in order, encouraging resistance forces to join the PLO and alleviate the siege of GS.

The changes in the Arab world have affected the reformulation of previously established alliances. Hence, the axes of moderation and resistance are no longer present the way they used to be. Perhaps, if the changes in Egypt succeed, the country will play a pioneer role in encouraging the formation of a new Arab system with an Islamic, Arab and national frame of reference. The situation in Syria remains a source of concern as there are fears the crisis there might continue for a long period, and foreign powers will be able to trigger ethnic and sectarian conflict and push the country towards fragmentation before Syrian national forces are able to take control and push towards a genuine process of reform and change.

The national and Islamic Palestinian movements might benefit from the change in the Arab world by conducting self-criticism and putting the Palestinian house and the PLO in order. It can also build on the change to reconstruct the institutions and activate their role in a way that serves the national project, benefits from the capacities of the youth and independent forces and accommodates the Islamic, Arab and human dimensions of the Palestinian issue.

Endnotes

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Chapter Four

The Palestinian Issue and the Muslim World

The Palestinian Issue and the Muslim World

Introduction

Palestine remains at the forefront of the news preoccupying the Muslim world. In 2011, the presence of the Palestinian issue on the agenda of the Muslim world crystallized during a number of events, namely: the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas, the attempt to gain UN state recognition, the prisoner swap deal (Devotion of the Free), the continued Judaization of Jerusalem, as well as the continued blockade of GS.

In this chapter, we will tackle in detail the role played by the OIC, in addition to examining the stances of two major Muslim countries with regard to the Palestinian issue; Turkey and Iran. We will also review public and official actions in Indonesia and Malaysia and Israeli economic relations with Muslim countries.

First: Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)

The OIC, over more than four decades, has operated as the second largest international organization outside the UN, comprising 57 Muslim countries. All of these states pledged “to support the struggle of the Palestinian people, who are presently under foreign occupation, and to empower them to attain their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination, and to establish their sovereign state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, while safeguarding its historic and Islamic character, and the holy places therein.”¹ Notwithstanding this, the organization continued to address the Palestinian issue in a manner disproportionate with its real power as an organization that represents a Muslim world rich in human and financial resources. In the end, it remains an official gathering reflecting the achievable common goals between regimes that differ in formations, inclinations, ideologies, potentials, interests, and priorities.

It appears that the OIC was positively influenced by the changes overtaking the region, bowing to the demands of many of its members to have a more effective role by deciding to change its name and motto. The 38th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers held in Kazakhstan’s capital Astana on

28/6/2011 adopted the decision to change the name of the organization into the “Organization of Islamic Cooperation” and approve a new motto without any essential change in its strategies of operation or general structure.

During 2011, the OIC continued its traditional support of the Palestinian issue and condemnation of Israeli aggression in Jerusalem, but its official structure kept hindering it from pursuing any effective substantial procedure to stop the constant Israeli violations against the Palestinian people and the Judaization of Islamic holy sites in Palestine. In this context, the Secretary-General of the OIC Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu slammed the Israeli authorities’ confiscation of the house of the former mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husseini, considering the move to be a flagrant violation of international law and “added that the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits occupying powers from changing the features of occupied territories and seizing private properties to create settlements.”²

At the same time, the organization supported the Palestinian move to gain full UN membership, with the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC) calling for a unified Islamic stance regarding the Palestinian issue in international forums, also raising the level of relations with Palestine to that of a state as well as inaugurating Palestinian embassies.³ This was also affirmed by the PUIC in its second session.⁴

As for the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and their possessions, the Secretary-General of the OIC said that “the continued Israeli settlement expansion in the holy city constituted an open war on the Palestinians and their legitimate rights,” and added that ongoing illegal Israeli practices aimed to isolate Jerusalem.⁵ Ihsanoğlu called for addressing international public opinion and presenting the true picture of the Palestinian issue, the suffering of the Palestinian people and rectifying the distorted image presented by the Israeli media through an exchange of media material between member states and the Palestinian media.⁶

The OIC resumed its condemnation of the Israeli siege of GS; the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) condemned the Israeli attack on the French Ship Dignity, which was one of the ships of the Freedom Flotilla 2. ISESCO considered the attack a criminal act that proved Israel’s disrespect for international law and called on the international community to force Israel to end the siege of the Palestinian people and end its disrespect of international law and “terrorist” practices.⁷

Concerning Palestinian reconciliation, the organization welcomed the signing of the national reconciliation agreement by Fatah and Hamas on 27/4/2011 under Egyptian auspices. Ihsanoğlu expressed OIC's willingness to contribute to any step that would enhance Palestinian national unity.⁸

One of the repercussions of the Arab revolutions was the decrease in OIC's financial aid to Palestine, as the value of projects carried out in Jerusalem during 2011 reached around \$6 million out of \$30 million allocated for that year, whereas it had reached around \$12 million in 2010. Bayt Mal Alqods Asharief Agency, the Arab Islamic foundation affiliated with Al-Quds Committee, borne out of the OIC, clarified that this decrease is due to the unstable political atmosphere in the Arab world that made it difficult to launch donation campaigns.⁹

Despite the change made to the OIC name and emblem, it seems that the OIC is still unable to play a role that is commensurate with its weight as the second largest international organization, outside the framework of the UN. This is not limited to the issues related to the Palestine and Jerusalem, but extends to all Islamic, political, economic and social issues. It seems that that the OIC needs more time to have a real influence on the Palestinian issue as well as other Muslim world issues.

Second: Turkey

2011 started with Turkish-Israeli relations still strained by the repercussions of the Israeli aggression against the Freedom Flotilla on 31/5/2010. Despite all efforts exerted to reach a satisfactory settlement between the two sides, Israel continued to reject Turkish demands for an apology for the incidents and lifting the siege of GS, while expressing willingness to compensate the families of the nine Turkish citizens killed in the Israeli attack. However, during the course of 2011, there were more rigorous attempts to overcome the tension between Ankara and Tel Aviv. The fact that the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi—AKP*), led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, opted for a passive stance concerning the Syrian regime, and that Turkey refrained from participating in the Freedom Flotilla 2, both enhanced the chances of reaching a solution, and hence increased the frequency of meetings between the Israelis and Turks.

There is no clear indication how far these talks reached, where each party was placing stakes on the concessions made by the other side. However, during 2011, events indicated that both parties avoided any provocative act against the other. On one hand, Erdoğan's election campaign on June 12th, which he won with 50% of the votes, did not criticize any Israeli policies, and on the other hand, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu congratulated Erdoğan by letter for his win, an excerpt reading: "My government will be happy to work with the new Turkish government on finding a resolution to all outstanding issues between our countries, in the hope of re-establishing our cooperation and renewing the spirit of friendship which has characterized the relations between our peoples for many generations."¹⁰

It was noteworthy the decision of the Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief (*İnsan Hak ve Hürriyetleri ve İnsani Yardım Vakfı—İHH*), headed by Fehmi Bülent Yildirim, that neither the Turkish Mavi Marmara (Freedom Flotilla)—nor any other Turkish ship—would participate in the Freedom Flotilla 2, whose organizers were preparing for a second campaign to break the siege of GS. The resolution to refrain from participating came after huge government pressure on the Turkish organizations that were planning to participate. Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet Daily News* reported that the "Turkish government has been discouraging the İHH through indirect channels from sailing to Gaza, indicating growing instability in Syria as the fundamental reason behind it, although the United States' pressure on Turkey to stop the flotilla is another important factor."¹¹ Turkish opposition newspaper *Radikal* mentioned that at the end of May a call between the US President Barack Obama and the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan made the latter prevent the İHH and the Mavi Marmara from participating in the Freedom Flotilla 2. The newspaper added that Washington and Ankara wish to avoid any new tension between Turkey and Israel, and that the Turkish government was now preoccupied with the situation in Syria. Nevertheless, the newspaper analysis was not free of exaggeration since Turkish attempts to pacify matters for various strategic considerations came prior to the eruption of events in Syria. Following the İHH decision not to participate, Erdoğan received a message of double congratulation from Obama: one for his win in the elections, and the second for the decision that Turkey will not participate in the Freedom Flotilla. The newspaper also referred to increased Turkish-Western cooperation, especially after establishing İzmir as the Land Force Command of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).¹²

News spread about communications and meetings between Turkish and Israeli officials aimed at agreeing phrasing for an Israeli apology to Turkey that would end the crisis and start a new phase of bilateral relations. News around these meetings intensified in the second half of August 2011 while Turkish newspaper *Milliyet* unveiled parts of the communications between Turkish and Israeli delegates. The newspaper revealed that the secret talks started nine months earlier and that the protocol they planned to sign took the form of an international agreement, not merely a statement or declaration of apology.¹³

A senior Turkish diplomatic source told *Milliyet*, also confirmed by Foreign Ministry sources, that the secret talks started in Geneva on 5/12/2010 between Turkish Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Feridun Sinirlioglu and Joseph Ciecchanover, Israel's representative on the UN panel investigating the Gaza-bound flotilla incident. The talks were resumed in New York where the two sides reached an agreement consisting of two sections relating to "compensation" and "normalization." The document also includes an Israeli apology in exchange for promoting military and economic relations. Moreover, in exchange for compensating the Turkish victims, the families of the victims would have to refrain from heading to international courts to file lawsuits against Israeli soldiers.

The "normalization" section included an apology which Turkey considered the key to solving the problem. However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu could not convince his cabinet of the phrasing of the apology and thus the document was shelved.

The newspaper recalled the secret talks between Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and Israeli Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer on 30/6/2010, followed by Turkey's dispatch of fire fighting aircrafts to the north of Palestine, both of which created an atmosphere of ease among the Israeli public. The Turkish daily also referred to the resumption of secret talks in winter 2011, after the high level Turkish-American coordination concerning the crises in Libya and Syria when Washington recommended that Israel apologize to Turkey. At that point, Erdoğan responded to US President Barack Obama's request to halt the participation of Mavi Marmara in the Freedom Flotilla 2.

On 6–8/7/2011, talks resumed between Sinirlioglu and Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Moshe Ya'alon in New York, where Netanyahu once again agreed to reach a draft agreement, including an apology, to end the crisis between the two

countries; Ankara and Washington were informed of the phrasing.¹⁴ The phrasing was again opposed in Israel's forum of top eight government ministers that convened and failed to agree to the apology.¹⁵ Netanyahu suggested that Ankara postpones issuing the report of the committee delegated to probe the incident for six months seeing as 78% of the Israeli public opposed the apology.¹⁶

On 1/9/2011, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met her Turkish counterpart Davutoğlu and suggested requesting from the UN secretary-general a month-long extension for the final presentation of the investigation committee report. In turn, Davutoğlu said Turkey was ready to wait until the end of September, provided the UN secretary-general accepted the request. Although Davutoğlu agreed, on that same day the *New York Times* newspaper leaked the UN report¹⁷ and the ready-to-be-signed protocol became history.

The Palmer Report

The Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Inquiry on the 31 May 2010 Flotilla Incident became known as the Palmer Report. The commission was formed by the Secretary-General of the UN Ban Ki-moon on 2/8/2010 and comprised of former Prime Minister of New Zealand Sir Geoffrey Palmer as its chair, former Colombian President Álvaro Uribe as vice-chair, in addition to two members: an Israeli Joseph Ciechanover and a Turkish Former Ambassador to the EU and the UK, Süleyman Özdem Sanberk.

The Palmer Report mentioned that Israel committed "an excessive reaction to the situation" but the report did not demand Tel Aviv apologize as it described the Israeli maritime siege imposed on Gaza as being both "legitimate" and compliant with the "requirements of international law."

However, the report stated that Israel "should offer payment for the benefit of the deceased and injured victims and their families" and stated that "Israel's decision to board the vessels with such substantial force at a great distance from the blockade zone and with no final warning immediately prior to the boarding was excessive and unreasonable." At the same time, it clarified that the flotilla, made up of six ships, "acted recklessly in attempting to breach the naval blockade." The report called Benjamin Netanyahu's government to issue "an appropriate statement of regret" concerning the attack and compensate the families of the nine victims killed, in addition to the injured victims.

Additionally, the report stressed that “Turkey and Israel should resume full diplomatic relations, repairing their relationship in the interests of stability in the Middle East.” It also claimed that “Israel faces a real threat to its security from militant groups in Gaza. The naval blockade was imposed as a legitimate security measure in order to prevent weapons from entering Gaza by sea, and its implementation complied with the requirements of International Law.” At the same time, the report stressed that “the loss of life and injuries resulting from the use of force by Israeli forces during the take-over of the Mavi Marmara was unacceptable.”

The report also noted that Israeli forces “faced significant, organized and violent resistance from a group of passengers” on board the Mavi Marmara, and observed that the “majority of the flotilla participants had no violent intentions, but there exist serious questions about the conduct, true nature and objectives of the flotilla organizers, particularly IHH.” The report also mentioned that Turkey made it clear that “in view of democratic rights and freedoms, Turkey could not ban people from legally leaving the country. ... It seems, however, that Turkish officials passed on the nature of Israel’s concern to the Turkish organizers of the flotilla.” The report clarified that “The Panel enjoyed no coercive powers to compel witnesses to provide evidence... The Panel was required to obtain its information from the two nations primarily involved in its inquiry, Turkey and Israel, and other affected States... It means that the Panel cannot make definitive findings either of fact or law.”¹⁸

The publication of the Palmer Report aroused the anger of the Turkish government who considered its publication prior to an agreement being reached between Turkey and Israel as putting an end to the efforts to reach a resolution. Taken as a whole, the report came contrary to the Turkish viewpoint as it considered the siege of GS complying with the “requirements of international law,” and failed to condemn Israel or demand that it apologizes. The only part that can be viewed as criticism of Israel was the comment on Israeli soldiers’ excessive use of force.

Vehemently angry reactions to the report ensued from opposition movements inside Turkey. On 7/9/2011, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, leader of the main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*—CHP), slammed the UN panel’s report as “one of the biggest debacles” in the history of Turkish foreign policy.¹⁹ However, the Turkish member of the committee Süleyman Özdem

Sanberk accused the committee Chair Geoffrey Palmer and his deputy Álvaro Uribe of being pro-Israeli and of preparing the report in cooperation with Israel disregarding all the arguments put forward by Turkey. Özdem Sanberk considered the report to be of no legal value internationally, as the committee was not an international one but a special panel formed by the UN secretary general, thus the Palmer Report was not listed within official UN documents. Moreover, the report was not signed either by Turkey or Israel, while Özdem Sanberk accused Israel of leaking the content of the report to the *New York Times*, and noted that the leaked copy was not one that had been agreed upon.²⁰

On 2/9/2011, the day after the Palmer Report was published in the *New York Times*,²¹ Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu announced the Turkish Government has decided to take the following measures:²²

1. “Diplomatic relations between Turkey and Israel will be downgraded to the Second Secretary level. All personnel starting with the Ambassador above the Second Secretary level will return to their countries on Wednesday [7/9/2011] at the latest.” This practically meant expelling Gabby Levy, the Israeli ambassador in Ankara.
2. “Military agreements between Turkey and Israel have been suspended.”
3. “As a littoral state which has the longest coastline in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey will take whatever measures it deems necessary in order to ensure the freedom of navigation in the Eastern Mediterranean,” without giving any clarifications.
4. “Turkey does not recognize the blockade imposed on Gaza by Israel. Turkey will ensure the examination by the International Court of Justice of Israel’s blockade imposed on Gaza as of 31 May 2010. To this end we are starting initiatives in order to mobilize the UN General Assembly.”
5. “We will extend all possible support to Turkish and foreign victims of Israel’s attack in their initiatives to seek their rights before courts.”

Davutoğlu expressed that “neither the Israeli Government who ordered the attack against the Mavi Marmara ship, nor the ones that actually carried out the attack are above or immune from the law” vowing to hold them accountable and saying that “The world is currently changing. Those who claim the lives of civilians or commit crimes against humanity are sooner or later brought before

justice and face trial for their crimes.” He also renewed the accusation to Israel of violating international law by attacking the Freedom Flotilla which he described as “not a simple offense” and stated: “Now, the Government of Israel must face the consequences of its unlawful acts, which it considers above the law and are in full disregard of the conscience of humanity.” He affirmed that “The time has come for it to pay a price for its actions. This price is, above all, deprivation of Turkey’s friendship.” Moreover, Davutoğlu noted that “Israel has wasted all the opportunities it was presented with” to repair relations with Turkey.²³ On his part, Turkish President Abdullah Gül said that the report was “null and void,” and can be viewed as “non-existent,” dubbing Israel’s current stance “a position devoid of strategy.”²⁴

Turkey did not suffice with the measures declared by Davutoğlu, as Prime Minister Erdoğan escalated the situation by declaring that “[t]rade ties, military ties, regarding defence industry ties” were completely suspended with Israel, referring to it as “a spoiled child.”²⁵ Erdoğan declared an additional step, vowing to enhance the Turkish naval presence in the eastern Mediterranean as “we will see Turkish ships more often in the international waters in eastern Mediterranean.”²⁶ Nevertheless, a spokesman for Erdoğan said that “the prime minister had been referring in his remarks only to trade in defense goods, and not to trade in general.”²⁷ Turkish Minister of the Economy Zafer Caglayan also mentioned that “no economic sanctions were taken against Israel and that ‘normal channels and normal works continued.’”²⁸

As for Israel, its officials tried to contain the Turkish measures by saying that they did not constitute boycott, as the military attaché, the consul in Istanbul and other diplomats would remain in Turkey. On the other hand, Israeli officials considered the Palmer Report a victory, and called on Turkey to avoid escalation as it has “a lot to lose from making this kind of extreme decision” according to Amos Gilad, head of the Israeli Defense Ministry Diplomatic-Security Bureau.²⁹ In addition, Israel threatened to support the recognition of the Armenian genocide and support the Kurdistan Workers Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*—PKK) in opposition to the Turkish state.

While Hamas welcomed the Turkish measures, it considered the move a natural reaction to the Israeli crime against the Freedom Flotilla, and to Israel’s refusal to take responsibility for the crime or lift the siege of GS. Hamas also declared its

condemnation of the Palmer Report which the movement described as “unjust” and lacking balance.³⁰

Notes on the Palmer Report and Turkey’s Responsibility

The Palmer Report can be viewed as a failure for Turkish diplomacy and its method of handling the Freedom Flotilla incident:

1. Turkish measures declared by Davutoğlu came exactly 15 months and two days after the date of the attack.
2. Since the moment the Freedom Flotilla incident first took place, Ankara sufficed with recalling the Turkish ambassador from Tel Aviv without taking any effective step to pressure Tel Aviv to meet the demand of apology and compensation for the victims.
3. It is likely that Turkey erred by initially accepting the Palmer inquiry panel. Very early on, it had been clear to the Turks that the New Zealander chair of the commission and his Columbian deputy were pro-Israelis. The delay in forming the commission and the manner in which it was formed by the UN secretary general should have aroused suspicions for Turkey.
4. Israel’s refusal to apologize was another reason for Turkey’s declaration that they would not leave Mediterranean waters to the hegemony of the Israeli naval force. If Israel had apologized, would that have been a reason for Turkey to refrain from making naval moves and let the eastern Mediterranean to be freely controlled by Israel?
5. The most serious details leaked concerning the secret talks between Turkey and Israel may well have been the AKP government’s willingness to sign an agreement of an international nature with Israel in exchange for an Israeli apology. This agreement would have enhanced Turkish-Israeli relations on military and the economic levels. Ankara was ready to enhance its cooperation with Israel.

The Palmer Report, the Missile Shield and Turkish Measures

The publication of the Palmer Report came on the same day as Turkey’s announcement that an early warning radar system will be deployed in Turkey within the NATO missile defense program aimed at countering ballistic missile threats, while Turkish measures against Israel came a few hours after Ankara’s declaration of agreeing to set up the system. This concurrence of announcement

reveals an interconnection between three key steps. On the morning of Thursday 1/9/2011, Turkish Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Selçuk Ünal announced that Turkey had agreed to deploy the missile shield on its land. He noted that Turkey's contribution to the alliance missile defence shield had reached "final stages." At the 2010 NATO summit of heads of state and government in Lisbon, Turkey formally backed NATO plans to build a missile defence system, saying it would also contribute to national defence against the growing threat of ballistic missile proliferation. Ünal also said that the "deployment of this [missile defense] element in Turkey will constitute our contribution to the defense system being developed within NATO's new strategic concept and it will strengthen our national defense system."³¹

The step to station an early warning radar system on Turkish lands spurred heated objections inside Turkey, particularly as it came concurrently with the declaration of Turkish measures against Israel. The two steps were discussed in parallel due to the prevailing conviction in Turkey that the early warning radar system may serve Israel; a belief that stemmed from fears that the US may grant Israel access to information provided by these radars. Some opposition parties drew a link between spreading the early warning radar system, the publication of the Palmer Report, and the Turkish measures against Israel, considering the latter two a cover for the radar system step, even if that meant escalating Turkish-Israeli tensions.

Serious concerns existed around the fact that the early warning radar system in Turkey's Kürecik military base in Malatya province allows Israel (should Israel be able to benefit from it) to operate three minutes ahead of the Israel-based radar network in spotting any Iranian missiles that can be launched against it. Although Turkey said that it received guarantees that the information of the early warning radar system would not be shared with any non-NATO country, more than one American official told *The Wall Street Journal* in mid September 2011 that they planned to fuse data from the Turkish, Israeli and other radar sites to create a comprehensive picture of the missile threat. Turkey, for its part, could also benefit from real-time data from the X-Band the US already operates in Israel.³²

Erdoğan and the GS Visit

Following Turkish-Israeli tensions, Erdoğan made a tour of the Arab Spring countries in North Africa: Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. The tour was preceded by

rumours that Erdoğan may visit the GS as a reaction to the Palmer Report and Israel's refusal to apologize to Turkey. Erdoğan confirmed that he would discuss with Egyptian officials during his visit to Cairo between 12 and 14 September whether to make the visit to GS or not. And although field security preparations were made, the visit was not. Turkish daily *Milleyet* attributed that decision to various reasons, among them:³³

First: Egypt did not want such a visit to take place at a time when relations between Israel and Turkey had reached such a stage of agitation. The newspaper mentioned that Egypt implicitly expressed its desire to Turkey that the visit not be made, particularly because the Egyptian army did not want additional tension with Israel.

Second: Erdoğan preferred to avoid taking a step that Egypt would oppose, for Turkey hoped for good relations with Egypt after the Mubarak burden had been removed.

Third: Although Erdoğan's visit to GS would win him much popularity in the Arab world, Erdoğan is well aware that it will not be welcomed in the Western world.

At that time, Turkey supported the PA in its bid for full UN membership. In a speech before the UNGA on 22/9/2011, the Turkish prime minister stressed that the "most important step... is to meet the legitimate demands of the Palestinian people for being recognized as a state and to allow the representatives of the State of Palestine to take their well-deserved place in this august Assembly, as a member of the UN." He added, "Turkey's support to the recognition of the State of Palestine is unconditional." Erdoğan filed harsh criticism at Israeli policy towards Palestine, and also criticized the UN which is "not able to take any step to stop the human tragedy suffered by the Palestinian people."

Erdoğan stated that "Nothing can be a substitute for peace," and added, "Our demands from Israel are known. Our position will not change unless Israel takes the necessary steps to redress its mistake and meet our demands." And these demands were clear: an apology, compensation to the families of the flotilla victims and lifting the siege of GS. Erdoğan stressed that the Turks "have no problem with the Israeli people. The problem emanates from the aggressive policies of the Israeli government."³⁴

In the interview with Fareed Zakaria of the Cable News Network (CNN), Erdoğan went on to accuse Israel of using the Holocaust for political and military gain. "Israelis like to remind us of the genocide that took place in history. They take advantage of that genocide, and always act as if they are the victims all the time," Erdoğan said. As a reaction, Netanyahu described Erdoğan's words as "false, outrageous and scandalous,"³⁵ while Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman accused Erdoğan's government of "supporting and nurturing terror."³⁶

Nonetheless, Israel continued to court Turkish friendship without reaching the threshold of apology. Upon the occurrence of a violent earthquake in Van region of eastern Turkey, Israel offered help, and the Turkish government, after hesitation, agreed "for humanitarian reasons" as Israel sent a number of prefabricated homes to shelter the victims of the earthquake.³⁷

This Israeli initiative, however, did not improve the continuing negative image of Israel in Turkish public opinion. A survey carried out by Turkish Kadir Has University in 2010 and published on 11/1/2011 asked which countries pose a threat to Turkey; 67.8% said the US and 51% said Israel.³⁸

Economic Relations

Economic relations between Turkey and Israel were not affected by the "tough" measures declared by Ankara against Tel Aviv following the Palmer Report and Tel Aviv's refusal to apologize. Professor of International Relations and Political Science Soli Özel at Kadir Has University sees that, contrary to Erdoğan's harsh discourse, the pragmatic approach to relations is still prevalent.³⁹ Turkish exports to Israel focused on textile products and marble while Turkey imports chemicals, agricultural products, and advanced technology from Israel. Official economic statistics issued by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) show growth in the volume of trade between Turkey and Israel. Despite the political tension witnessed in relations between Turkey and Israel, especially after September 2011, the volume of trade between the two countries increased in 2011 in comparison to 2010 by 29.3%. The trade volume in 2011 reached a total of \$4,449 million while in 2010 it reached a total of \$3,439.7 million. Turkish exports to Israel reached \$2,391.7 million in 2011 against \$2,080.1 million in 2010. Turkish imports from Israel reached \$2,057.3 million in 2011 in comparison to \$1,359.6 million in 2010.⁴⁰

Official Israeli data, despite showing smaller figures than Turkish statistics for the volume of trade between the two countries, confirm the ascending direction witnessed in trade exchange in 2011. According to these stats, Turkish exports to Israel reached \$2,171.1 million while its imports from Israel were valued at \$1,850.7 million, making the trade volume between the two countries \$4,021.8 million, with a 29.3% increase, compared to 2010.⁴¹

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 areas, revealing a pragmatic attitude on both sides.

Table 1/4: Volume of Trade Between Turkey and Israel According to Turkish and Israeli Statistics 2010–2011 (\$ million)⁴²

Year	Turkish exports to Israel		Turkish imports from Israel		Volume of trade	
	Turkish statistics	Israeli statistics	Turkish statistics	Israeli statistics	Turkish statistics	Israeli statistics
2010	2,080.1	1,800.1	1,359.6	1,310.7	3,439.7	3,110.8
2011	2,391.7	2,171.1	2,057.3	1,850.7	4,449	4,021.8

Commercial relations were not affected either by the sanctions declared by the Turkish government against Israel, as the volume of trade rose in the four months that followed these sanctions, to December 2011 by 26% in comparison to the same period in 2010, recording \$1,493.8 million in the last third of 2011 against \$1,185.6 million in the last third of 2010.

The Future of Turkish-Israeli Relations

Turkish-Israeli relations in 2011 stood on the tip of two contradictory possibilities. Had Israel made the apology, relations would have improved in the various areas of cooperation. On the other hand, if Israel refused to apologize, relations may have gone to the verge of boycott in an atmosphere imbued with threats of war.

In view of these contradictory possibilities, Turkish-Israeli relations have entered into a complicated area, where bilateral, regional, and international factors intertwine. Hence, we find ourselves considering the following factors:

1. Turkey did not stop using the international law as their reference point for their stance on Israel and the Palestinian issue.

2. The AKP government can no longer backtrack on the demands of apology and compensations. On one hand it will affect the party's image, especially its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, on a Turkish street that harbours great animosity towards Israel, and on the other hand Turkey is a major regional country with increasing leverage and power in the region.

3. The Palestinian issue continued to be a priority in Ankara's Middle East policies, being Turkey's gate to the Arab and Islamic region.

4. The Turkish role in 2011 was different from 2010 and the outbreak of Arab revolutions played a major role in this regard.

The Islamic aspect of the Arab revolutions and the emerging power of political Islam in the "Arab Spring" countries played a part in increasing Turkish power, partly through the AKP's Islamic roots. At the same time, the fact that these revolutions opened possibilities for some Arab countries, particularly Egypt, to play a more effective role. Turkey may find its expected position of strength and leadership to be threatened by of the reclaiming of roles previously played by historically strong states that had been weakened under the temporary conditions of authoritarian rule.

We see this clearly in the case of Egypt, as it started to reclaim aspects of its regional role, what might directly weaken the Turkish role in sensitive regional and Palestinian issues. Egypt has played an active part in achieving Palestinian reconciliation while Turkey, through its Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu, sufficed with playing a secondary role. The same applies to the prisoner exchange deal between Hamas and Israel, in which Egypt played a prominent role in completing, whereas the Turkish role was limited to receiving 10 detainees. But it must be noted that the harmony between the Turkish and Egyptian positions towards Israel may encourage Turkey to take more severe steps towards confronting Israeli policies.

In this framework, Turkish-Palestinian relations did not witness any major events, whether in exchanging visits or in implementing Turkish projects in the GS or the WB. However, the visit by Prime Minister Isma'il Haniyyah to Turkey on 3/1/2012 warmed the previously frozen relations. Haniyyah met with Turkish officials and leaders of all parties without exception including the leader of the

Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi—BDP*). Haniyyah's visits also included several Arab countries that Syria and Iran were not allied to. What was notable was the comment of Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu on Haniyyah's visit, in which he said that it is a proof that Palestine's route passes through Turkey.⁴³

Haniyyah's next tour, however, from 30/1–16/2/2012 included Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iran, UAE, and Egypt, giving the impression that Hamas wanted to promote the image of being an independent movement. At the same time, the fact that Syria was not included in Haniyyah's itinerary communicated the message that Hamas did not approve of the Syrian regime's policies towards its people.

It was also noteworthy that 20 days after the visit, news appeared of Ankara's plan to open an office for Hamas. Turkish President Abdullah Gül left the door open to the possibility of a Hamas office opening up in his country. He said, "Our contact [with Hamas] has been constant, but we will have to wait and see what has come out of the frequent visits."⁴⁴

5. As for the future of Turkish-Israeli relations, this is related to a group of interlinked and complicated factors. In the last few years, Turkey adopted policies that were pro-Palestinian, while keeping reasonable relations with Israel, the US and the West in general. Turkish President Abdullah Gül mentioned that Turkish-US relations are "the healthiest relations that we ever had with the US."⁴⁵ It has been obvious, though, that in the last two years, the Turkish anti-Israel political discourse has increased. Davutoğlu was clear when he spoke of the uprisings against authoritarian regimes in Middle Eastern and North African countries in mid-December 2011 that "Turkey had never remained silent in the face of 'oppression.' It is our policies which made Israel kneel down in the region in front of us. We have always sided with people who demand democracy, not with authoritarian and oppressive regimes," he said.⁴⁶

Although the regional ambitions of Turkey and Israel seem different it is strategically difficult for Turkey to be part of the structure of western policies in the region while taking a hostile approach towards Israel. Thus, it is not expected under the present circumstances that Turkish-Israeli relations will come to a complete halt. Efforts will continue to reach normalization which may witness some tensions related to internal calculations in both countries. These relations, however, are not likely to freeze unless Turkey changes its axis and turns completely towards the

east. Such a change seems improbable in view of the given conditions and current policies of the AKP as well as all other Turkish opposition parties.

Some believe that Turkey's policies—in harmony during 2011 with Washington's policies on most issues—contain alarming characteristics that may affect Turkey's position on the Palestinian issue, especially regarding resistance movements, the most prominent of them being Hamas. There is a contradiction between Turkey's stances and those of the Iran-Syria-Iraq-Lebanon axis on Syria and other issues, and proximity between the governing Turkish AKP and the Islamic parties that rose to power in Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt, and probably in Lebanon and Yemen. There is also complete coordination between Ankara and Washington. Therefore, some fear that Turkey, together with other Arab countries possessing political, financial and security leverage, may play a pressurising role with Hamas to move it away from the "resistance" axis on the one hand and on the other, to encourage it accept peace with Israel and abandon resistance. This may drive the Palestinian issue into a new stage in which Hamas, if it gives up its relations with the resistance axis, may find itself in a position where it is unable to withstand Arab and Turkish pressures forever.

Others believe that the reformulation of the Arab region and the dismantling of former axes representing "moderateness" and "resistance" will serve policies supporting resistance and not vice versa. According to this analysis, the change of American-allied and anti-Hamas regimes to regimes that adopt the Islamic ideology of rejecting the peace settlement with Israel, refusing to give up Palestine, and embracing the resistance stream, would add new and considerable credit to resistance forces, increase Israel's isolation and weaken American policies in the region. This in turn may force Turkish policies to adopt more powerful steps against Israel and in support of resistance movements.

Third: Iran

The Arab revolutions imposed themselves on the top of the agenda of regional and international powers as well as on the plans, programs and projects of the different parties and political movements in the Arab region. The world became preoccupied with these revolutions and the consequential strategic changes, particularly after the fall of the regimes in Tunisia and Egypt and the Islamists'

(The Renaissance Party, MB Movement and the Salafis) reaping of the majority of parliamentary seats in both countries. This has decreased the attention given to the Palestinian issue, although it reclaimed an advanced position in the second half of 2011 through the following three events:

1. Reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah under direct Egyptian auspices after the fall of Mubarak.
2. Hamas releasing Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit.
3. The PA's bid for full UN membership.

It was natural that the revolutions took center stage in popular, official, international and regional attention. The toppling of the regimes were not merely internal issues in Tunisia or in Egypt but were events that would have repercussions on the whole future of the region and its main issues, including the Palestinian issue. Thus, Palestine was one of the questions posed to the revolutionaries and Islamists who after the elections obtained positions of decision-making and influence in their countries. Questions also rose about the stances of different countries, movements, and regional and international bodies on the Arab revolutions and their view of the relationship between these revolutions and Palestine. Among those entities were Turkey, Iran, the Arab League, the OIC and of course Israel, a state that naturally does not welcome any change in the region that would make Palestine a priority in any foreign policy, or threaten the pillars of stability provided under the peace agreements with Israel, especially the Camp David Accords with Egypt.

Iran supported the Arab revolutions, as most of the world's countries did. It had an more characteristic stance in comparison to other Arab and Islamic countries through:

- Early stress on the Islamic nature of these revolutions, considering them an "Islamic awakening."
- Linking the revolutions to threats that Israel would face in the future.

The Iranian Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution (*Murshid*) Ali Khamenei hailed the uprising of the Egyptian people against the regime of Hosni Mubarak, describing it as the "explosion of sacred anger." Khamenei, who led the praying multitude on the Friday prayer in Tehran said: "Today more than the fleeing Tunisian and Egyptian officials, Israelis and the Zionist enemies are the [ones] most worried about these events as they know if Egypt stops being

their ally and take its rightful place, it would be a great event in the region.” He added that no other country went through as many wars as Egypt had against the “Zionist entity,” although they were not crowned by victory. Moreover, he said that “For 30 years this country [Egypt] has been in the hands of someone who is not seeking freedom and is the enemy of those seeking freedom,” and added, “Not only he is not anti-Zionist, but he is the companion, colleague, confidant and servant of Zionists.”

He explained that Egypt was the flag bearer in the face of “Zionist expansion.” Yet under Mubarak, it imposed a siege on Palestinians in GS and if it had not been for Mubarak’s subordination to the Zionists, it would not have been possible to impose the siege on the GS. Khamenei said that current conditions would favour Arab and Muslim nations and could remove tens of years of tyranny and injustice in these countries.⁴⁷

The following day Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denounced the planned passage of two Iranian warships through the Suez Canal; the okay for the passage came only a week after the fall of Egyptian President Husni Mubarak. Khamenei told Iranian officials that “The fake Zionist government is a cancerous tumor and the cause of different diseases and political, economic calamity in the region.”⁴⁸

In the annual al-Quds Day rallies, which are organized by the Iranian government in the last of week of Ramadan, and on the basis that there is a link between Egypt’s revolution and the supposed Israeli degeneration, participants demanded the Arab countries that had signed peace agreements with Israel, especially Egypt, annul them. A statement released at the end of the rallies called on the Muslim nations Egypt, Tunisia and Libya to be alert and cautious and to watch out for the conspiracies of neo-colonialists and international arrogance, and not to provide them with a justification for interference. The statement continued to say that the will and revolutionary demands of these nations must decide the destiny of their countries. The statement declared its unconditional support of the Islamic resistance and the Palestinian *Intifadah*, and stressed that the only solution for the Palestinian issue was the removal of the “Zionist entity,” the departure of “Zionists” from the occupied territories, the return of Palestinian refugees to their lands and the homes of their parents and grandparents, in addition to holding comprehensive, free elections to decide the destiny of Palestine.⁴⁹

The reasons for the previously cold relations between Iran and the former Egyptian regime have faded somewhat. President Mahmud Ahmadinejad stressed the pivotal role of Egypt after the revolution, and emphasized “the importance of establishing close ties with Egypt and reiterated that if unity between Tehran and Cairo takes effect, no space would be left for Israel and hegemonic powers in the region.”⁵⁰

Meanwhile, and in the midst of international and regional preoccupation with the Arab revolutions and resulting changes, Israel continued its aggressions on GS and continued the building of settlements. In turn, Iran condemned the Israeli aggression on GS and the continuation of building settlements, while its Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast said that “Iran strongly condemns the criminal Zionist attacks against Gaza.” He added, “The Zionist regime is exploiting the climate of war in the region to achieve its nefarious objectives and spill the blood of Gaza’s innocent people.”⁵¹

Referring to Israel’s continued building of settlements, Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi, head of the Mobilization of the Oppressed organization (*Basij-e Mostaz’afin*), said that Palestinians should not worry. He added that Jerusalem would be freed and the flag that went to GS (with the Asia convoy to break the GS siege) will be raised high beside the *al-Aqsa* Mosque.⁵²

Iranian leaders reiterated their view that they see a link between Arab revolutions and American and Israeli retreat. President Mahmud Ahmadinejad said that the Middle East will soon be free of the US and Israel. Ahmadinejad added, “We will soon see a new Middle East materializing without America and the Zionist regime and there will be no room for world arrogance (the West) in it.” He said that Egyptians needed to be vigilant of the US, and added, “The Iranian nation is your friend and it is your right to freely choose your path. The Iranian nation backs this right of yours.”

Ahmadinejad hit out at the US, calling it an “accomplice to the oppression of the Zionist regime.” He also said, “If you want people to trust you, first of all do not interfere in affairs of the region, including in Tunisia and Egypt. Let them be by themselves.”⁵³

Israel did not hide its concerns and fears regarding Iran’s role after the Egyptian revolution and in areas where the regional balance of power is turning against it, especially after two Iranian warships passed through the Suez Canal following the

fall of the Egyptian regime. The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported that Iran's Deputy Army Commander Brigadier General Abdul-Rahim Mousavi said, "The Zionist regime (Israel) was shocked by the presence of Iran's naval ships in the Suez Canal" and added that "The global arrogance should know that Iran's Army is fully ready to defend the ideals of the Islamic Republic."⁵⁴

Netanyahu responded by warning that "Iran tries to exploit the situation that has been created in order to expand its influence." He also added that "Israel views this Iranian move with utmost gravity and this step, like other steps and developments, underscores what I have reiterated in recent years—Israel's security needs will grow and the defence budget must grow accordingly." As for the Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, he considered the Iranian move as a "provocation that proves that the self-confidence and impudence of the Iranians is growing from day to day."⁵⁵ In *Haaretz* newspaper, Aluf Benn focused on the implications of the Iranian move: "There is growing concern in Israel that Egypt will become a hostile front," he wrote. He believed that granting the Iranian navy permission to pass symbolized "the change to the regional balance of power following the fall of President Hosni Mubarak," and added that "Egypt is signalling that it is no longer committed to its strategic alliance with Israel against Iran, and that Cairo is now willing to do business with Tehran. This is precisely what Turkey has done in recent years under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan."⁵⁶

The Iranian president stressed his stance towards Israel on different occasions. In a meeting with participants of the Tehran International Conference on Global Alliance against Terrorism for Just Peace, he said, "The reason for our insistence that the Zionist regime should be wiped out and vanished is that the Zionist regime is the main base for imposing oppression and harbors the main terrorists of the world."⁵⁷

Following the Arab revolutions, Iran faced accusations of resuming its nuclear program for non-peaceful purposes. These accusations were accompanied by Israeli threats of targeting Iranian nuclear facilities, and waging war against Iran without even consulting the US. Many considered opting for war against Tehran by the Israelis and even the Americans, an escape from the inability to find solutions to the regional crises, which had become more complicated since the outbreak of the Arab Spring revolutions. The Israelis and Americans also magnified the Iranian danger to persuade Russia and China to impose new sanctions, instead of the war option that was fast becoming impossible, or near impossible.⁵⁸

Iran responded strongly to Israeli threats and the American “all-options-are-open” policy against Iran. The Senior Advisor to the Supreme Leader on Military Affairs General Yahya Rahim Safavi said that any military action taken against Iran would result in Iran determining the location and characteristics of the ensuing war.⁵⁹

Haaretz newspaper reported a senior Israeli official who said that Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Barak were trying to muster a majority in the cabinet in favor of military action against Iran. Responding to the threats, Safavi said that “Iran’s response to any war monger would be ‘crushing and ruthless. Any military threat against Iran would be met with an indescribable military action by Iran’s military.’”⁶⁰

A few weeks after the toppling of President Mubarak, when reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas was made in Egypt, Iran, like many Arab and Islamic countries, voiced support for the reconciliation and the Egyptian role in it. However, many Iranian officials considered the reconciliation to be insufficient and not a goal in itself, rather a step towards realizing the historic goals of the Palestinian people. They also considered it a preliminary step towards opening the Rafah crossing.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi described the reconciliation agreement between Fatah and Hamas “a ‘positive step’ in line with materialization of historic ends of the oppressed Palestinians.” Salehi said that the “unity of Palestinian forces and their resistance against Zionist occupiers are two key and necessary factors for vindication of Palestinians’ rights.” Salehi called the accord the first achievement of the great Egyptian in Palestine since the uprising. He stated his hope that the agreement would lead to reopening of Rafah crossing to pave the way for Palestinians’ access to basic necessities.⁶¹

Iranian Parliamentary Speaker Ali Larijani, and Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Policy and National Security of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran Alaeddin Boroujerdi also declared Iran’s support of the reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah. Boroujerdi saw that Iran “has long voiced support for the establishment of unity among all Palestinian factions. This development is a leap forward towards the decline of the Zionist regime [of Israel].”⁶²

Also after the revolution, and in the absence of a president, Egypt played a role in completing the prisoner swap deal between the detained Israeli Corporal

Gilad Shalit and the Palestinian prisoners. Iran supported the exchange process and the Foreign Ministry Spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast congratulated the Palestinian people on the release of Palestinian prisoners and said that Iran hoped one day to see “the return of the land of Palestine to its true owners.”⁶³ In a phone call between Prime Minister Isma‘il Haniyyah and Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad to update him on the details of the exchange operation, Ahmadinejad said that “The Islamic Republic of Iran has always been by the side of the oppressed Palestinian nation and the resistance movement and would always support the ideals of that noble and oppressed people” adding that “Beyond doubt this prisoner exchange was a great victory for the great Palestinian nation and for all Muslims and freedom and justice seekers of the world and the independent nations, who are happy side by side with the oppressed Palestinian people.” Haniyyah in turn said that “Iran has always been a true supporter of the Palestinian people and their ideals, and is the main partner in entire victories of the Palestinian nation.”⁶⁴

However, the third Palestinian event in 2011, namely seeking full UN membership for a Palestinian state, was not welcomed by Iran, a position contrary to the stances of all Arab and Islamic countries and in contrast to Iran’s strong support for inter-Palestinian reconciliation and the prisoners swap deal. Iran justified its opposition by stating that it feared that this would be a prelude to ending the right of return and accepting the division of Palestine. For that reason, the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, in a speech at the opening ceremony of the 5th International Conference On Palestinian Intifada held in Tehran on 1/10/2011, reaffirmed that:⁶⁵

- “Our demand is the liberation of Palestine, not the liberation of a part of Palestine. Any plan to divide Palestine is completely unacceptable” and that “Palestine is the land that extends ‘from the river to the sea.’”
- “Islam, jihad and martyrdom were the factors that could have encouraged an entire nation to step into the arena of resistance and turned it into an invincible force.”
- “The two-state idea which has been presented in the self-righteous clothing of ‘recognizing the Palestinian government as a member of the United Nations’ would mean trampling on the rights of the Palestinian nation, ignoring the historical right of the displaced Palestinians and even jeopardizing the right of the Palestinians settled in ‘1948 lands.’”

- Iran doesn't want to throw "Jewish immigrants into the sea," but the "Palestinian nation has the right to determine its own destiny and to elect its own government. All the original people of Palestine—including Muslims, Christians and Jews and not foreign immigrants—should take part in a general and orderly referendum and determine the future government of Palestine whether they live inside Palestine or in camps or in any other place."
- The red line of Israel's security "will be crossed by Muslim nations that have risen up" ... and the Iranian missiles "will fulfill their duty whenever the enemy poses a threat."

Khamenei also repeated the above stances on the Occasion of Imam Ayatollah Khomeini's 22nd Demise Anniversary, where he said, "The solution is to hold a referendum among the people of Palestine. Any government that receives the majority of the votes in the referendum will rule the entire Palestinian lands. Then that government will decide what to do with the Zionists who immigrated to Palestine."⁶⁶

As for President Mahmud Ahmadinejad, he called on the international community to recognize Palestinians' right to sovereignty. At the closing ceremony of the 5th International Conference On Palestinian Intifada, on 2/10/2011, Ahmadinejad said "If we recognize the right of (Palestinian) sovereignty (over the entire homeland) the issue of two state or multi-state is revoked." Ahmadinejad suggested that "the solution to this issue, according to what the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution said, is that Palestinians return to their homes and occupiers return to their own lands." He said that "Some poor people were brought to Palestine on the promise of security and jobs while they turned the Palestinian people into refugees... So now Palestinians should go home and those brought to Palestine should go to theirs."⁶⁷ On 3/10/2011, President Ahmadinejad stressed during his reception of the Speaker of Kuwait's National Assembly Mohammad Jassim al-Kharafi that the freedom of Palestine is an interaction axis between all Muslim countries, and added that all countries in the region must unite to liberate Palestine and holy Jerusalem, and that if the West is able to implant the Zionists once again, the issue will become more difficult.⁶⁸

Despite solid relations between Hamas and the Iranian leadership, the demand of UN membership was an issue of difference between the two sides. While the Iranian leadership confirmed their rejection of this step for fear of ending the right

of return or causing division, Khalid Mish'al, head of the Hamas Political Bureau said, "We cannot deny that this action has had symbolic and moral achievements." At the same time, Mish'al said, "the action should not be considered in isolation. He demanded to 'first liberate Palestinian lands and then ask the United Nations Security Council for U.N. membership.'"⁶⁹

Conclusion

During 2011, Iran did not change the essence of its previous policies and stances from the Palestinian issue, focusing on affirming resistance as a choice, supporting this choice, and rejecting the peace settlement and process with the Israelis. Iran interacted with the Arab revolution, the key strategic event in 2011, through its vision of the Palestinian issue. In this view, the Egyptian revolution was to Iran an unprecedented change in the future of Israel. And it seems that Iran was right in this regard, as Israeli leaders considered the loss of Mubarak a loss of a "strategic treasure," to move after the revolution to what they called "strategic distress." Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned that "Muslim nations in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Yemen or other countries need vigilance today. They should not allow enemies [to] confiscate the victories they've achieved." He also said, "If the imperialist and hegemonic powers and Zionism, including the U.S. tyrannical and despotic regime, manage to use the ongoing conditions in their own favor, the world of Islam will definitely face big problems for tens of years."⁷⁰

Western meddling, or attempts to dominate the revolutions are not exaggerated Iranian concerns, since there are certain economic and social conditions, in addition to poverty and unemployment that may aid such meddling and domination. There are also fears concerning the new experience of rule that the Islamists will face after the revolution, especially that their leaders stressed that internal problems will be a priority in the near future, and avoided provoking the Americans and Western powers or setting them in a position of animosity. Most of all, they linked the annulling of the Camp David Accords for example, to handing the issue to constitutional institutions and the decision of the Egyptian people.

Despite the previously mentioned valid fears of Western pressures to avoid any escalation against Israel and against American interests, we can still summarize the following:

- Israel was, and will remain, unaccepted by Arab and Islamic nations. These nations will oppose rulers that deal with Israel, and it is not expected that Israel will be accepted or kindly dealt with by new regimes.
- The Palestinian resistance (especially Hamas) is expected to gradually enjoy more political and media freedom in several Arab arenas. This means that the support for resistance, even at government level, will not be limited to Iran but will spread to Arab countries as well.
- The occupation will continue to clash with the Palestinian people on a daily basis. The settlements will remain, and settlement building, Judaization of Jerusalem and the excavations under *al-Aqsa* Mosque will continue, consequently Palestine will remain a priority even if the new Arab regimes did not wish it to be. These conditions will also dictate the need for all kinds of support of the Arab and Islamic countries, especially Turkey and Iran.
- Palestinian and regional politics will be full of challenges, first and foremost among them inter-Palestinian reconciliation. It will face this question: will reconciliation be able to reach consensus over a unified national program that will improve the conditions of resistance or improve the terms of negotiations? There is also the challenge of resuming the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations that became worthless, making no progress in recent years.
- Despite the very real possibility of achieving no progress through negotiations with Israel, some still wish to drag the Arab revolutions, and with them the Palestinian resistance, in to supporting the peace process by participating in it. Others want the revolutions to be similar to Iran, which is considered a “threat to Israel.” This means that we will witness in the near future vigorous jostling between these two trends while exerting pressure on resistance movements (especially Hamas). However, whatever the nature of this gravitation between Iran that supports the resistance choice, and Turkey or Arab countries that encourage negotiation and peace settlement, and whatever the factors in play, the priorities of the Palestinian leadership and what occurs inside Palestine will determine which trend prevails. The priorities of the Palestinian leadership, especially those of the resistance, will increase the boycott of Israel, and oppose any form of normalization with it, while what occurs inside Palestine itself may be an *Intifadah*, reconciliation, resistance or even Israeli assaults. It is important to note, however, that the religious, ideological dimensions of the Palestinian

Islamic movements, especially Hamas and the PIJ make giving up any part of Palestine a red line, and mean that the current peace settlement projects are devoid of any meaning to these factions.

Fourth: Malaysia

During 2011, Malaysia continued to support the rights of the Palestinian people, in accordance with international law; refusing the Israeli siege of the GS and backing the PA in its bid for full UN membership. It also continued to refuse to have diplomatic relations with Israel in spite of some statements from some opposition figures.

The Palestinian issue enjoys a high status in popular and official circles in Malaysia. Many public and philanthropic organizations succeeded in making wide popular sectors interested in the issue, especially after some Malaysians participated in the Freedom Flotilla to break the siege of GS. Malaysian political powers have become increasingly aware of the status of Palestine in the Malaysian national conscience, and consequently they used it in internal politics.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman attacked opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim for his statements to *The Wall Street Journal* where he said, "I support all efforts to protect the security of the state of Israel."⁷¹ Aman called Ibrahim's statement "pathetic, an embarrassment and should be condemned."⁷² In return, the opposition unveiled a letter that was sent by former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to the then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, a move considered an attempt to cover the statements attributed to Anwar Ibrahim. Prime Minister Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak clarified that the Foreign Ministry had examined the letter and found that it could be made public. He said, "This will enable the people to understand the reason why Tun Dr Mahathir wrote the letter was to champion the Palestinian struggle to establish a sovereign nation."⁷³

In the context of Malaysian political support for PA's bid to gain full UN membership, the Malaysian foreign minister promised his Egyptian counterpart on 29/5/2011 that he would broker the issue with a number of member states in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to recognize the Palestinian state. The Permanent Representative of Malaysia to the UN, Hussein Haniff, stated

that “Malaysia is of the opinion that in order to achieve a fair and peaceful solution to the conflict, the onus to compromise and make way for negotiations does not fall on Palestine alone.” He said, “Israel’s insistence that Palestine should assume direct negotiations without any preconditions does not reflect Israel’s willingness to be fair and to be more accommodating to its future neighbour.” Haniff added that despite the fact that his delegation speaks with a sense of pessimism, “we remain resolute in our commitment towards finding a lasting two state solution based on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, where both sides could live side-by-side in peace and taking into account security concerns of both sides.”⁷⁴

In addition to this, many activities and events were held in support of Palestine. On the annual al-Quds Day, on 26/8/2011, Muslims marched in the streets of Kuala Lumpur after the Friday prayer. Many key political and religious figures participated including former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who stressed the necessity of Muslims preparing themselves to face Israel.⁷⁵

Generally speaking, many organizations are active in Malaysia, supporting charity dedicated to Palestine, for example Aqsa Syarif, Aman Palestin, Viva Palestina, and HALUAN Palestin, in addition to the Palestinian Cultural Organization Malaysia that was established at the beginning of 2011. These organizations worked on a range of activities supporting Palestine.

Fifth: Indonesia

Indonesia is one of the countries characterized by broad popular interaction with the Palestinian issue especially since *al-Aqsa Intifadah*. The Prosperous Justice Party (*Partai Keadilan Sejahtera—PKS*), participating in the government with four ministers, had an important role in this field. At the beginning of 2011, different Indonesian bodies participated in the Asia 1 convoy, in which eight volunteers carried \$1 million worth of aid. Israeli forces prevented the convoy from entering GS by sea, thus it headed to al-Arish port.⁷⁶ Head of the Indonesian delegation accompanying the convoy, Irman Abdur-Rahman announced that a voluntary organization Mer-C is planning to build a 100-bed trauma centre in Beit Lahia in the northern GS, and added that they are making arrangements for a planned visit to GS by the Indonesian president.⁷⁷

After signing a memorandum of understanding between the Islamic Development Bank and the Indonesian Health Minister, Indonesia donated \$3 million for building a cardiac surgery and cardiac catheterization center in GS, on 10/2/2011.⁷⁸

On the anniversary of *al-Nakbah*, the Indonesian government prevented the Jewish community from celebrating “Israel’s independence day.” Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa stated that his country will prohibit any such celebration simply because “Indonesia does not officially recognize the state of Israel.” He added, “Our policy on this has been crystal clear—that we will recognize the existence of [the state of] Israel only if it acknowledges [the state of] Palestine.”⁷⁹

On 27/5/2011, the ministers of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) held a conference in the Indonesian island of Bali. For the first time, the NAM Ministerial Conference dedicated a special section on Palestine and political prisoners, headed by Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa, while the Palestinian Minister of Prisoners ‘Issa Qaraqi’ was among the participants.⁸⁰

On 29/6/2011, a conference was held in Jakarta to launch a new Asian movement for supporting the Palestinian issue, representing members of parliament and NGOs representatives from Asian and Pacific countries to defend Palestinian rights and sanctuaries. The movement was named “Asia and Pacific Societies for Supporting Palestine.” Joined by Usamah Hamdan, head of the Hamas International Relations Department, the conference discussed a number of issues related to supporting the Palestinian people on all political, humanitarian and legal levels, in addition to many projects to be implemented in Jerusalem, WB, and GS. It denounced Israeli practices against Jerusalem, the settlement projects, and Judaization schemes in addition of confiscating the rights of its citizens.⁸¹

Sixth: Trade

Turkey still occupies the highest rank in the Muslim world when it comes to the volume of trade with Israel, as it reached a total of \$4,021.8 million in 2011 while in 2010 the total was \$3,110.8 million, thus recording a 29% increase. Turkish-Israeli economic relations were tackled with some detail in the earlier section on Turkey.

As for Malaysia, in 2011 it recorded relative stability in its trade with Israel. Israeli exports to Malaysia decreased to \$716.4 million, a 10% decrease compared to 2010, while Israeli imports from Malaysia reached \$93.6 million, a 10% increase compared to 2010.

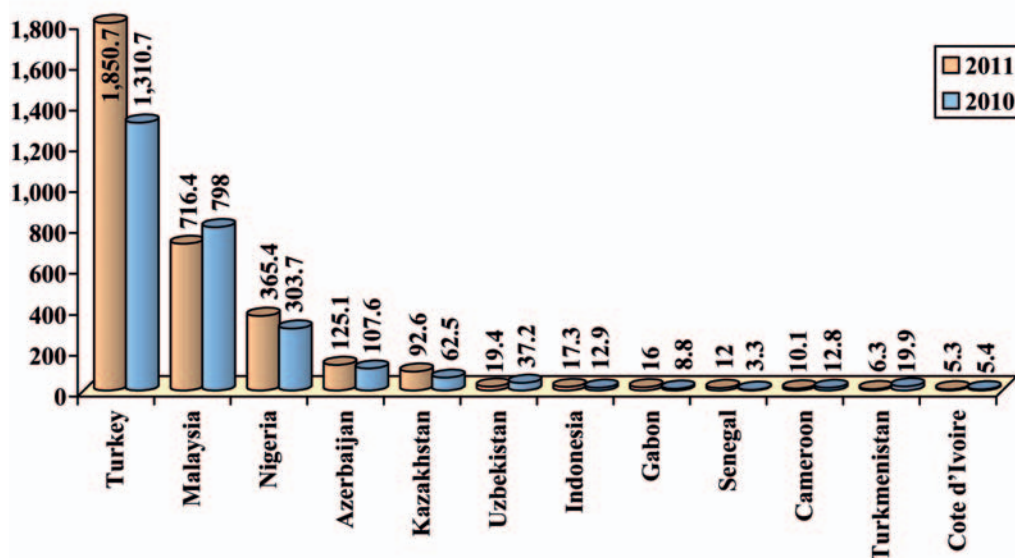
Haaretz newspaper published a report on Israeli trade with Muslim countries mentioning that years ago Israel tried establishing trade with Malaysia and Indonesia, but the disclosure of the issue led to limiting the fields of trade exchange. The report stated that “trade continues covertly with Indonesia at the lowest possible profile and without diplomatic relations. Singapore serves as a base for businessmen trying to penetrate there.” The Israelis can only get in by invitation from a local Indonesian source sponsoring the visit. If none is available, the Israeli Embassy in Singapore assists by providing a local consultant who can serve as a sponsor in a pinch. Occasionally, however, Indonesian authorities turn down requests, depending on the country’s political mood. The report mentioned that “Israel also uses businessmen and trade networks for political and commercial purposes.” It monitors the “activities of businessmen from Arab countries and enlists the help of Israeli businessmen in carrying out diplomatic missions and serving as intermediaries in clandestine intrigues.” Foreign publications claimed the Ofer family’s ships had for years assisted Israeli agents in infiltrating Iran, after it was revealed that ships belonging to the Ofer Group docked in Iran. Sources close to the Ofer family also hinted that the Ofer Group “had long played a part in the country’s security.”⁸²

Also worth mentioning is the remarkable increase in the value of Israeli exports to Nigeria, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan during 2011, despite the absence of any official relations between Israel and these Muslim countries. The value of Israeli exports to Nigeria reached \$365.4 million, a 20% increase. Israeli exports to Azerbaijan also increased by 16%, while Israeli exports to Kazakhstan soared by 42% in comparison to 2010. It is important to note here that despite the increase in trade value, it did not amount to the value it had reached in 2008 when Israeli exports to Kazakhstan reached \$159 million. Apparently, Israeli interest is increasing in these countries, where it is achieving relative penetration and success in countries that are supposed to be in a state of political and economic boycott with Israel. This reflects the stance of many Muslim countries towards the Palestinian issue. As for the rest of Muslim countries, they recorded a relative stability in their volume of trade (see table 2/4).

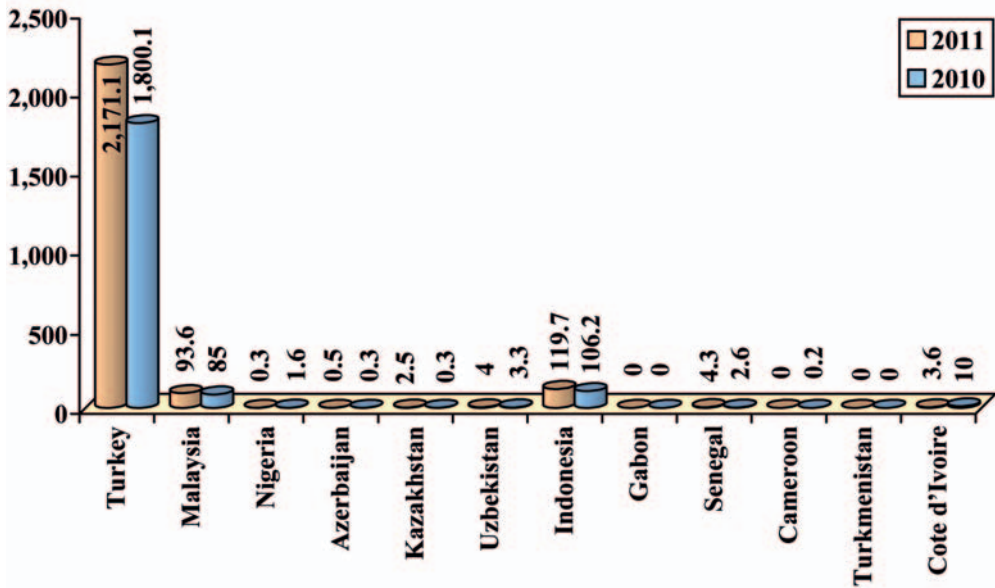
Table 2/4: Israeli Exports and Imports to/ from a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries 2008–2011 (\$ million)⁸³

Country	Israeli exports to:				Israeli imports from:			
	2011	2010	2009	2008	2011	2010	2009	2008
Turkey	1,850.7	1,310.7	1,086	1,609.9	2,171.1	1,800.1	1,387.7	1,825.3
Malaysia	716.4	798	116.8	30.2	93.6	85	68.5	100.6
Nigeria	365.4	303.7	210.3	304.3	0.3	1.6	2.4	1.4
Azerbaijan	125.1	107.6	264.3	129.4	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.3
Kazakhstan	92.6	62.5	57	158.6	2.5	0.3	0.9	3.4
Uzbekistan	19.4	37.2	20.7	23.3	4	3.3	0.4	2.7
Indonesia	17.3	12.9	12.5	15.8	119.7	106.2	90.7	293.4
Gabon	16	8.8	1.9	2.9	0	0	0	0
Senegal	12	3.3	3.7	8.8	4.3	2.6	1.1	0.7
Cameroon	10.1	12.8	24.3	18.2	0	0.2	0.1	0.5
Turkmenistan	6.3	19.9	3.9	1.7	0	0	0.6	0.2
Cote d'Ivoire	5.3	5.4	8.4	9.3	3.6	10	8.1	8.9

**Israeli Exports to a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries
2010–2011 (\$ million)**



Israeli Imports from a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries 2010–2011 (\$ million)



Conclusion

Whatever the interests of the Muslim countries and their preoccupations, the Palestinian issue remains a central one, taking an advanced position in their foreign policies, keeping in mind the disparate levels of official and popular support and interaction. Despite this, the aspirations of Muslim nations towards Palestine remain unfulfilled. Including the issue on the political, economic, media and cultural agendas of the effective political powers in Muslim countries will improve this situation. The OIC has continued with its minor contribution to the Palestinian issue, which is likely to remain the case until a serious change happens in the stances of major countries towards the Palestinian issue. Perhaps the changes in the Arab world, and especially in Egypt, are a reason for optimism in this regard.

As for Turkey, indications show two levels of dealing with the Palestinian issue. On the popular level, support for the Palestinian issue continued at an increasing pace, with a surge in Turkish popular hostility towards Israel.

Nevertheless, the Turkish government maintained its anti-Israel tone, by taking measures against Israel because of its refusal to apologize for killing Turkish volunteers on the Mavi Marmara ship. However, the Turkish stance preserved diplomatic relations with Israel, although more limited than before, and continued free commercial and economic relations with Israel. Hence, Turkey tends to follow a pragmatic approach in its foreign policy towards Israel, because it always takes into consideration its membership of NATO, relations with the US, and efforts to join the EU. All of these could be affected if Turkey continued to increase its hostility towards Israel.

Despite the warm welcome for the Palestinian Prime Minister Isma‘il Haniyyah in the Turkish parliament on 3/1/2012, official Turkish economic support to Palestine remains minute and not commensurate with Turkey’s political and economic weight in the Muslim world.

Iran continued to support the Palestinian issue politically and economically as an expression of its Islamic view of the conflict with Israel. This support is also a reflection of Iranian interests, where some parties accuse Iran of having its own ideological agenda in the region. However, when the Arab revolutions erupted, and the political map of the region reformulated, the “moderate” front suffered disintegration, and at the same time the refusal front (Iran, Syria, Hamas and Hizbullah) was also shaken, especially after Syria’s unrest. While Iran adopted a stance supporting the Syrian regime, Hamas supported the rightful demands of the Syrian people for freedom and democracy without denying at the same time Syria’s role in embracing and supporting Palestinian resistance. The gap may grow wider as events develop in Syria, but the issue of Palestine and supporting the resistance against the Israeli occupation must remain a point of consensus for all Muslims despite their differences. It must be taken into consideration that liberating the people, and the establishment of regimes that express their pride and dignity, are essential steps in an emancipation project that faces the “Zionist project.”

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Chapter Five

The Palestinian Issue and the International Situation

The Palestinian Issue and the International Situation

Introduction

There are two primary strategic focuses taken by the US and Western Europe with regard to the Palestinian question. The first strategy is to let the balance of power between the Palestinians and Israelis determine the outcome of negotiations, by continuously stating that a settlement of the conflict must be based on what is agreed in negotiations between the two sides, without intervention based on international law or even UN resolutions and international legitimacy. The second strategy is to prevent any developments in the region from having a positive effect on the Palestinian issue, which must be kept on the backburner for as long as possible, while diverting international attention away from Israeli political and military actions toward Palestinian land and people, providing Israel with a favorable atmosphere in which to implement its expansionist policy in a gradual but accelerating pace. This is evident from the unrelenting expansion of Jewish settlements in the WB, and even military strikes against the GS; all such developments do not receive adequate coverage in the international media, which is preoccupied with other international developments.

In 2011, a series of developments took place, providing this strategy with the opportunity to continue unabated, starting with the “Arab Spring,” which coincided with the start of the year, and which continues to unfold; or the return of international tension over the Iranian nuclear program with the possibility of military confrontation; this is not to mention the repercussions of the global financial crisis, which continues to impact the majority of capitalist countries, at political, economic and social levels in equal measure.

Add to this the suspension of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations throughout 2011; the successive resignations of US Middle East envoys (First George Mitchell, and then Dennis Ross, Obama’s adviser on the Middle East) in 2011; and the imminent US presidential election, with the Republicans holding a majority in the US House of Representatives, and more seats in the US Senate. With all this in mind, the conclusion is that the Palestinian issue is slipping further and further into obscurity, despite a faint hope resulting from reconciliation efforts between Fatah

and Hamas, wherein both sides expressed some optimism, but without this being reflected in tangible steps on the ground. This seems to be mainly due to the PA's fears over an adverse reaction by the US or some EU countries.

Despite Palestinian success in securing full membership in UNESCO, one of the UN's specialized agencies, which reflected positive shifts in international public opinion, European timidity and American political pressure at the UN Security Council, with respect to a full Palestinian membership of the UN, continue to undermine Palestinian success in political terms. Indeed, the bid for Palestinian membership of the UN has stumbled amid all the contradictory proposals and deliberations, and it seems that referral to the UNGA is currently the only possible path ahead.

First: The Quartet

The statements issued by the Quartet¹ (the UN, US, EU and Russia) reflect trends in the foreign policies of the major powers in the Middle East, with the exception of China and Japan, which both remain uninterested in taking part in a way that may compel them to adopt particular stances that may harm their relations with either side in the conflict.

Since its creation in Madrid in 2002, the Quartet has issued a total of 39 statements, in which the general principles that govern its work are often repeated, namely:

- Accepting a Palestinian state based on the borders of 1967 with agreed land swaps in certain areas.
- Rejection of settlement including in East Jerusalem.
- Leaving final status issues to be agreed upon by the Palestinian and Israeli sides.
- Rejection of so-called "terrorism," meaning armed resistance, even when armed resistance is sanctioned by international law.
- All 39 statements issued by the Quartet omitted the adoption of any actual measures against Israel, despite the latter's clear rejection of many of the stances adopted by the Quartet itself. Meanwhile several measures were approved against Palestinian parties that contravened the Quartet's stated positions on

some issues. This reflects US influence over the Quartet's decisions, which we shall refer to later, through the statements made by a number of European and Russian officials, as well as the Quartet Representative, Tony Blair.

The Quartet adopted a strategy in which fundamental issues are deferred to direct negotiations, rendering the items dealing with the Palestinian state and settlement a mere smokescreen. However, the Quartet has often intervened to prevent the situation from deteriorating into a complete impasse, and has sought to renew negotiations, thus contributing to the continuation of a negative situation. The statements of the Quartet in 2011 parroted the statements of the previous years, including the following:

1. First Statement on 5/2/2011²

The Quartet confirmed that it “took note of dramatic developments in Egypt and elsewhere in the region” and considered “the implications of these events for Arab-Israeli peace and agreed to discuss this further in upcoming meetings as a matter of high priority.” It seems that the Quartet is concerned, in following-up the developments of the Arab Spring, with the effects of changes in the Arab countries over the balance of power, and the nature of the political inclinations of the emerging Arab factions, especially the Islamist parties.

The Quartet then reiterated its traditional position that negotiations “should lead to an outcome that ends the occupation that began in 1967 and resolves all permanent status issues in order to end the conflict and achieve a two-state solution. The Quartet reiterates its support for concluding these negotiations by September 2011.” The Quartet then called on its envoys “to meet separately with Israeli and Palestinian negotiators in Brussels, as well as with representatives of the Arab Peace Initiative Committee.” This, it seems, was an attempt to create a parallel process to circumvent the suspension of negotiations.

The Quartet also stressed that efforts must focus on “how to bring about resumed negotiations on all core issues, including borders and security” going on to condemn rocket fire from GS, stressing “the need for calm and security for both peoples,” while expressing its regret for the discontinuation of Israel's moratorium on settlement activity. The Quartet reaffirmed that “unilateral actions by either party cannot prejudice the outcome of negotiations and will not be recognized by the international community.”

Despite the fact that the Quartet specified September as the end date for negotiations, it failed to address the cause of stalled negotiations, namely the continued illegal settlement building by the Israeli side, ignoring the statements of the Quartet which had not taken any practical and binding measures in this direction.

2. Second Statement on 14/3/2011³

This statement was limited to addressing a specific incident, namely an attack by the Palestinian resistance against settlers in the WB. In its statement, the Quartet stated that it “condemns in the strongest possible terms the violent murder of an Israeli family of five, including three young children, in the West Bank.” The Quartet offered its condolences to “the Israeli people,” and declared that “attacks on any civilians are completely unacceptable in any circumstance,” while calling for “those responsible to be brought to justice” and welcoming “the strong condemnation of this attack by President Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian leadership.”

There are two observations to be made with regard to this statement; the first involves the condemnation it expressed (as opposed to the regret expressed with regard to settlement activity or the killing of Palestinians). The second observation involves the Quartet’s direct call for action to be taken against those responsible, while the Quartet’s other statements on settlements contain no references to any form of action that ought to be taken against any Israeli party.

3. Third Statement on 20/5/2011⁴

This statement expressed support for the vision of Israeli-Palestinian peace outlined by President Barack Obama on 19/5/2011, which will be discussed in depth later. The Quartet agreed that “moving forward on the basis of territory and security provides a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to reach a final resolution of the conflict.”

4. Fourth Statement on 5/7/2011⁵

Here, the Quartet expressed its concerns regarding the conditions facing the population in GS, despite efforts that improved conditions in 2010, in particular the increase in the volume of goods and materials flowing into GS. The Quartet cited the “recent approval by Israel of materials for new homes and schools to

be constructed by UNRWA.” The Quartet noted that “more needs to be done to increase the flow of people and goods to and from Gaza,” in implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1860 (2009). The Quartet’s statement then called on all parties “wishing to deliver goods to the people of Gaza to do so through established channels so that their cargo could be inspected and transferred via established land crossings.”

The Quartet also recognized that Israel has “legitimate security concerns that must continue to be safeguarded” and said that it will work with “Israel, Egypt and the international community to prevent the illicit trafficking of arms and ammunition into Gaza.” The Quartet expressed regret over the injuries and fatalities on board the Turkish ship in 2010, and urged all governments concerned to show restraint and to discourage additional flotillas, in light of the risk posed to the safety of participants. The Quartet also called for “an end to the deplorable five-year detention of Gilad Shalit.”

Even a cursory examination of the wording of the statement reveals the bias towards the Israeli side. Any Israeli measure, no matter how small, is praised at length, while the Quartet avoids taking any practical measures against Israel’s violations of Palestinian rights. For instance, the Quartet praised Israel’s approval of certain materials for the GS, insisting that these materials be “inspected” in line with the Quartet’s acknowledgement of Israel’s security concerns.

Furthermore, it is possible that the reference made in the statement to transferring goods bound for GS via land crossings is not isolated from the desire of Israel to stop humanitarian aid that might reach GS through ships bound for the port there, operated by civilians from different countries. This is evident in the statement’s call for “discouraging” such endeavors. And while the statement referred to the Israeli soldier held captive by Hamas, it made no reference to the thousands of Palestinian detainees in occupation prisons.

5. Fifth Statement on 16/8/2011⁶

The statement expressed several positions as follows:

- a. The Quartet was greatly concerned by Israel’s announcements regarding plans for new housing units in the settlement of Ariel and in East Jerusalem, reiterating its position outlined in its statement of 12/3/2010.

- b. The Quartet reaffirmed that unilateral action by either party could not prejudice the outcome of negotiations and would not be recognized by the international community.
- c. The Quartet said that Jerusalem in particular is one of the core issues that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties.
- d. The Quartet said that the two sides must avoid actions that undermine the very goals that they and it are trying to achieve.

To examine this statement and its many rehashed positions, it is necessary to raise questions regarding the purpose of leaving the issue of Jerusalem to be resolved “through negotiations between the parties.” This is nothing but an attempt to let negotiations between the two sides determine the mechanism for settling the most sensitive issues, in a reflection of the American and British positions in particular. The US had never allowed negotiations by the parties to any other international conflict to determine the settlement. There are ample examples of this, including Kuwait, Afghanistan, Libya, Syria, Vietnam, Haiti, Somalia and so on.

All UN resolutions, despite their inherent undermining of Palestinian rights, have been rendered moot anyway, as long as the first and last reference point and determinant of the outcome is US-brokered negotiations. In this context, UN resolutions have been used only to obtain Arab and Palestinian concessions, when they were recognized, while successive Israeli governments have not recognize them, and the Quartet then shelved them, favoring continuing the negotiations.

6. Sixth Statement on 20/8/2011⁷

The statement said that the Quartet “condemns the attacks in southern Israel on 18 August 2011 and all acts of terrorism in the strongest terms.” The Quartet expressed hope that those responsible for the attacks would be brought to justice. The Quartet also expressed “concern about the security situation in the Sinai Peninsula” and said that “recent commitments by the Egyptian government to address the security situation in the Sinai are important, and the Quartet encourages the Egyptian government to find a lasting resolution to the issue of Sinai security.”

It is notable that the statement “condemns” and does not merely express “regret,” as is the case with the language used in the Quartet’s statements when the aggressor is Israel. Furthermore, there are almost always calls for measures in the case of the issues raised by Israel, something that the statements by the Quartet

fail to do when the issue is Israeli actions that contravene international law. This is made clear in the calls by the Quartet for those responsible for the attacks “to be brought to justice,” and its call on the Egyptian government to address the issue of security in the south of the Sinai desert.

7. Seventh Statement on 23/9/2011⁸

The statement mentioned the following:

- a. The Quartet took note of the application submitted by President ‘Abbas on 23/9/2011 to the UN Security Council (in reference to the Palestinian bid for full UN membership).
- b. The Quartet affirmed its determination to seek a comprehensive resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 1850, the Madrid principles including “land for peace,” as well as the Road Map, and the agreements previously reached between the parties.
- c. The Quartet proposed a number of steps, including:
 1. A preparatory meeting within one month between the parties to agree an agenda and method of proceeding in the negotiation.
 2. A commitment by both sides during this meeting that the objective of any negotiation is to reach an agreement within a timeframe agreed to by the parties, but not longer than the end of 2012. The Quartet said it expected the parties to come forward with comprehensive proposals within three months on territory and security, and to have made substantial progress within six months. To that end, the Quartet said it would convene an international conference in Moscow in consultation with the parties, at an appropriate time.
 3. A donor’s conference at which the international community would give full support to PA state-building actions.
 4. The Quartet recognized the achievements of the PA in preparing institutions for statehood as evidenced in reports to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, and stressed the need to preserve and build on such measures. In this regard, the Quartet said its members would consult in order to identify additional steps they could take to actively support Palestinian statehood, individually and collectively, to secure significantly greater independence and sovereignty for the PA over its affairs.

5. The Quartet called upon the parties to refrain from provocative actions to ensure that negotiations are effective. The Quartet reiterated the obligations of both parties under the Road Map.

This statement makes it clear that the Quartet wished to bring the parties back to negotiations, overlooking the main obstacle to this, namely the cessation of settlement activities, at a time when the Israeli side wanted to return to the negotiations without preconditions, a position that the Quartet seemed to adopt as well.

The statement made an implicit link between the proposed return to the negotiations and the holding of a donors conference to provide financial support for the Palestinian state. Such a link can be viewed, as along with other measure already discussed, as a technique to subdue the Palestinian side.

In its more recent efforts, the Quartet sought to meet with the two sides to try to convince them to return to the negotiating table. However, in its last statement, the Quartet said that it has called for the two sides to resume negotiations “without delay or preconditions,”⁹ essentially telling the Palestinian side that they must abandon the demand for a cessation of illegal settlement building as a condition for returning to negotiations.

On 26/10/2011, the Quartet Representative Tony Blair met with the Palestinian and Israeli sides separately in Jerusalem, to implement the Quartet’s statement issued on 23/9/2011. In the context of their shared commitment to the objective of direct negotiations leading toward an agreement by the end of 2012, the conferees agreed “to come forward with comprehensive proposals on territory and security within three months.” The Quartet also called upon the parties to refrain from provocative actions. It was also agreed that the parties would meet regularly for the next three months following the statement in order to review progress.¹⁰

Whereas the Quartet’s statement mentions that each party must specify the political borders it accepts for its state, it was stated that the Palestinian side had indeed submitted its proposal in this regard, while the Israeli side refused to do so, saying instead that any counterproposal would be presented in direct negotiations.¹¹

In addition to the statements issued by the Quartet, it is necessary to note the efforts of the Quartet Representative, Tony Blair, who since September 2011 has been seeking to push the parties to return to the negotiating table without

necessarily meeting the condition of a cessation of illegal settlement activity. Blair's efforts were stepped up in late October 2011.¹² It is generally assumed that Blair's diplomacy took place in line with US efforts. Indeed, in an interview with *Alquds* newspaper, Blair said that the Americans were leading the political process. He also stated that political negotiations had always been traditionally led by the US, and that this was nothing new.¹³

Also noteworthy regarding Quartet policy was the bid to obtain a pledge from the Palestinian side to abandon armed resistance. Blair expressed this clearly when he said that the most important issue if a Palestinian national unity government was going to be formed was that it must possess real unity. Blair added that the position of President 'Abbas is very clear; namely that attaining the two-state solution must come about through political negotiations not violence. This was the main issue, according to Blair. If it was possible to create conditions favorable for this in the framework of a unified political position, then Blair's view was that this would be very positive. Blair believed that what would not work was a government in which half would say that resolution could be reached through negotiations, while the other would say that it would use armed resistance to achieve the goal. Blair wanted a clear commitment to nonviolent means to achieve goals, on the grounds that this would be the only basis that the international community would be prepared to deal with.¹⁴

The approach of Blair fits with the strategy that seeks to deny the Palestinian side any means to apply pressure during negotiations, including staging an *Intifadah*, or any other step unacceptable to the Israeli government.

Second: The United States of America (US)

1. Negotiations Under a Balance of Power Tipped in Favor of Israel

Perhaps the most over-used phrases in US statements concerning the Middle East are those that state that the outcome of negotiations must center on what the PA and Israel agree over, as highlighted in our review of the Quartet's positions.

However, anyone familiar with the negotiating environment will notice that the US makes concerted efforts to maintain and even increase the disparity in the balance of power between the two negotiating sides, in military, economic, political

and diplomatic terms. This means that the outcome of the negotiations can only be a reflection of this balance of power, and will only lead to a peace settlement in which all of Israel's conditions and demands are met. US reluctance to pressure on the Israeli side is clarified through what the Palestinian Chief Negotiator Sa'ib 'Uraiqat told David Hill, an adviser to Obama; that the failure of this administration in pushing for a complete freeze of Israeli settlements will damage its credibility. However, Hill rejected 'Uraiqat's inference, saying that the US cannot force a sovereign government to do anything; it can only use persuasion, negotiation and highlight shared interests.¹⁵ Yet such diplomacy of persuasion is absent when it comes to the Palestinian side, as is clear from the following events:

a. The US suspended its payments to UNESCO when the organization accepted membership of Palestine (we will return to this issue in detail later). In a statement made on 31/10/2011 following UNESCO's admission of Palestine as a full member, Victoria Nuland, spokesperson for the US State Department said:

Today's vote by the member states of UNESCO to admit Palestine as a member is regrettable, premature, and undermines our shared goal of a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in the Middle East. The United State[s] remains steadfast in its support for the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state, but such a state can only be realized through direct negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians.... However, Palestinian membership as a state in UNESCO triggers longstanding legislative restrictions which will compel the United States to refrain from making contributions to UNESCO.¹⁶

On 5/10/2011, the US House of Representatives confirmed what that Congress had threatened in early August 2011 by suspending the payment of \$200 million in aid to the PA, which had been part of a \$358 million five-year plan to improve WB infrastructure.¹⁷

b. The reactions of official US institutions to the Palestinian bid to obtain UN membership revealed the US strategy of placing Palestinian negotiators in particular, and Arab negotiators in general, in an environment of wide and increasing disparities in the balance of power, tipped firmly in favor of Israel. This is evidenced by the calls for practical measures to be taken against the Palestinian side in a manner that keeps its negotiating power at a minimum, while foreclosing any attempts to improve its legal position. This was manifested, for example, when the US wielded the veto on February 18th against a UN Security Council

resolution that condemned the building of Israeli settlements in the WB. This had been a policy pursued by the US 42 times previously, in order to thwart resolutions condemning Israel in the UN Security Council, including 33 directly concerning the Palestinian issue and the Arab territories occupied since 1967. Conversely, the US offers legal and logistical support for Israel, for example the US House of Representatives granting \$205 million to Israel to help it deploy the Iron Dome anti-missile system.¹⁸

Furthermore, official US institutions reacted angrily to the Palestinian bid at the UN; the following are some examples of this:

1. The US House of Representatives voted with an overwhelming majority to pass a bill calling on the US administration to suspend aid to the PA, after the latter went to the UN to obtain recognition of Palestinian statehood. The bill was supported by 407 representatives, while only six objected, despite the fact that this bill was not binding for the US administration under the US Constitution.¹⁹

2. Eighty-one US representatives (26 Democrats and 55 Republicans) made a visit to Israel in August to show opposition the Palestinian bid for UN membership.²⁰

3. On 8/9/2011, Representative Joe Walsh, along with 42 Republican representatives, introduced a bill that supported Israel's right to annex the WB if the Palestinians continue to insist on seeking UN membership.²¹

4. On 12/9/2011, Representative Steve Israel, along with three other representatives, called for the US "to prohibit Foreign Military Financing program assistance to countries that vote in the United Nations General Assembly in favor of recognizing a Palestinian state in the absence of a negotiated border agreement between the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority."²²

5. On 13/9/2011, the Chairwoman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the US House of Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen said in an interview with *Haaretz*, "We need to stop Abu-Mazen's dangerous scheme. I hope that the U.S. Congress takes a very forceful stand against this statehood issue. It's time to tell the Palestinians: If you are going with this statehood issue and it is granted, then the U.S. must cut funding to the Palestinians."²³

Therefore, it was possible that extensive pressure exerted to suspend aid, in conjunction with the lack of opposition to it, led Congress to approve on 28/12/2011 a reduction in aid to the PA from \$187 million to \$40 million.

Mark Toner, a spokesman for the State Department, justified the fact that not all aid was suspended by saying that this “help[s] to build a more democratic, stable, and secure region.”²⁴

6. On 21/9/2011, Senator Orrin Hatch, along with 18 Republican senators, called for the US to prohibit “funding for the U.N. if the Security Council or UNGA grants Palestine a change in status in the absence of a comprehensive peace agreement.”²⁵

7. The US applied the pressure to exploit the controversy surrounding the Goldstone Report, after its primary author Richard Goldstone backtracked on his original condemnation of Israel. US Permanent Representative to the UN Susan Rice, said that the Goldstone Report on the Israeli war on GS two years ago must disappear, after Judge Goldstone reversed course with regard to his conclusions.²⁶

All the above examples confirm that the US takes particular care to ensure that negotiations take place in an environment that enables the Israeli side to achieve the greatest possible gains with minimal losses.

c. With the Arab preoccupation with the changes that have affected the regimes in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, and the developments in Syria, Yemen and other Arab countries, the Israeli government continued to engage in large-scale settlement activities in Jerusalem and beyond. The US did not voice any practical positions with regard to this issue. Instead, the American media gave extensive coverage to the Arab Spring, while only covering expanding Israeli settlement in passing. In the speech delivered by President Obama at the US State Department on 19 May, the prime focus was praising the Arab uprisings, even after the toppling of some of the most important allies of the US in Egypt and Tunisia.

d. The US called on Israel to respond favorably to the popular uprisings in the Arab region. In a speech in Washington the US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta told Israel that “it is partly responsible for its increasing isolation and that it now must take ‘bold action’ — diplomatic, not military — to mend ties with its Arab neighbors and settle previously intractable territorial disputes with the Palestinians.” He also “called on Israel to ‘reach out and mend fences with those who share an interest in regional stability,’ specifically Turkey, Egypt and Jordan,” and urged Israel to resume talks with the Palestinians. In addition, Panetta reaffirmed the “unshakable commitment to Israel’s security” of the US. He added, “Unfortunately, over the past year, we have seen Israel’s isolation from its traditional security partners in the

region grow, and the pursuit of a comprehensive Middle East peace has effectively been put on hold.” However, at the same time he noted that “Israel is not solely responsible for this isolation,” and talked about “an international campaign underway to isolate Israel.” Panetta also added that “now is the time for Israel to take bold action and to move towards a negotiated two-state solution.”²⁷

e. Panetta pledged to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, and said that US President Barack Obama did not completely rule out military action as the administration continued the policy of using both diplomacy and economic sanctions against Iran. Panetta stated that military action should be a “last resort,” and pledged to continue offering broad military support to Israel; “the United States will ensure that Israel continues to enjoy unquestioned air superiority by delivering to Israel the advanced fifth-generation fighter aircraft, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.”²⁸

f. The US voiced its opposition to the rapprochement between Hamas and Fatah, and the potential for reconciliation between the two sides following their Cairo meetings in November 2011. This meant that the US preferred for negotiations to take place amid Palestinian division, a weak position for Palestinian negotiators, and a strong starting point for Israel. Indeed, US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, said on 7/12/2011 that he had explained the US position to Abu Mazin in this regard; that the US understands the Palestinian aspiration for unity, but the Palestinians will not obtain statehood in partnership with a “terrorist group.” It remains the view in the US that Hamas is a “terrorist” organization.²⁹

g. The US position is increasingly clear with regard to its policy on the negotiating environment. The choice not to take any practical measures against Israel, despite its refusal to halt settlement building, which the US, the Quartet and the majority of the international community officially rejects.

h. The US supported the proposals pertaining to the protection of civilians in Libya, Syria and Sudan, as is clear from the US address at the UN Security Council on 9/11/2011.³⁰ Yet it rejected such proposals when requested by the PA. This was evidenced by the fact that the US wielded its veto to prevent the sending of international observers to the WB and GS to ensure civilians were protected on 28/3/2001, a position it continued to hold.

All the steps mentioned above confirm that the strategic outlook of the US is effectively identical to that of Israel. The US continues to boost Israeli military power, bar any resolutions condemning Israel, and consolidating the strategic disparity in the balance of power.

2. US Efforts for a Peace Settlement

It is helpful to scrutinize the main tenets of US strategy in the Middle East, according to the declared policies of US officials, and to interpret them in the context of the Palestinian question. US Under Secretary for Political Affairs, William Burns, identified these tenets under four broad titles, namely:³¹

- a. **Supporting Peaceful Democratic Change:** In practice, however, the US requires that no faction opposed to its policies take power, even if through democratic means.
- b. **Supporting Economic Modernization:** This effectively means expanding the private sector in a manner that enables the infiltration of American companies and funds in to the structure of the Arab economy.
- c. **Achieving a Comprehensive Arab-Israeli Peace:** The proviso being that this must be the result of the balance of power between the Palestinian and Israeli sides determining the outcome of the negotiations.
- d. **Boosting Regional Security:** This means, in the US lexicon, pushing Arab capabilities towards further encirclement of Iran on the one hand, and the furthering of Israeli superiority over any other force in the region, on the other.

Nevertheless, this does not negate the fact that there are deep divisions within the current US administration over how to tackle the issue of the Middle East, as confirmed by some of the following:

- a. The resignation of several American officials involved in the Middle East peace process. Despite the enthusiasm shown by US Envoy George Mitchell upon his appointment in January 2009, and his promise that he would succeed in resolving the conflict, along the lines of his success in resolving the conflict in Northern Ireland, he came to appreciate the difficulty of the task at hand in the Middle East. He ultimately resigned on 13/5/2011, and was succeeded by his deputy, David Hill. The Palestinians, represented by Nabil Sha‘th, said that Mitchell’s resignation was the result of Israeli policies, which denied him any support and caused him to fail in his mission. This was while the Israelis, represented by Zalman Shoval,

special envoy for Netanyahu, claimed that Mitchell's "efforts were undermined by the Palestinians' refusal to engage in meaningful negotiations." For his part, Netanyahu "has made it clear that the turmoil in the region has heightened his country's security concerns, making a negotiated peace an unacceptably risky gamble for now."³² As regards Mitchell, he said in his resignation letter that "his original intention had been to serve two years and he had done longer than that."³³ This means that Mitchell had wagered on reaching a solution within two years, something that he failed to achieve. Mitchell's failure is reflected in the fact that the report he presented to the US administration in the year 2000, for a peace settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict comprised three main points, namely the cessation of Israeli settlement activity, an end to violence, and a return to negotiations; the same topics being discussed now, 11 years later.

It also seems that Obama's appointment of Dennis Ross to the National Security Council as a Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for the Central Region (the Middle East, the Gulf, Afghanistan, Pakistan and South Asia) six months after Mitchell was appointed had an impact on the latter's efforts. The appointment of Ross, who served for a long time as a negotiator in the Middle East, cast a shadow over Mitchell's position, particularly in the context of the disagreements within the US administration, in which Mitchell and Ross were on opposing sides. Indeed, it seems that the presence of Ross, who was named by the book *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* by John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt as a member of the Israeli lobby in the US, made Mitchell's job more difficult.³⁴ For instance, at a time when Ross sought to persuade the Palestinian president to abandon the bid for UN membership, Mitchell showed a lesser degree of bias to Israel, when he said on the eve of his visit to the Middle East that "his country would freeze its aid to Israel if the Jewish state failed to advance peace talks with the Palestinians and a two-state solution."³⁵

It seems that failure is becoming increasingly visible in the Obama administration. For one thing, Mitchell's resignation was followed by the resignation of Dennis Ross. Although Ross justified his resignation by saying that "After nearly three years of serving in the administration, I am going to be leaving to return to private life," the American media said that it was motivated by two things: First, the Iranian issue; and second, "to avoid the U.S. pressuring Israel to take steps its government is unwilling to take."³⁶ Rather, Ross is interested in

promoting the “Jewish identity” of the state of Israel. Moreover, the institute which he previously headed, the Jewish People Policy Institute (JPPI) headquartered in Jerusalem, is spearheading a campaign to convince American Jews to immigrate to Israel to reaffirm the “Jewishness” of the state, and preempt the return of Palestinian refugees.³⁷ This was rejected by most American Jewish organizations, despite the fact that there was promotion of immigration to Israel contained in ads sponsored by the Israeli government. Opposition to these calls appeared in statements issued by organizations such as the Jewish Federations of North America and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).³⁸

This series of resignations by US administration diplomats involved in the Middle East peace process indicated that 2012 would be a year of confusion and helplessness for US policies, which will have nothing meaningful to bring to the table regarding resolution of the conflict, especially so when the administration will probably be unwilling to take any serious steps during its presidential reelection campaign.

b. The private conversation between the US President Barack Obama and the French President Nicolas Sarkozy during the Group of Twenty (G20) summit meeting in Cannes on 9/11/2011 showed that the personal convictions of Western officials do not necessarily impact on the policies of their administrations. During the conversation, Sarkozy called Netanyahu a “liar” and Obama responded by saying, “You are fed up with him, but I have to deal with him even more often than you.”³⁹

c. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, President Obama “ordered the US intelligence services to step up monitoring of Israel to glean clues of its intentions,” especially after “Israel has refused to reassure President Barack Obama that it would warn him in advance of any pre-emptive strike on Iran’s nuclear capabilities.”⁴⁰

Despite all this, US diplomacy went ahead with its efforts to push the parties back to the negotiating table. The vision put forward by President Obama as a plan for peace in the region in a speech on 19/5/2011 comprised the following points:⁴¹

a. Two States: “A lasting peace will involve two states for two peoples. Israel as a Jewish state and the homeland for the Jewish people, and the state of Palestine as the homeland for the Palestinian people; each state enjoying self-determination, mutual recognition, and peace.”

- b. Territory:** “The boundaries of Israel and the Palestinian state should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps.”
- c. Security:** “The Palestinian state must be non-militarized, and the full and phased withdrawal of Israeli forces would be geared to the ability of Palestinian security forces and other arrangements as agreed to prevent a resurgence of terrorism; stop the infiltration of weapons; and provide effective border security.”
- d. Timeframe:** “The duration of this transition period must be agreed, and may vary for different areas like borders. But it must be sufficient to demonstrate the effectiveness and credibility of security arrangements.”
- e. Jerusalem and the Refugees:** “Once Palestinians can be confident in the outlines of their state, and Israelis are confident that the new Palestinian state will not imperil its security, the parties will be in a position to grapple with the core issues of refugees and Jerusalem.”

Therefore, the essence of Obama’s project is based on two premises:

- a. Palestinian recognition of Israel as a “Jewish state for the Jewish people.”
- b. Leaving all issues to be agreed one way or the other during negotiations, whether the issue is territories, borders, Jerusalem or the refugees, with even the time frame for all these issues to be resolved.

Israel is well versed with the intricacies of domestic American politics and reacted sharply especially to Obama’s reference to the 1967 lines, forcing him to backtrack several days later. During The American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) Policy Conference 2011, Obama said:

My position has been misrepresented several times, let me reaffirm what ‘1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps’ means. By definition, it means that the parties themselves—Israelis and Palestinians—will negotiate a border that is different than the one that existed on June 4, 1967. That’s what mutually agreed-upon swaps means... It allows the parties themselves to account for the changes that have taken place over the last 44 years. It allows the parties themselves to take account of those changes, including the new demographic realities on the ground, and the needs of both sides.⁴²

If we bear it in mind that 2012 is an election year, and that Obama had received 78% of the Jewish vote in his first term,⁴³ then we see that Obama will inevitably refrain from taking any position that may antagonize the Israeli side. We thus

observed early on political one-upmanship in seeking Israel's favor among the US presidential candidates. For example, the Republican presidential candidate Newt Gingrich said in an interview with *Haaretz* that an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines would be "suicidal," and he added, "An Israel that accepts 1967 borders is an Israel that accepts the demise of the country." He also said that "a growing number of American conservatives see U.S. national security and Israeli national security as faced by the same enemy."⁴⁴

In another statement, Newt Gingrich said, "There was no Palestine as a state. It was part of the Ottoman Empire." He added, "I think that we've had an invented Palestinian people who are in fact Arabs and who were historically part of the Arab community. And they had a chance to go many places, and for a variety of political reasons have sustained this war against Israel now since the 1940s, and it's tragic."⁴⁵

It seems that the US is in favor of the idea of parallel negotiations as a way out of the impasse in the direct talks over the issue of Zionist settlement. In her speech to the UN Security Council on 24/10/2011, the US Permanent Representative to the UN, Susan Rice said that:

President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu have each agreed to send negotiators to Jerusalem for preparatory meetings with the Quartet envoys on October 26th. Thus, our focus remains on laying the groundwork for these and subsequent meetings leading to the two parties exchanging comprehensive proposals on territory and security by the end of the year, as outlined in the Quartet's timeline.

Rice also said, "We believe Palestinian efforts to seek member-state status at the United Nations will not advance the peace process but rather will complicate, delay, and perhaps derail prospects for a negotiated settlement." Rice also went on to say that "the fate of existing settlements is one that must be dealt with by the parties, along with the other permanent-status issues, including the status of Jerusalem. For that reason, steps by the Government of Israel to advance significant new construction in Givat Hamatos are deeply disappointing." After referring to the illegal trafficking of weapons in GS, she said, "The United States is very pleased that Gilad Shalit has finally been reunited with his family after five long years in captivity."⁴⁶ However, Rice failed to mention more than one thousand Palestinian prisoners who were freed from Israeli prisons.

In this context, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reiterated the US position on settlement building condemning the demolition of the Shepherd Hotel in East Jerusalem by saying, “This disturbing development undermines peace efforts to achieve the two-state solution. In particular, this move contradicts the logic of a reasonable and necessary agreement between the parties on the status of Jerusalem.”⁴⁷

3. American Public Opinion Trends

Upon examining trends in American public opinion regarding Obama’s policy vis-à-vis the situation between the Palestinians and Israel up until October 2011, the division is revealed to be sharp, with 44% approving Obama’s way of handling the situation, and 48% disapproving.⁴⁸ However, the J Street Group, which was founded in 2008 with a membership of 170 thousand American Jews and headed by Jeremy Ben-Ami, made calls for some elements of US policy in the Middle East to be reconsidered, and for greater focus on diplomatic solutions rather than resorting to the use of force. Some pundits believe that this could be a sign of relations turning sour between some segments of the Jewish-American community and Israel, in particular for Jews who support Palestinian statehood and oppose illegal settlement building.⁴⁹

A poll by Rasmussen Reports indicated that a majority of Americans want to suspend aid to all Middle Eastern countries with the exception of Israel. 58% of the respondents said that they wanted to see aid to Arab countries suspended, while 20% said that they wanted to maintain it; 21% said they were unsure. On the other hand, 51% said they support the continuation of aid to Israel, while 32% opposed it, and 17% said they were undecided.⁵⁰

In a survey conducted by Gallup on Americans’ stance on the conflict in the Middle East, 63% said that they support and sympathize with Israel. Conversely, if the results of the survey are examined closely, one can see that the percentage comes from the support of older people for Israel (67%), while among young Americans aged 18 to 34, this percentage drops to 58%, indicating a significant decline. 17% of Americans said that they supported the Palestinians and 20% said they supported both sides, compared to a previous figure of only 7% supporting the Palestinians.⁵¹

Third: The European Union (EU)

European countries did not hide their dissatisfaction with US domination of the Middle East peace process, individually and through the Quartet. The French President Nicolas Sarkozy expressed the sentiment when he said:

France will be proposing the organization of a donors' conference for the future Palestinian State, on one condition: that this donors' conference has a political dimension. Europe can no longer go on paying and being excluded from the political discussions. If the political discussions were making headway without Europe, you could say: 'That's how it is,' but on top of this things aren't moving forward..... starting to discuss the settlements was a mistake for one simple reason: there are settlements which (once the border has been mapped out) will cause a problem because they will be in territory which will no longer be Israeli and others which won't cause a problem since they will be in the part of the territory which will stay in Israel.⁵²

In truth, Sarkozy's position reflects two things: First, uneasiness regarding US domination over the negotiation process, and second, the legitimacy gifted to some settlements, since he pointed out that some of the settlements would remain in Israel.

Differences between the US and Europe can also be seen in their diplomatic conduct relative to certain aspects of the political settlement. This is reflected, for example in the position on settlement building, as seen when the UK, France and Germany voted on 18/2/2011 in favor of a proposal in the UN Security Council condemning Israel over settlement building; only for the US to veto and block the proposal.

Differences among the positions of the European countries also exist, relative to many aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. For instance, the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton stated that the 27 member states of the EU would vote individually should the Palestinians unilaterally go to the UN to obtain recognition of an independent state.⁵³ Meanwhile the European Parliament ruled the PA's bid for Palestinian statehood at the UN to be "legitimate," and, in a resolution adopted by an overwhelming majority, called on the "EU's foreign affairs High Representative and Member States to find a common EU position on the Palestinian request [for full statehood and UN membership] and to avoid divisions among Member States."⁵⁴

The position of European countries vis-à-vis President Obama's announcement that borders in the Palestinian-Israeli peace settlement should be on the basis of the 1967 lines, indicates that these countries do not have the ability to take serious political initiatives independent of the US position. This is evident from the fact that these countries rushed to praise the US position, whereas they had failed to adopt such a stance themselves. Catherine Ashton welcomed "President Obama's confirmation that the borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps, secure and recognised borders for both sides."⁵⁵ The Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski also expressed his support for Obama's position, after a meeting with his French and German counterparts.⁵⁶ As for the Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, he lauded the "explicit" message sent out by Obama. Bildt said, "It was very good that he was so explicit on this point. It is a basic precondition for a peace process. This means that Europe and the U.S. right now can speak with one voice on this important issue."⁵⁷ In addition, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said, "I think the proposal of taking the 1967 border and of considering the exchange of territory—considering it and not dogmatically adhering to it—would be a good and manageable path."⁵⁸ The British also supported Obama's position, and Foreign Secretary William Hague praised Obama's "clear message that the borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps."⁵⁹ Obama later backtracked on his position, causing a great deal of diplomatic embarrassment to the European countries.

European diplomatic efforts in 2011, relative to the Palestinian question, were characterized by the following features:

1. Linking the Arab Uprisings to Efforts for Settling the Palestinian Issue

It seems that the European side, like the American side, was concerned that the transformations taking place in the Arab world may lead to boosting the Arab camp that is opposed to long-standing Arab appeasement and support towards Israel, whether as a result of the growing chances for the Islamist parties to take power, or the increasing role of the Arab street in shaping political decisions, bearing in mind that Arab public opinion is mostly opposed to offering concessions to Israeli policies. For this reason, Western countries are urging the parties to rush to reach an agreement.

Catherine Ashton visited the region in June 2011, and met with officials in Palestine, Jordan, Israel and Egypt, saying “With the momentous events going on in North Africa and following President Obama’s speech last month, it is more urgent than ever that we kick start the Middle East Peace Process.”⁶⁰

Ashton then visited Israel again in late August 2011, and met with several Israeli officials. At the end of the visit, Ashton issued a statement in which she said “I believe the changes we witnessed in the neighbourhood, changes in countries around Israel, give even more momentum to the need to try and find solution that will enable the people of Israel and the people of Palestine to live in peace and security together.” She also reiterated the EU’s condemnation of the attack in Eilat on 18/8/2011, and said, “The security of the people of Israel is a top priority for the EU.”⁶¹

2. Condemnation of Israeli Settlement in the Territories Occupied in 1967

In a statement issued on 15/10/2011, Catherine Ashton reiterated the European position on ongoing Israeli settlement activities, saying:

I deplore the decision by the Israeli Authorities to advance the plan for the construction of 2600 new housing units in the settlement of Givat Hamatos and to legalize—under Israeli Law—houses in West Bank outposts. This is unacceptable. Both actions run against roadmap obligations. Settlements are illegal under international law. These decisions should be reversed. The proposed constructions in Givat Hamatos are of particular concern as they would cut the geographic contiguity between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The EU has repeatedly called on Israel to end all settlement activity, including natural growth, and to dismantle outposts erected since March 2001.⁶²

This European position was further reaffirmed on 2/11/2011, when Ashton said, “I am deeply concerned by the latest Israeli decisions to expedite settlement activities in response to Palestinian accession to UNESCO. Israeli settlement activity is illegal under international law including in East Jerusalem and an obstacle to peace. We have stated this many times before. We call on Israel to reverse this decision.”⁶³

On 13/10/2011, the EU delegation office in Jerusalem also condemned Israel's demolition of a mosque in the northern WB for the third time in one year, and called on "Israel to review its policy and planning system in order to allow for the socio-economic development of the Palestinian communities."⁶⁴

As noted earlier, the positions expressed by the EU did not include any reference in any statements to punitive action against Israel, similar to the measures taken against GS, Iran or Syria.

3. The "Moral" Bias to the Israeli Side

The statements issued by the EU revealed a profound bias when expressing certain facts. For example, on 10/9/2011, Ashton expressed her regret for the attack by Egyptian crowds against the Israeli Embassy in Cairo, which took place after several Egyptian soldiers were killed by Israeli forces on the border in the Sinai desert;⁶⁵ Ashton's statement made no reference to the deceased Egyptian soldiers. On 12/10/2011, she welcomed the release of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, and added, "I pay tribute to the work of all those who have worked tirelessly to secure his release, and in particular the Egyptian and German negotiators."⁶⁶

4. Continued Financial Support⁶⁷

In May 2011, the European Commission (EC) announced its decision to allocate a package of additional financial assistance to the PA worth 85 million euros (around \$121.96 million) in the 2011 budget. The EC noted that this package was in addition to the 100 million euros (around \$143.49 million) that it previously approved as part of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.⁶⁸ The EC also announced additional aid in August worth 115 million euros (around \$164.95 million), distributed among several sectors (see table 1/5).⁶⁹ On the other hand, the PA and the EU agreed, on October 25, for the German government to finance youth employment programs in the context of improving training and vocational education programs, to the tune of four million euros (around \$5.48 million) over four years.⁷⁰ The UK provided 122 million pounds (around \$192.89 million) for the next three years,⁷¹ and France offered 10 million euros (around \$13 million) as a grant to the PA.⁷²

Table 1/5: EC Support to PA Sectors, August 2011

Sector	Amount (million euros)	Amount (\$ million)
UNRWA's 2011 Regular Budget	40	57.37
Water Sanitation and Re-use Program in the WB	22	31.56
Rule of Law	20	28.69
Financial Governance and State-Building	14	20.08
Private Sector and Capacity-Building for Institutions related to the economy	11	15.78
Development of Community Services in East Jerusalem	8	11.47
Total	115	164.95

5. European Public Opinion

A poll conducted by ICM Research between 19 and 25/1/2011 on a sample of adults in the UK, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain showed that 10% of respondents supported the continuation of their countries' support for Israel, while 39% believed that their countries must refrain from supporting Israel. In addition, 53% believed that the Israeli economic blockade of GS to be "illegal under international law," compared to 16% of respondents who said it is "legal under international law."

Regarding the victims of the conflict, 31% said that the Palestinians are the primary victims, while 6% said that the Israelis are the victims. Regarding the democratic character of the state, the poll showed that 34% of the respondents believe that Israel is "a democracy." 65% said that Israel "does not treat all religious groups the same," compared to 13% who said that it "treats all religious groups the same." With regard to the position on Hamas, 45% said that "Hamas should be included" in the peace process, while 25% rejected this and said "Hamas should be excluded."

Regarding whether the "European law should be changed to make it easier for those accused of war crimes to visit Europe," something that particularly affects Israeli officials accused of war crimes in GS, 58% objected to any changes, while 7% of British respondents supported them. The current Conservative-Liberal coalition government in the UK led by David Cameron had expressed its commitment to amending the relevant laws in this regard.⁷³

Furthermore, according to *The Guardian*, a poll covering the UK, Germany and France showed that 59% of British respondents, 69% of French respondents and 71% of German respondents said that “the government should vote in favour of a UN resolution recognising a Palestinian state alongside Israel.”⁷⁴

Trends in public opinion in Europe have become a source of concern for Israel, which has responded by launching a comprehensive strategy aimed at restoring its old image among Europeans.⁷⁵

Fourth: The Russian Federation

Russian foreign policy has been showing a greater degree of potency since Vladimir Putin took office in 2000. Russia seems determined to improve its position in the region, an issue that requires further elaboration.

Russia (whether with Tsarist Russia, under the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) or with the Russian Federation at present) has two main areas of interest, namely Eastern Europe and West Asia. Russia lost the first when it joined the EU and the NATO. This has prompted Russia to seek to preserve its footholds in the second area, of which Arab Asia is a key part.

Statements issued by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2011 reveal the general trends in Russian policy regarding the Palestinian issue, while bearing in mind that this policy has been increasing in scope relative to previous years. Despite the fact that Russia, similar to other countries, has refrained from taking any punitive measures against Israel, it has been gradually reducing the gap with the Palestinian and Arab sides in such a way that it appears to be putting pressure on Israel. In essence, this remains just an attempt by Russia to promote its strategic interests by not losing its second vital area.

Russian stances in 2011 have been characterized by attitudes that confirm our analysis; they are detailed here:⁷⁶

1. The Position on Settlement Building

Israeli settlement in East Jerusalem represents the most important dimension of this issue. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov explained the Russian position towards the issue of Jerusalem by saying, “There will be no solution (to resolving

the status of Jerusalem) without the border demarcation and the resolution of the refugee problem.” He also stated that Russia believes that West Jerusalem should belong to Israel, East Jerusalem to the Palestinians, while the holy sites could be placed under international control. According to Lavrov, any statements claiming that Jerusalem would belong only to one side “will never work” on the ground; what is possible instead, he said, would be an inter-state format that reflects the existing situation in terms of sectarian relations. The Russian foreign minister also stressed that the legal status of Jerusalem should be determined as part of the general settlement to be agreed upon by the Israelis and the Palestinians, in the framework of their agreement on border issues and land swaps. Lavrov said that no one expects Israel to dismantle large settlements and evict their residents, but that the Palestinians must be given something similar to what Israel receives.⁷⁷

Lavrov’s statements indicate that Russia does not mind some large settlements remaining under Israeli control, a view that is compatible with the attitudes of certain European countries, as we noted earlier.

In a statement by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 16/11/2011, Russia reiterated its “deep concern” regarding the announcement by Israel that it will expedite settlement construction in areas in East Jerusalem. The statement said, “Any construction in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, is contrary to the well-known norms of international law and must be stopped.”⁷⁸

At the 16th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, Lavrov said, “The situation in many regions of the world, including the Balkans, Africa, South and South East Asia and the Middle East, urgently calls for a more comprehensive and thorough approach to accommodate the religious factor. As for the fate of Jerusalem, that factor is a decisive one.”⁷⁹

The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also criticized the Israeli move to approve the construction of 1,600 housing units in East Jerusalem in August, in addition to 900 units announced previously. Alexander Lukashevich, the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that these settlements “exacerbate the complicated, volatile situation in the Middle East peace process, are illegal and go against the efforts of the international community, especially the Quartet of international mediators, aimed at finding a mutually acceptable basis for resumption of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations.” He added, “We hope that the Israeli side will reconsider these plans.”⁸⁰

2. The Effects of the Arab Uprisings on Efforts to Resolve the Palestinian Issue

Russian analyses of the current Arab uprisings indicate confusion over the assessment of the possible repercussions for Russian policy. For example, there are concerns regarding the rise of Islamists to power in several Arab countries, in a manner that may fuel Islamic fundamentalism in the region, which may affect Russia itself, particularly in Chechnya. However, there is another current of opinion in Russia that believes these uprisings will increase the gap between the Arab and the US, enhancing Russia's chances of exploiting this gap.⁸¹

The issue of the Arab uprisings was thus raised by Russian officials in many of their foreign meetings. On 24/3/2011, a meeting was held between Lavrov and Netanyahu in Moscow in which the impact of the developments (i.e., the Arab uprisings) in the region over the peace process was discussed, as well as the issue of the Iranian nuclear program. Both sides "unanimously expressed a strong condemnation of manifestations of terrorism that claim innocent human lives," while Russia stressed the need to resolve "all the doubts concerning the nature of Iran's nuclear programme exclusively by peaceful means."⁸²

Regarding the link between the Arab uprisings and the Palestinian issue, a joint statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton and Foreign Minister of Russia Sergey Lavrov on 24/2/2011 said that:

Current upheavals in countries of the region should not be used as a pretext for preserving an impasse in the efforts to establish comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. On the contrary, these efforts should be intensified. The achievement of a just settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict is a crucially important component of the efforts aimed at stabilization and sustainable development of the region as a whole.⁸³

One can assume that the "pretext" mentioned in the statement above is addressed to the Israeli side, which could use potential security threats arising from the recent developments in the Arab region as an excuse to drag its feet in implementing certain steps in the course of the peace process with the Palestinians.

3. Military Tension in the Region

There was an escalation of tension around the GS in late October 2011, including an exchange of fire between the PIJ and the Israeli military. About 40 rockets and

mortar shells were fired by the PIJ into Israel, killing one Israeli and injuring at least five. Israel responded with air strikes on GS killing nine Palestinians, and wounding 15. A spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, “The new spiral of confrontation undermines efforts being actively undertaken by the Middle East Quartet in line with its New York statement of September 23, 2011, to restart talks between Palestinians and Israelis.” The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs hoped that “the ceasefire agreement reached with Cairo’s mediation will be strictly observed.”⁸⁴

In the statement of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the attack against Israelis in Eilat on 18/8/2011, the spokesperson used the term “terrorist” to describe it, while describing the killing of Egyptian soldiers by Israeli troops over the same period by saying, “three Egyptian border guards were killed by the Israelis who mistook them for militants.” In this regard, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs took into account the statement of the Palestinian Hamas leadership on resumption of the ceasefire.⁸⁵

Concerning the demonstrations in front of the Israeli Embassy in Cairo over the killing of those border guards on 9/9/2011, the spokesperson for the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, “We hope that the incident will not lead to a serious worsening of Egyptian-Israeli relations, which are an important factor in moving forward the Middle East peace process. We expect the Egyptian authorities to take additional necessary measures to protect foreign diplomatic missions on the territory of the country.”⁸⁶ Naturally, Russian diplomatic pressure is aimed at maintaining the ceasefire and Egyptian-Israeli relations in their current context of calm.

4. Russian Relations with the Palestinian and Israeli Sides

It is important to clarify that Russian meetings with the Palestinians and the Israelis do not address the same issues. For example, Russian-Israeli talks focus on armament in the region, the Iranian nuclear program and “terrorism.” Russian-Palestinian talks focus on peace settlement in the region, Palestinian national unity and support for Palestinian aspirations relevant to these two issues. But in both cases, the goal of the Russians is for their country to have a role in the peace process, as evidenced by Russia’s keenness on holding an international Middle East peace conference in Moscow.

a. Relations with the Palestinian Side

The Palestinian and Russian sides held a series of meetings at different levels, with the Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov attending most meetings. A statement by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs following a meeting between Minister Sergey Lavrov and President Mahmud ‘Abbas on the sidelines of the 66th session of the UNGA in New York on 21/9/2011, said that ‘Abbas “expressed his readiness to continue searching for ways to resume talks with Israel on the well-known international legal basis, as well as efforts toward building a national inter-Palestinian consensus.” During the meeting, the Russian side welcomed the readiness to hold an international Middle East conference in Moscow “as the favorable conditions take shape for that.”⁸⁷

Lavrov later stated that forming a government of technocrats and holding Palestinian elections in 2012 would both lead to reunification between GS and the WB, through democratic measures and dialogue among all Palestinian factions, while taking into account the interests of all sides.⁸⁸

Meanwhile, the Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mikhail Bogdanov, held meetings with the Palestinian factions in Damascus on 29/8/2011, attended by representatives from Hamas, DFLP, PFLP and PFLP-GC. A statement by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the discussions laid “particular emphasis... on the task of ensuring inter-Palestinian consensus and creating an independent Palestinian state on the well-known international legal basis. The Russian side stressed the importance of maintaining calm along the perimeter of the Gaza Strip and the inadmissibility of the recurrence of violence between Palestinians and Israelis.”⁸⁹

On 5/7/2011, a meeting of the Russian-Palestinian Working Committee on the Middle East was held in Moscow. The Palestinian side, headed by Fatah Central Committee Member Nabil Sha‘th, stressed that it remains “committed to continuing the search for a mutually acceptable option for the resumption of negotiations with Israel... and the renunciation of violence.” The Russian delegation headed by Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mikhail Bogdanov “emphasized Russia’s firm support for the Palestinian people’s right to create their independent, sovereign, geographically contiguous and viable state, whose future borders would be based on the 1967 lines with agreed territorial swaps.”⁹⁰

Regarding the Inter-Palestinian Meeting in Moscow in May 2011, Director of the Middle East and North Africa Department at the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sergey Vershinin said:

We tried to be helpful. At the same time we pursued a single goal—to enable the representatives of leading Palestinian organizations in a relaxed atmosphere to continue the dialogue on all issues of concern to them and thereby consolidate and develop the progress achieved in Cairo under very important Egyptian auspices.... The priority now is the early formation of a unified and inclusive Palestinian government of independent technocrats. It would deal primarily with the preparation and organization of general elections a year from now.... Achieving national unity will allow the Palestinians to conduct a fruitful and effective dialogue with Israel. The purpose is well known: to create an independent, viable and peaceful Palestinian state living in peace and security with Israel. Without unity, this is unreal. By the way, if you look at the final paragraph of the Moscow Statement, you'll see the parameters outlined for such a state, agreed by all Palestinian representatives, including Hamas. It talks about the borders based on the June 4, 1967 lines.⁹¹

Vershinin's statement indicates that the strategic goal behind Russia's engagement with Hamas in recent years, is to entice it into accepting the principle of settlement on the basis of the 1967 lines.

During his discussions with the Palestinian delegations participating in the Inter-Palestinian Meeting held in Moscow, Lavrov welcomed the steps to restore Palestinian national unity, and the creation of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 border with East Jerusalem as its capital.⁹² On 23/3/2011, Lavrov met with 'Abbas in Moscow, where Russia stressed the importance of dialogue, saying that "the use of military force against civil population and foreign interference in contradiction to the international legal instruments are inadmissible."⁹³

Regarding the Palestinian bid for UN membership, a statement by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 2/11/2011 said, "We presume that the Palestinians' legitimate bids for membership in international organizations are not and cannot be an alternative to their negotiations with the Israelis, the ultimate aim of which should be to create an independent, sovereign and viable Palestinian state living in peace and security with Israel." The statement also said that the Russian government "urge[s] Israel's government to refrain from any unilateral actions

that prejudice the outcome of the negotiation process on the final status of the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.”⁹⁴

On 10/11/2011, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov praised the efforts of The Imperial Orthodox Palestine Society, a 130 year old institution, in promoting multifaceted relations between Russia and the peoples of the region. Lavrov also made a reference to the return of some properties in Jerusalem to the Russian Federation and the PA’s transfer of some of its land plots in Jericho and Bethlehem to Russia.⁹⁵

b. Relations with the Israeli Side

Putin’s visit to the region in 2011 had no impact on moving the peace process forward. As for the talks between the Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and the head of the Israeli National Security Council Ya’akov Amidror with Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov in Jerusalem, on 29–30/11/2011, they focused on topics such as arms control, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as regional and international issues.⁹⁶

Relations between the Russian and Israeli sides were marred by some tension when the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed that the military attaché in the Israeli Embassy in Moscow Vadim Leiderman “was detained red-handed while receiving secret intelligence from a Russian citizen in Moscow on May 12.” The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared him “persona non grata” and ordered him to leave within 48 hours, which he did.⁹⁷

Nevertheless, it is clear that Russian policy has remained within the scope of the following stances:

1. Not taking any direct measures against Israel, with the exception of expelling the Israeli diplomat.
2. The ongoing Russian inclination towards reducing the gap with the various Palestinian factions, by helping achieve Palestinian unity on the one hand, and by working gradually to entice Hamas into accepting peace settlement and some kind of a recognition of Israel on the other.
3. Agreement with the general attitudes of the Quartet, with respect to settlement, Jerusalem, the refugees and the need for calm on all fronts.
4. Accepting the principle of land swaps, and accepting the annexation of some settlements to Israel.

Fifth: China

In the nineties, the Chinese leadership focused on finding a way to confront American plans for the international order, following the collapse of the USSR. This continued until the theory of the peaceful rise of China, advanced by Chinese political strategist Zheng Bijian, gained traction in 2003. Pursuant to Bijian's strategy, China would gradually rise to become a major player in international relations, but without threatening the security and stability of the international order, as had been the case during comparable transformations and their impact on international orders, historically.

The theory envisioned China's peaceful rise through several policies, including: Taking advantage of world peace to boost development in China, which would in turn contribute to world peace, by supporting openness and free trade. Furthermore, China must not stand in the way of the development of any country or put any country in danger. The instruments of soft power should therefore be the foundation of China's rise.⁹⁸

It is therefore important to see Chinese policy in the framework of China's pragmatism that began with modernization in 1978, on the one hand, and China's strategy of peaceful rise on the other. This means that China is uninterested in getting involved in regional conflicts (which explains its absence from the Quartet). Furthermore, China seeks to appear equally distant from each of the conflicting parties.

Based on the above, Chinese diplomatic activity was restricted to meeting with the parties, for example the meeting between Chinese Special Envoy to the Middle East Wu Sike and President Mahmud 'Abbas on 25/8/2011. On 12/7/2011, the Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi met with the special envoy of the Palestinian president, after a meeting with Vice Foreign Minister Zhai Jun on 11/7/2011.⁹⁹ Furthermore, Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi at the general debate of the 66th session of the UNGA reiterated several traditional Chinese stances, namely:¹⁰⁰

1. Calling for the obstacles to the resumption of the peace talks between the two sides to be overcome.
2. Reaffirming support for the two-state solution.
3. Reaffirming that East Jerusalem is the capital of the Palestinian state.

4. Supporting Palestinian efforts to obtain full membership of the UN.
5. Maintaining financial aid to the Palestinian side. The PA and China signed an agreement under which China will provide \$5.5 million in aid, in addition to another agreement to enhance trade and economic cooperation between the two sides.¹⁰¹

It is worth mentioning here that in 2011, China made clear overtures to Hamas. For instance, an official Chinese delegation visited Damascus in January, meeting with Khalid Mish'al, the head of the Hamas' Political Bureau. The delegation and Mish'al discussed developments in the peace process between the Palestinians and Israel as well as Palestinian national reconciliation. Mish'al also explained the suffering of the Palestinians as a result of the blockade and the Separation Wall, as well as the prisoners. The two sides then stressed the need for continued political communication between them on these issues. This visit was followed by another meeting that brought together a number of Hamas leaders and a Chinese delegation in February. The Chinese side appeared to be aware of the importance of the Palestinian issue in China's rising role globally. Moreover, the Chinese position has been positive in terms of respecting the will of the Palestinian people, including the results of the 2006 elections.¹⁰²

As for Israeli-Chinese meetings, on 30/5/2011 Vice Foreign Minister Zhai Jun attended the Opening Ceremony of the Seminar on Israel-China Relations held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel in China. And on 25/8/2011 Chinese Special Envoy to the Middle East Wu Sike met with the Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor.¹⁰³

On 25 May, the Commander of the Navy of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), Admiral Wu Shengli visited Israel, and met with his Israeli counterpart Eliezer Marom¹⁰⁴ as well as Defense Minister Ehud Barak. On 14 August, the Chief of the General Staff of PLA General Chen Bingde made the first visit of its kind by a Chinese military officer of this level to Israel.¹⁰⁵ In a sign of growing ties between Israel and China, Defense Minister Ehud Barak visited China in June 2011, and the Defense Ministry stated that "it would be the first visit by an Israeli defense minister in 10 years, and that it would highlight the complex relationship between the two states."¹⁰⁶

The European and US embargo on the sale of arms to China following the events in Tiananmen Square in 1989 has made Israel the second largest exporter of arms to China after Russia.

Chinese-Israeli military ties and trade have both grown dramatically. The volume of Israeli exports increased by about 96% in 2010, according to data released by the Israeli CBS, amounting to around \$2.05 billion. Then, despite the fact that military trade between China and Israel decreased in 2011, the volume of Israeli exports to China rose to \$2.71 billion in the same year. The volume of trade between the two countries in 2010 was \$6.78 billion, compared to \$8.16 billion in 2011.¹⁰⁷

The Israeli government also discussed with China a project to build a railway between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. During his visit to China in September 2011, the Israeli Minister of Transportation, National Infrastructure, and Road Safety Yisrael Katz said that “the project is designed to function as a tunnel for the delivery of goods from Asia to the Mediterranean Sea.” The railway is planned to be 180 km long, running from the port of Eilat on the Red Sea to Nahal Tzin.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, it seems that the uprisings in the Arab countries have caused some concern in China over its interests in Arab countries, especially when around 37 thousand Chinese nationals had to be pulled out of Libya. This has prompted China to reaffirm its determination to maintain relations with Israel.

It is likely that China’s policies that have prevailed since 1978, which focused on developing China economically, militarily and technologically, as well as avoiding conflict with the US, except as regards Taiwan and the region bordering China, will change. This is more probable since the announcement by the Obama administration that the main focus of the US in its global strategy will shift to the Pacific, which means focusing efforts on containing China. This is a serious development in international relations unseen since the end of the Cold War.

Sixth: Japan

During 2011, the major stances of the Japanese government were: to reject settlement activities, stopping violence between the sides, and providing financial support to UNRWA and the PA. The following are stances of the Japanese government on some significant developments:¹⁰⁹

1. Regretting the Israeli decision to build more housing units in East Jerusalem and the rest of the WB. Japan said that settlement activity contravenes international law; several statements regarding this issue were also released by the Japanese government.¹¹⁰

The Japanese government condemned the demolition of the Shepherd Hotel in East Jerusalem by Israel, as well as future plans to build housing units which the Israeli government announced its intention to execute at a later time in the WB, including East Jerusalem.

The Japanese statements said that all these Israeli acts go against the efforts of the international community to resume negotiations. Japan urged Israel to refrain from any unilateral act that changes the current situation in East Jerusalem.¹¹¹

2. The Japanese government stated that it “does not recognize any act that prejudices the final status of the territories in the pre-1967 borders.”¹¹²
3. Concerning the Japanese position on military operations between the Palestinians and the Israeli side, the Japanese government stated the following:¹¹³
 - a. Japan strongly condemned the attack targeting an Israeli bus in Jerusalem on 23 March. Japan stressed that “terrorism cannot be justified for any reason,” while expressing its deep concern for the mutual attacks between the two sides in the GS.
 - b. Japan also condemned the attack on 18 August against Israelis, stressing that it is deeply concerned by rocket fire from the GS as well as Israeli military operations.
 - c. Japan welcomed the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, and hoped that “this agreement will contribute to the confidence-building between the parties concerned.”
 - d. Japan said that it was deeply concerned about rocket attacks from GS against Israel, and Israel’s military operations, which “have caused death and injuries among civilians,” calling on both sides “to exercise maximum self-restraint” as problems can never be solved through violence.
4. Concerning political activities, Japanese government statements included the following positions:¹¹⁴
 - a. Japan welcomed the economic measures announced by the Quartet and Israel to improve the economic situation in the WB and GS.
Japan announced a donation of \$7.7 million to UNRWA, in addition to \$3.3 million in food aid to GS in August 2011 for the financial

year 2011/2012,¹¹⁵ and \$32 million for environmental purposes in the areas controlled by the PA in February 2011.¹¹⁶

- b. In commenting on the meeting between Fatah and Hamas in Cairo on 4 May, the Japanese Foreign Ministry expressed its hope that “the Palestinian Authority will maintain the commitment of renouncing violence against Israel.”
- c. Japan expressed its support for the efforts of the Quartet, and also stressed its support for Palestinian statehood. Japan also highlighted the importance of the Japanese initiative dubbed the “Corridor for Peace and Prosperity.”
- d. Japan said it was deeply concerned that Israel has “frozen the transmission of the taxes which Israel collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority.”

In conclusion, it seems that the Japanese position remains within the acceptable scope determined by the US, although some positions depart somewhat from American policies. Japan is unlikely to go beyond this limited scope in the foreseeable future.

Seventh: The United Nations (UN)

The UN was the scene for the diplomatic battle between the Palestinian and Israeli sides in 2011, over the Palestinian bid for UN membership as well as membership in the UN’s specialist agencies, particularly UNESCO. As a result of the categorical opposition of the US to full Palestinian membership of the UN, international efforts focused on a number of options:

1. Accepting Full Palestinian Membership: An option backed by Russia, China, the Arab countries, most developing countries, some European countries especially the small ones, and the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

2. Accepting “Non-Member” State Status: There are three levels of UN membership: full-membership; observer status (such as the status of the PLO); and non-member state status (such as the Vatican, or Switzerland until 2002). This status does not grant Palestine full membership, but does give it the right to join other specialized agencies of the UN. The PA may consider the upgrading of Palestinian representation to non-member state status a step forward, despite the fact that it falls short of Palestinian aspirations. It is important, however, to realize that there is a difference between recognition and admittance. Indeed, the first paves the way for the second, but does not necessarily guarantee it. Based on this,

the strategy pursued by Palestinian diplomats may focus instead on upgrading the legal status from an observer member to an observer state, effectively rendering the WB a state under occupation. It seems that several European countries, and perhaps the Quartet, are closer to supporting this option.

3. Observer Status: This is the current situation. It seems that the US is closer to this option. According to Maged Abdel Fattah, Egypt's envoy at the UN, efforts at the UN Security Council regarding the Palestinian bid are being impeded because of intense pressure exerted by the US to block the nine votes required to pass the Palestinian application in the UN Security Council. Abdel Fattah said that the US is doing so to avoid wielding an embarrassing veto against this application at a critical time internally, in the run up to presidential elections.¹¹⁷ It seems that heading to the UNGA is the only option available to the Palestinians in 2012, especially after the Committee on the Admission of New Members of the UN Security Council announced in November 2011 that it "was unable to make a unanimous recommendation to the Security Council" regarding the Palestinian application.¹¹⁸

The Palestinian bid for membership was bolstered by the acknowledgement of several international institutions of the "eligibility" of the Palestinian entity to become a state, from an economic standpoint. For example, the PA received recognition from The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that it was fully capable of managing the economy of an independent state. In a report released on 7/4/2011, The World Bank said that if the PA "maintains its 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."¹¹⁹

Meanwhile, membership in UNESCO proved to be easier to achieve from a procedural standpoint. For one thing, it did not require going through the UN Security Council where it would face the American hurdle. As such, the Executive Board of UNESCO voted in favor of accepting full Palestinian membership to the organization in its 187th session on 5/10/2011, under the presidency of the Russian delegate, with a majority of 40 votes out of 58 member states; four countries objected (the US, Romania, Germany and Latvia), and 14 abstained (including France, Spain and Italy).¹²⁰

At the 36th General Conference of UNESCO, Palestine was granted full membership, on 31/10/2011, despite fierce opposition by the US. 107 countries

voted in favor of the resolution, most notably Russia, China, France, India, Brazil and South Africa, while 14 countries opposed it including the US, Germany, Canada and the Netherlands. This is while 52 countries abstained from voting, including the UK and Italy, while 12 countries were absent.¹²¹ Gaining membership in UNESCO does not require preexisting membership in the UN.

The following remarks can be made regarding the UNESCO vote:

- a. Major countries in the EU were divided between those who are opposed and those who abstained.
- b. If we take the vote at UNESCO's General Conference to be representative of the potential vote at the UNGA, if the Palestinian bid was presented there, then American pressure on member states may be effective, both diplomatically and financially.

Settlement Policy and the Human Dimensions

The position of the UN is consistent with the quasi-unanimous international position that rejects settlement activity, considering it a violation of international law. As such, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has made repeated calls for Jewish settlement in the WB, including East Jerusalem, to be halted.

A statement issued by the spokesperson for Ban Ki-moon read: "The Secretary-General reiterates that settlement activity in East Jerusalem and the remainder of the West Bank is contrary to international law and to Israel's obligations under the Road Map, and must cease."¹²²

On the other hand, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA-oPt) called on the Israeli authorities to abide by the advisory opinion on Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory of the ICJ, to halt construction of the Separation Wall, modify the path of the parts that were built to conform to the Green Line, while dismantling the parts of the Wall that have been already completed as well as eliminating the gates and permits system.¹²³

However, Martin Nesirky, spokesperson for the Secretary-General Ban had sent letters to the governments of countries around the Mediterranean Sea on possible flotillas to GS. In these letters Ban Ki-moon "expressed his belief that assistance and goods destined to Gaza should be channeled through legitimate crossings and established channels." Nesirky added, "The Secretary-General called on all

Governments concerned to use their influence to discourage such flotillas, which carry the potential to escalate into violent conflict.”¹²⁴ This is possibly consistent with the findings of Geoffrey Palmer’s Report of the Secretary-General’s Panel of Inquiry on the 31 May 2010 Flotilla Incident. The report issued in September 2011 reached several conclusions, including:¹²⁵

1. “Israel faces a real threat to its security from militant groups in Gaza. The naval blockade was imposed as a legitimate security measure in order to prevent weapons from entering Gaza by sea and its implementation complied with the requirements of international law.”
2. “Israel’s decision to board the vessels with such substantial force at a great distance from the blockade zone and with no final warning immediately prior to the boarding was excessive and unreasonable.”
3. The Israeli army personnel “faced significant, organized and violent resistance from a group of passengers when they boarded the Mavi Marmara requiring them to use force for their own protection.”
4. “There was significant mistreatment of passengers by Israeli authorities after completion of the takeover of the vessels.”

But Palmer’s Report was considered odd by some international law experts and pundits familiar with the Israeli blockade on the GS. There were question marks about the credibility of Palmer himself and his pro-Zionist background. For instance, the report failed to condemn Israel for its violation of international law when it raided a civilian vessel in international waters and killed civilians. The report also justified the blockade on GS on the grounds of preventing arms smuggling, at a time when the Israelis ban the entry of more than six thousand types of foodstuffs, consumer goods, building materials and equipment for agriculture, manufacturing and infrastructure. Indeed, there are hundreds of ways to verify that a vessel contains arms or not, without the need for a suffocating Israeli blockade.

If we are to link the findings of the Palmer Report to the in April backtracking by Judge Goldstone on his own report on the Israeli assault on GS in 2008, especially as regards condemning Israel, this suggests that there may be influences prejudging the attitudes of the international community concerning the recognition of the Palestinian right to UN membership.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)

The UNGA began discussing the item “Question of Palestine” on 29/10/2011. Five resolutions were adopted on Palestine in the UNGA meetings on 30/11/2011, namely:

1. Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine: the UNGA stressed the need to reach a peaceful settlement of the Palestine question in all its aspects through this resolution, and reiterated its full support for the peace process in the Middle East in accordance with UN resolutions. The resolution called on all parties to fulfill their previous obligations, especially as regards the implementation of the Road Map, and commitment to the two-state solution. The resolution also called for a complete halt to Israeli settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, calling on Israel to immediately cease its construction of the Wall, and the “cessation of all provocations, including by Israeli settlers, in East Jerusalem, including in and around religious sites.”

The resolution stressed the need for “the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem; the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination and the right to their independent State.” The resolution also stressed “the need for a just resolution of the problem of Palestine refugees in conformity with its resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948.”¹²⁶

2. Jerusalem: The UNGA reiterated 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, were null and void and must be rescinded forthwith.” The UNGA also expressed its grave concern about the continuation by Israel of illegal settlement activities, including construction of the Wall in and around East Jerusalem, and the “demolition of Palestinian homes, the revocation of residency rights and the eviction and displacement of numerous Palestinian families from East Jerusalem neighbourhoods, as well as other acts of provocation and incitement, including by Israeli settlers, in the city.”¹²⁷

3. Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat: The UNGA, having considered the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights

of the Palestinian People, encouraged the Department “to formulate ways for the media and representatives of civil society to engage in open and positive discussions to explore means for encouraging people-to-people dialogue and promoting peace and mutual understanding in the region.”¹²⁸

4. Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: The UNGA requested the Committee “to continue to exert all efforts to promote the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, to support the Middle East peace process... and to mobilize international support for, and assistance to, the Palestinian people.” The UNGA also requested the UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine and other UN bodies associated with the question of Palestine “to continue to cooperate fully with the Committee.”¹²⁹

5. Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat: The UNGA requested “the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources and to ensure that it continues to carry out its programme of work,” and invited “all Governments and organizations to extend their cooperation to the Division in the performance of its tasks.”¹³⁰

United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

On 26/7/2011, ECOSOC adopted a resolution concerning the Situation of and Assistance to Palestinian Women, in which it expressed its “deep concern about the grave situation of Palestinian women in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, resulting from the severe impact of the ongoing illegal Israeli occupation and all of its manifestations.” The resolution also expressed grave concern about the difficulties that faced Palestinian women under Israeli occupation, including “the continuation of home demolitions, evictions of Palestinians and arbitrary detention and imprisonment, as well as high rates of poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, inadequate water supply, incidents of domestic violence and declining health, education and living standards.”

ECOSOC also expressed its deep concern over the critical socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the GS, due to restrictions on the movement of people and goods, and called upon “the international community to continue to provide urgently needed assistance,” and reiterated the need for Israel to abide by the rules of international law, and allow the refugees to return to their homes.¹³¹

On 28/7/2011, ECOSOC adopted a resolution that:¹³²

1. Calls for the full opening of the border crossings of the Gaza Strip, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009)....
2. Stresses the need to preserve the territorial contiguity, unity and integrity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to guarantee the freedom of movement of persons and goods....
3. Also stresses the need to preserve and develop Palestinian national institutions and infrastructure....
4. Demands that Israel comply with the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, signed in Paris on 29 April 1994.
5. Calls upon Israel to restore and replace civilian properties, vital infrastructure, agricultural lands and governmental institutions that have been damaged or destroyed as a result of its military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.
6. Reiterates the call for the full implementation of the Agreement on Movement and Access of 15 November 2005, particularly the urgent and uninterrupted reopening of all crossings into the Gaza Strip....
7. Calls upon all parties to respect the rules of international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against the civilian population....
8. Reaffirms the inalienable right of the Palestinian people... to all their natural and economic resources....
9. Calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its destruction of homes and properties, economic institutions and agricultural lands and orchards....
10. Also calls upon Israel, the occupying Power, to end immediately its exploitation of natural resources....
11. Reaffirms that the construction and expansion of Israeli settlements and related infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem... are illegal....
12. Also reaffirms that the ongoing construction by Israel of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, is contrary to international law....
13. Calls upon Israel to comply with the provisions of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War....

14. Emphasizes the importance of the work of United Nations organizations and agencies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem....
15. Reiterates the importance of the revival and accelerated advancement of negotiations of the peace process on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions....

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA)

UNRWA managed to close its \$100 million budget deficit in 2010, thanks to donations by some countries, according to the Commissioner General of UNRWA Filippo Grandi. However, it is possible that the UNRWA will not be able to address the \$60 million deficit in 2011, as some countries reduced their donations because of the global financial crisis. UNRWA's total budget for 2011 is approximately \$620 million.¹³³

Despite the fact that there had been references made, in Europe and elsewhere, to Israel easing the blockade on GS, UNRWA's Spokesman Chris Gunness said in July 2011 that "The Israeli blockade of Gaza has lasted longer than some of the most notorious sieges in human history." He also quoted the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which said that the blockade is "a collective punishment in clear violation of international humanitarian law."¹³⁴

Gunness said that if the Israeli blockade of GS had happened in any other place, then there would have probably been meaningful political measures to put an end to it and hold those responsible accountable. It must be noted that UNRWA has only brought in a tiny fraction of the construction material needed in GS; 3,291 trucks since June 2010 (under 4% of the Agency's overall \$660 million construction plan to rebuild homes and schools in the GS over three years).¹³⁵

Eighth: International Public Opinion

Public opinion can be discussed on two levels:

1. Popular Attitudes

These are measured through opinion polls conducted by academic or political entities enjoying a certain degree of credibility. We will attempt to show these attitudes through a number of topics:

a. The Position on the Palestinian Right to UN Membership

A poll conducted for BBC World Service by the international polling firm GlobeScan during the period 3/7/2011–29/8/2011 of 20,446 citizens from 19 countries showed that 49% backed UN recognition of Palestine as a full-member state, while 21% said that their government should oppose it; 30% either said that it depends, that their government should abstain, or that they do not know what their government should do. The poll showed that support for the Palestinian bid to obtain UN recognition of Palestine as an independent state within the 1967 lines was strongest in Egypt, and that there was a majority support in the other three predominantly Muslim countries polled (Turkey, Pakistan and Indonesia). While the Chinese people were the second most likely overall to favor their government voting for recognition of a Palestinian state.

On the other hand, the highest opposition to the right of Palestine to obtain UN membership was in the US, with 45% supporting and 36% opposing the proposal. In Brazil, 41% were in favor and 26% opposed the proposal, and in India, 32% were in favor while 25% were opposed to the proposal. In the three EU member states covered by the survey, the results were as follows: France 54% in favor, versus 20% against, Germany 53% in favor, versus 28% against, and the UK 53% in favor versus 26% against. This is while in Russia the percentage of those in favor was 37% versus 13% who were against.¹³⁶

b. The Negative View of Israel

A poll conducted for BBC World Service in the period 6/12/2011–17/2/2012, which included 24,090 citizens from 22 countries, asked respondents to evaluate Israel's influence in the world. It showed that 50% of respondents have negative views of Israel's influence in the world, while 21% gave it positive views. Those who gave it a favorable one ranged from 3% in Japan to 54% in Nigeria, while the positive views reached 50% in the US. It should be noted that the poll only included one Arab country, Egypt.

However, we would like to draw attention to the following:

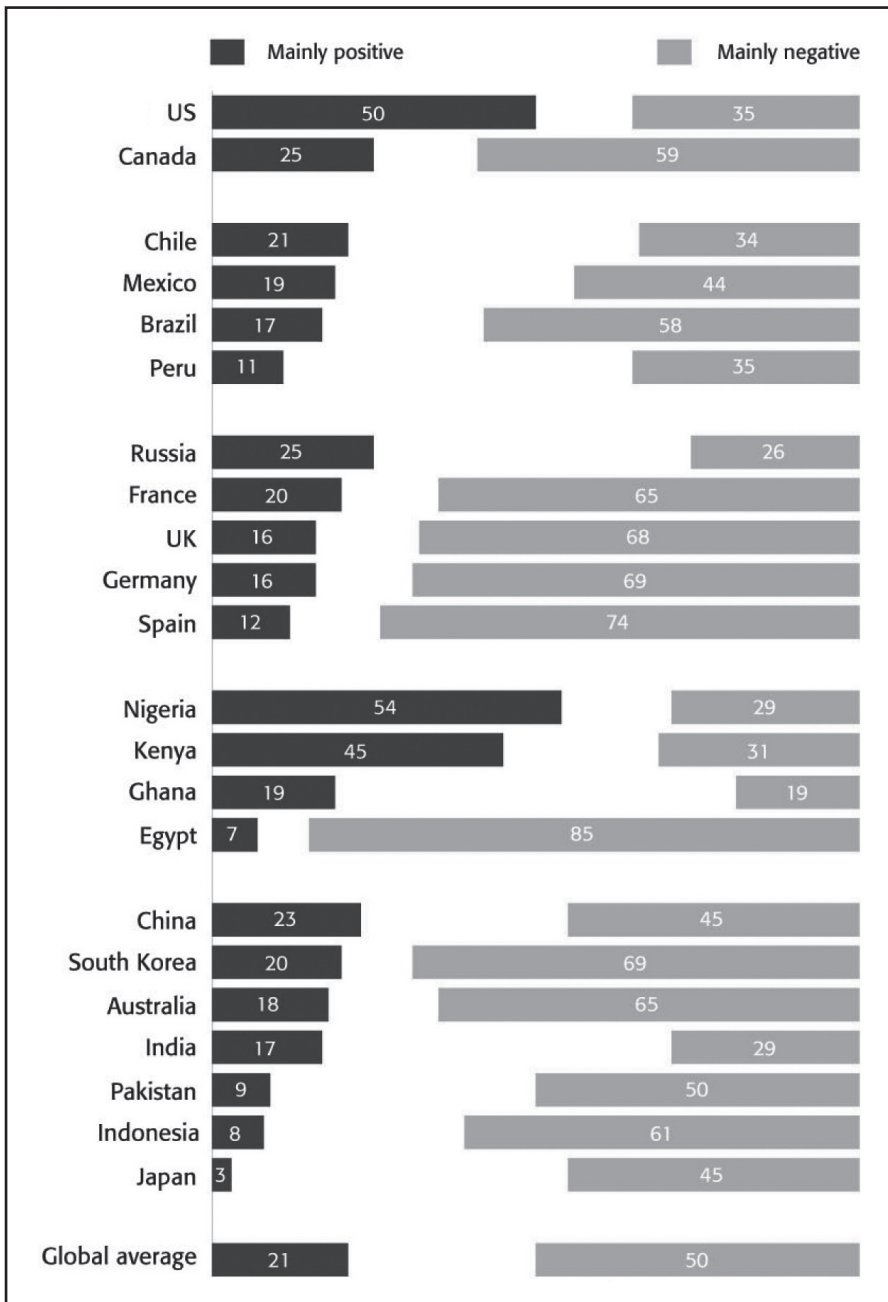
1. The positive view of Israel was predominant in only three countries, while a negative view of Israel prevailed across 19 countries.
2. There is a contrast between the conduct of the governments of major European nations and public opinion trends in these countries regarding the Palestinian

issue. For example, 69% had a negative view of Israel in Germany, 68% in the UK and 65% in France; yet the policies of these countries do not reflect the views of the populations.

Table 2/5: Views of Israel's Influence by Country 2012¹³⁷

Country	Mainly positive (%)	Mainly negative (%)	“Depends,” “neither/ neutral” and “DK/ NA” (%)
US	50	35	15
Canada	25	59	16
Chile	21	34	45
Mexico	19	44	37
Brazil	17	58	25
Peru	11	35	54
Russia	25	26	49
France	20	65	15
UK	16	68	16
Germany	16	69	15
Spain	12	74	14
Nigeria	54	29	17
Kenya	45	31	24
Ghana	19	19	62
Egypt	7	85	8
China	23	45	32
South Korea	20	69	11
Australia	18	65	17
India	17	29	54
Pakistan	9	50	41
Indonesia	8	61	31
Japan	3	45	52
Global average	21	50	29

Views of Israel's Influence by Country 2012



The white space in this chart represents “Depends,” “Neither/neutral,” and “DK/NA.”
Asked of half of sample.

The following remarks can be made based on the above study of international public opinion trends (both individual and organizational):

1. Regardless of the parties that conducted the polls, the results would have been perhaps different if the questions focused on supporting or opposing Israeli occupation, settlement or the Judaization of Jerusalem, or even the blockade of GS. Perhaps if that happened, the results would have better served Palestinian interests, as the extent of the opposition to Israeli policies worldwide would have been revealed.
2. Strikingly, the number of those who chose “depends,” “neither/ neutral” and “DK/ NA” options in some countries remains high. There were seven countries where their percentage exceeded 40%, a high percentage worthy of note.

2. International Non-Governmental Organizations

The activities and attitudes of popular NGOs at the international level mirror the attitudes of international public opinion. Examining the work of the most prominent such NGOs indicates that sympathy with various Palestinian campaigns continues, as illustrated by the following examples:

- a. Amnesty International: The organization called for the rejection of the Israeli request that the Goldstone Report be withdrawn. The report blamed Israel for the suffering of Palestinian civilians in GS. Amnesty International also criticized the harassment of human rights activists by Israel.¹³⁸
- b. Human Rights Watch (HRW): In its statements, the organization condemned attacks by the Israeli security forces against peaceful marches on the anniversary of the *Nakbah*. HRW also criticized Israeli calls for sanctions against those who advocate a boycott of products manufactured in the settlements; HRW also criticized incidents of torture by the PA and its crackdown against peaceful demonstrations.¹³⁹
- c. Friends of Humanity International: The organization called on the Egyptian authorities to open the Rafah crossing and lift the blockade of the GS.¹⁴⁰
- d. The European Network to Support the Rights of Palestinians Prisoners—Ufree, called on Egypt to release Palestinian prisoners in its custody.¹⁴¹
- e. Swiss human rights organizations: More than 20 pro-Palestinian rights organizations and popular organizations called for a protest against a visit by the Israeli president to Switzerland.¹⁴²
- f. Several European human rights organizations called for the dismantlement of the Separation Wall and settlements.

- g. European human rights groups criticized Goldstone's backtracking on the findings of his report.
- h. The European Campaign to End the Siege on Gaza (ECESG): ECESG organized a flotilla bound for GS, criticizing Ban Ki-moon's call for an end to such flotillas carrying aid to GS.¹⁴³
- i. The ICRC issued several statements criticizing Israel's failure to return some Palestinian prisoners, released as part of a swap deal between Israel and Hamas, to their hometowns. The ICRC also made reference to providing medical aid to GS, and criticized the Israeli siege on health facilities in the GS.
- j. A convoy of trucks was organized, carrying aid to GS from South Africa under the name "We Are All Gaza."¹⁴⁴
- k. Twenty-two international humanitarian, development, human rights and peace-building organizations criticized the Palmer Report, mentioned earlier.¹⁴⁵
- l. Twenty-one Trade union organizations (members of the World Federation of Trade Unions) declared their support for the Palestinian for UN membership.¹⁴⁶
- m. An international coalition of 20 leading aid agencies and human rights groups called on the Quartet to put pressure on Israel "to immediately reverse its settlement policies and freeze all demolitions that violate international law."¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

If we discount unexpected developments on the international stage, there are events scheduled to take place in 2012, such as the US, Russian and French presidential elections, in addition to the possible change in Chinese leadership. This is not to mention possible Palestinian elections which were initially planned for May 2011.

It seems that the change in Russian leadership (with Dmitry Medvedev and Vladimir Putin swapping places for the second time, with the latter returning as president and the former as prime minister), and the possible change in Chinese leadership (we expect that Xi Jinping and Li Kegiang will replace the Secretary-General of the Communist Party Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao respectively) will not lead to meaningful change in the attitudes of either nation concerning the Palestinian issue.

The victory of the leader of the French Socialist Party, Francois Hollande in the presidential election, defeating rightwing rival President Nicolas Sarkozy on 6/5/2012, has perhaps cast doubt on the French and European positions regarding the Palestinian issue. However, it does not appear that there is anything substantial regarding the possibility of a serious change in this regard. Indeed, Hollande's victory came as a result of internal factors linked to the economic and social conditions in France, and policies in the EU, rather than as a result of a desire for change in French foreign policy.

The issue of Palestinian membership of the UN and the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian talks will therefore remain the focal points for international diplomatic efforts. However, these two issues will not be immune to a number of developments, including:

1. The Results of the US Presidential Election: As the presidential election will be held in the first week of November 2012; this means that the US president may find himself caught between two options: Avoid steps that might deprive him of Israeli support and seek to maintain the status quo. Alternatively a candidate could seek a significant breakthrough that would enhance his image and therefore chance of reelection; this would mean that his policy in 2012 may take on the following features:

- a. Continued opposition to Palestinian membership of the UN, whether by threatening to wield the veto, or by intensifying pressure on new members in the UN Security Council, including Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Morocco, Pakistan and Togo (instead of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Lebanon, Nigeria and Gabon), starting From January 2012. Togo may be the country the least supportive of Palestine among the new members.
- b. Easing statements that criticize the accelerating Israeli settlement activity.
- c. Intensifying pressure on the Palestinian side to return to the negotiating table, or seeking to launch parallel talks that give the impression that some kind of a diplomatic breakthrough is being achieved.
- d. Sustaining economic pressure on Iran, and threatening to use other options from time to time to appease the Israel lobby.
- e. The PA could begin an effort to expand the circle of countries participating in the Quartet, a move that may be opposed by the US, particularly if this means the inclusion of countries like Brazil, India or South Africa.

2. Developments in the EU: Two countries will share the EU presidency in 2012. In the first half, Denmark will preside over the EU and Cyprus in the second half. The strategic plans of the EU for 2012 place particular focus on two axes: First, addressing the economic crisis; and second, focusing on three regions which are, in order of priority, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and the Caucasus.¹⁴⁸ It is necessary to note here that stability in the Middle East, according to the European plan, is not limited to the Palestinian issue, but also includes the developments of the Arab Spring in Egypt, Syria and North Africa, and the prospects of developments in Jordan.

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Chapter Six

The Land and the Holy Sites

The Land and the Holy Sites

Introduction

No matter how often writers try to find new ways to describe what is taking place in Jerusalem, they find themselves repeating the term “escalation of the pace of attacks.” This is because the Israeli focus on Jerusalem has continued to rise, year after year. A researcher following what is going on in Jerusalem will struggle to monitor and classify the huge amount of reports they gather regarding the steps taken towards Judaizing the city, steps that encompass almost every area of life in the city.

This sudden awakening to Jerusalem is not surprising, as the Judaization of the city is the biggest and most prominent manifestation of the expression “the Jewishness of the state,” which has become the central expression of the “Zionist political mind.” For, if Israel was a state with a “Jewish identity,” its capital “Yerushalayim” must be likewise. Such a city, to this day, remains a dream. The beholder of the city’s horizon will notice great blocks of buildings surrounding it. But his eye cannot miss its Arab and Islamic identity; for its mosques and churches are the first to meet the eye, even 44 years after the city’s complete fall in to the hands of the Israelis. Preceding this, we are likely to witness, year after year, an escalating race to settle the city’s identity.

First: Islamic and Christian Holy Sites

1. Al-Aqsa Mosque

During 2011, the Israeli authorities continued to violate the sanctity of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. These violations included excavations, attacks on the properties belonging to the mosque, intervention in its management, and break-ins. Such incidents, carried out during the period 22/8/2010–21/8/2011 by Jewish extremists, Israeli officials and security agencies numbered 34. At the same time, Israel took a series of measures to ease restrictions that were imposed on Jews’ entry into the mosque. Furthermore, 2011 witnessed one of the largest Jewish group incursions



into the mosque, on 9/8/2011, corresponding to the ninth of Ramadan. Meanwhile, occupation forces imposed, during the month, tight restrictions on the entry of Muslims wishing to perform special late night Ramadan prayers (*Tarawih*) and their Friday prayers.¹

**a. Developments in the Political, Religious and Legal Stances Towards
al-Aqsa Mosque**

In 2008, the Knesset State Control Committee asked State Comptroller Micha Lindenstrauss to “examine the enforcement of the Antiquities Law on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.”² Lindenstrauss’s office set about preparing a report on the subject, which it presented to the concerned committee in 2010. On 3/8/2010, the committee started to discuss it and decided to keep it, hidden from the public since it is considered highly sensitive for diplomatic and security reasons. Very limited sections of the report were approved for publication.³ These parts were not published until 17/5/2011, and were limited to short sentences, which said, “These works [done by the Islamic Endowments (*Waqf*) in Solomon’s Stables] were carried out without any coordination with the authorities that deal with legal enforcement in the Temple Mount, and without the required permits and licenses. The use of mechanical tools during some of the works regretfully damaged some of the archaeological evidence.”⁴ The report came to the conclusion that “It is important to highlight that any work or excavation at the Temple Mount should be carried out in keeping with the character of the site, with the necessary licenses, and according to archeological standards.”⁵ This report and its conclusions came to serve the agenda of Jewish extremists who call on the government to confront the Islamic Endowments and force them to coordinate with the Israel Antiquities Authority in any works they plan to carry out in *al-Aqsa* Mosque. This report coincided with a systematic media campaign launched by a group of extremist Jewish associations in cooperation with politicians, among them members of the Knesset, in which they accused the Israeli police of instituting discriminatory policies against Jews wishing to visit the Temple Mount. This campaign led to a hearing, held on 15/6/2011 by the Knesset Interior and Environment Committee in which Police Chief Superintendent Avi Bitton was questioned.⁶ It also led

to an investigation, by Israel's Attorney General, Yehuda Weinstein, of the conduct of Israeli police. These efforts ended with the convening, on 7/8/2011, of an extended meeting in the office of Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin that included top police officials, a group of politicians, and representatives of Jewish associations. In this meeting, it was agreed to:⁷

1. Allow Jewish soldiers to enter the mosque in their uniforms (which had been banned previously).
2. Allow visits to the mosque for brides on their wedding day, suggesting that wedding ceremonies may be allowed inside the mosque.
3. Stop subjecting religious Jews to search procedures and strict supervision when entering the mosque.

Regarding developments in religious attitudes, what was striking was the move by Safed's Chief Rabbi Shmuel Eliyahu, one of two chief rabbis in the official rabbinate, calling upon the Israeli public to offer "Passover sacrifice on the Temple Mount." He decreed that the Jewish people who avoid performing this ritual were putting themselves at risk of "kareth," a biblical term meaning supernatural punishment for transgressing Jewish Law.⁸

In 2010, a group of Jewish extremists presented a plea to Israel's Supreme Court requesting "permission to bring a sacrifice on the Temple Mount prior to Passover." State attorneys asked the Supreme Court to reject this plea saying, "Performing the ritual on the Temple Mount would deal a severe blow to public safety and security."⁹

b. Excavations and Constructions Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Periphery

By the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011, excavations below *al-Aqsa* and in its periphery moved up to a new phase. The focus had been on increasing the number of excavations and expanding them, but now switched to rehabilitating the excavations and opening them to visitors; so that they would form, after their inauguration and after completing linking them one to the other, a Jewish historical city under the mosque. This change in focus indicates that this city's infrastructure has been completed. The following table shows the rise in the number of excavations under *al-Aqsa* Mosque:

Table 1/6: Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Periphery, 21/8/2011¹⁰

Direction		Southern side	Western side	Northern side	Total
Type of excavations	Completed	5	10	0	15
	Active	12	9	2	23
Total		17	19	2	38

Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Periphery, 21/8/2011

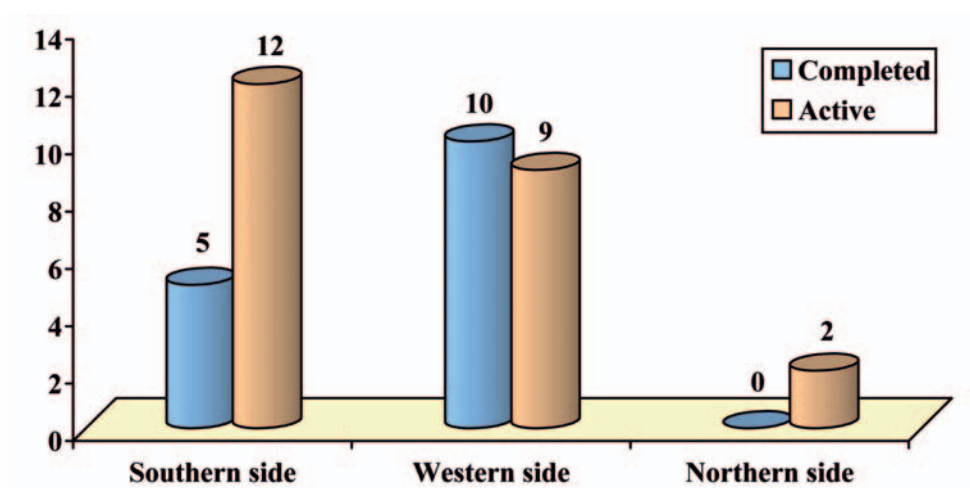
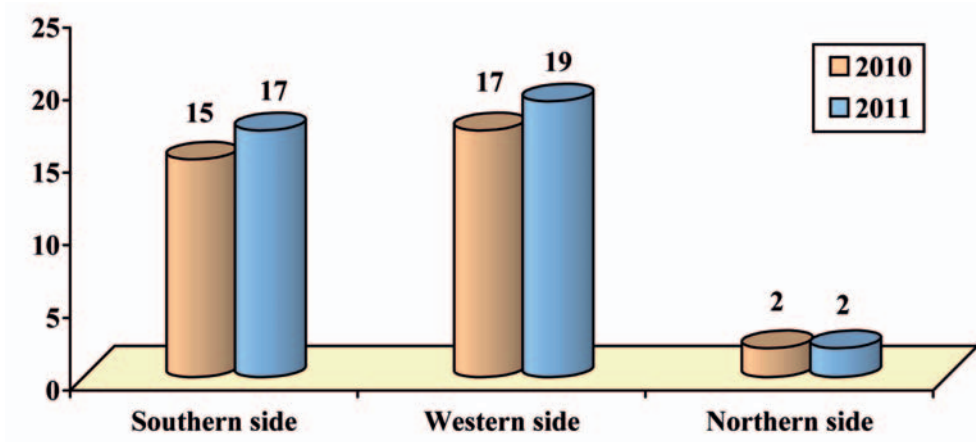


Table 2/6: The Rise in the Number of Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Periphery, 22/8/2010–21/8/2011¹¹

Direction of excavation	No. of excavation sites in 22/8/2010	No. of excavation sites in 21/8/2011	% increase
Southern side	15	17	13
Western side	17	19	11
Northern side	2	2	0
Total	34	38	12

The Rise in the Number of Excavations Under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Periphery, 22/8/2010–21/8/2011



The most important of the inaugurated digs was a tunnel linking the “City of David” in Silwan to the south and the Western Wall’s network of tunnels to the north; the Herodian road forms a section of this. The importance of this tunnel stems from the fact that it connects the two wings of the historical Jewish city, south and west of the mosque.¹²

Furthermore, the Israeli authorities focused on preparing an infrastructure that would allow the presence of Jewish shrines. So, in November 2011, they confiscated the land, an area of 800 square meters, in order to convert it to a parking lot for visitors to the City of David.¹³ On 4/10/2010 the occupation’s municipality approved an integrated project for the rehabilitation of the vicinity of the Western Wall, aiming to attract around 15 million visitors annually. The project includes opening, for the first time since the city was occupied, a new gate in the Old City’s southern wall.¹⁴

The most prominent facility that was opened to visitors is the Ophel City Walls Site, a large complex of ruins from what is claimed to be of the First Temple period and which the Jews believe to be the Water Gate. The corridors were constructed among the ruins of the Umayyad palaces situated south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and were opened to visitors as part of the Jewish Historic City.¹⁵

The Issue of the Mughrabi Hill

The Mughrabi issue came to public attention on 15/2/2004 when the stone retaining wall that supports the hill from its northern side, overlooking Western Wall Square, crumbled after a snowstorm. The explanation for the collapse of the hill's wall at the time was the cement bases that the Israeli authorities poured for the umbrellas that were installed in the place shortly before. Another reason was that the Israeli authorities did not allow the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places to fortify or restore the hill, when in fact the weight placed on it was purposely increased. Just over a year after the hill's collapse, on 20/4/2005, Israel put up, in place of the hill, a wooden ramp that allows entrance to the mosque from the Mughrabi Gate.¹⁶

Before elaborating further on how this issue developed, it is helpful to explain the background. The hill came into being in this area after the Moroccan Quarter, situated to its north, was demolished on 11/6/1967, followed by the honorary Khanqah building, which is situated to its south and was in turn demolished on 16/6/1969. All these buildings used to stand at the same level. However, the demolition work that leveled them to the ground left the passage going up to the Mughrabi Gate standing alone, looking like an isolated block.¹⁷ This tells us that the hill is artificial, consisting of a demolished passage, standing over structures that go back to at least the Ayyubid period; hence their need for constant maintenance and care. This background also tells us that the Mughrabi Hill and the rooms beneath it are the last Islamic structures in this area.

The work to demolish the Mughrabi Hill started on 6/2/2007, part of a plan to rehabilitate the area from a biblical point of view.¹⁸ These works led to numerous repercussions and reactions. One of these came from UNESCO, when its Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura, sent a technical mission, in the period 27/2–2/3/2007, to make a technical assessment of the location. Their report made five recommendations, which included the following, “The Government of Israel should be asked to engage immediately in a consultation process with all concerned parties, in particular the authorities of the Waqf and of Jordan.”¹⁹ This call came after Jerusalem was placed on UNESCO's List of World Heritage in Danger.

This call by UNESCO constituted a precedent that surpassed the fundamentals of international law in this regard. There is a constant in the various resolutions of UN bodies which is that the affairs of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and Islamic endowments

in Jerusalem are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places. This call turned Israel into a genuine party and turned the Jordanian ministry into one of the “concerned parties.” Nevertheless, the Jordanian government responded to this call. Since then the World Heritage Committee has held a series of meetings to look into this matter as a standing item on its agenda. The Israel Antiquities Authority presented its vision of a solution, by erecting a metal bridge on pillars over what remains of the hill, while the Jordanian authorities opposed this project. However, and in numerous meetings, they were not able to present an alternative project, in view of the fact that Israeli authorities did not allow them to visit the site and take the necessary measurements and soil samples, in order to prepare their own plan. Thus we ended up with two viewpoints belonging to two parties contesting the guardianship of the site. This was the first time that this alternative viewpoint had been given since the city was occupied, having been the exclusive right of the Jordanian authorities.

In spite of the Jordanian Foreign Ministry’s favorable response to the UN resolution, which called on the two parties to cooperate in finding a solution, the Israeli authorities continued to bar Jordanian experts from entering the site. When the Jordanians were allowed entrance, their tools were all confiscated. This prompted UNESCO’s Executive Board on 21/10/2010 to call “upon Israel to enable the necessary access to the site to Jordanian and Waqf experts, most notably, in order to take the necessary measurements for the concept design proposed by Jordan, ... and to enable Jordan as a concerned party to present its final design for the restoration and preservation of the Mughrabi Ascent.”²⁰ Then, after exhausting negotiations, the Israeli authorities allowed the Jordanian technical experts to inspect the site and examine soil samples, provided that they leave within six hours;²¹ enabling the Jordanian authorities to prepare their own plan, which it presented to UNESCO on 27/5/2011.²²

On 22/5/2011, the Jerusalem city engineer sent a strongly worded letter saying that the temporary wooden bridge “was not intended to provide a permanent solution and is not suitable for security and civilian needs, as well as may be hazardous due to deteriorating physical conditions,” in an effort to bring the subject back to the limelight.²³ Then on 26/10/2011, Jerusalem city engineer announced his intention to dismantle the bridge because it was in danger of collapse. He gave the Western Wall Heritage Fund 30 days to work on a replacement plan.²⁴ Thus, from Israel’s viewpoint, legal procedures were completed for the demolition of the hill.

This announcement provoked strong reactions, especially as it included a specified period after which the demolition may take place. An Egyptian public campaign, as well as a Jordanian one, started to stop the demolition. On 13/11/2011, the Egyptian campaign sent letters to al-Azhar, the Coptic Church and to the SCAF demanding action to stop the demolition.²⁵ Then, on 16/11/2011, Grand Imam of al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyib warned against destroying the hill and called on Arab leaders to take action;²⁶ he also called for dedicating Friday 25/11/2011 to Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa* Mosque.²⁷ And on 24/11/2011, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, head of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, sent a letter to the Jordanian King ‘Abdullah II, expressing the need for immediate action to stop the demolition of the hill.²⁸ On 25/11/2011, mass rallies were held in Jordan, Egypt and GS. One of these was held in Suweima, a border village in the Jordan Valley north of the Dead Sea, the closest place in Jordan to Jerusalem, only 25 km away.²⁹ Furthermore, the Jordanian Foreign Ministry sent a letter to its Israeli counterpart regarding the Jordanian stance in this regard. On 25/11/2011 Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed the Jerusalem municipality and the Public Security Ministry to postpone for a week the demolition of the Mughrabi Bridge, due to warnings from Egypt and Jordan of possible repercussions.³⁰

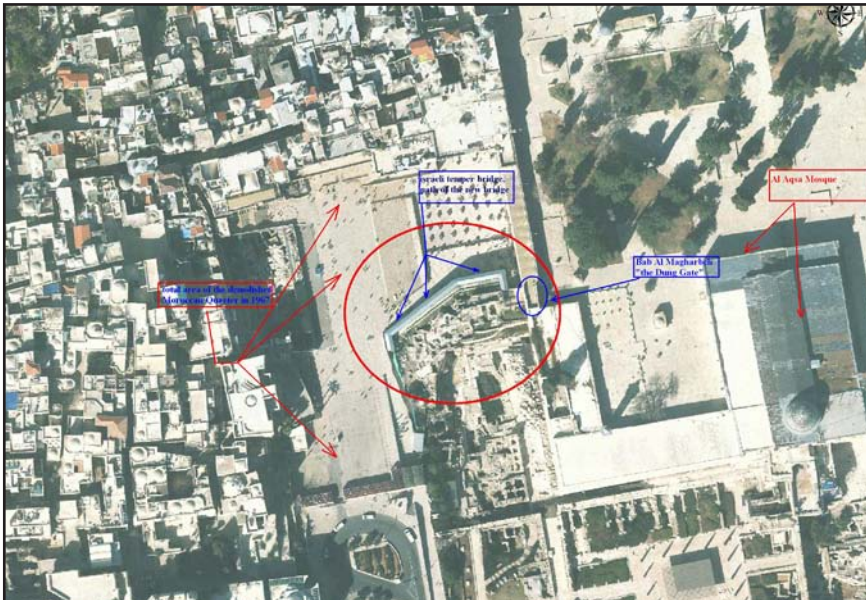
On 11/12/2011, in an attempt to pressure the prime minister, officials closed the Mughrabi Bridge, three days before the municipality deadline to close the ramp, because it posed a threat to public safety.³¹ During that period, many Arabic condemnations of this decision were issued; among them a letter from the Jordanian foreign minister on 9/12/2011, in which he warned Israel against closing the wooden ramp to *al-Aqsa* Mosque.³² Israel reopened the bridge on the morning of 14/12/2011. Two Knesset members, Aryeh Eldad and Uri Ariel of the National Union Party (Halhud HaLeumi) were the first to enter *al-Aqsa* Mosque,³³ coming over the bridge after its reopening, having previously announced their intention to break into the mosque on that date.

In spite of the fact that the storm surrounding the issue of the Mughrabi Hill has passed, the hill remains under threat. Most of the rubble that existed was, in effect, removed. What is more serious is Israel’s intent to remove all that remains of the hill, and to pave the place in order to enlarge the Jewish prayer area. That is why there is a lot of focus on the idea of an iron bridge standing on pillars, because this would allow the removal of the hill and expansion of the prayer area. There is no doubt that the issue of the Mughrabi Hill will return to the forefront soon.

The Mughrabi Hill After the Demolition of the Passage and the Removal of Its Debris



The Mughrabi Hill Location and the Wooden Ramp Relative to *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the Western Wall Plaza



c. Jewish Presence Inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque and Interference in Its Administration

Realizing Jewish presence in the mosque as a “permanent right” represented the central goal of “Zionist actions,” both on the level of extremist Jewish associations and on an official level. These associations consistently called for “Ascent to the Temple Mount,” a matter which they were able to consecrate over the years 2009 and 2010. They also tried to give the temple the status of “the center of Jewish life” and started to organize educational trips for students, intensify introductory tours, and pressure the Israeli police into changing the rules governing entrance to the mosque. They succeeded with the settlement reached on 7/8/2011 in the office of Knesset Speaker Reuven Rivlin; immediately after which, the largest recorded mass incursion in the history of the mosque took place; when 500 Jewish settlers stormed it under police protection on 9/8/2011, which coincided with the month of Ramadan.³⁴

After Israeli police agreed to allow uniformed Israeli soldiers to break in to the mosque and hold celebrations, some members of the police force began to take part in these rituals. Such incursions used to be met with stones and shoes and the Israeli police began to arrest anyone who dared call takbeer, “*Allah-u-Akbar*” (*Allah* is the greatest) to the intruding groups. Such incidents took place on 13, 16 and 17/3/2011, with the aim to confront those sitting in the benches of learning in the mosque.³⁵ The Israelis began using methods to keep worshippers away from the mosque and deter them from visiting. They would issue against them six months expulsion orders, subject to renewal; even if they were guards of the mosque and were employed by the Islamic Endowments. Furthermore, they would make a point of recording the names of those who attend lessons at the benches of learning; monitoring their entry daily, in preparation for issuing rulings against them.³⁶

This reality has led to a decline in direct confrontation related to the storming of the mosque, with the exception of calls to execute major break-ins, such as those that took place during January and February of 2012. Extremist Jews no longer enter the mosque afraid and in a hurry to leave, as was the case over the last few years. Their visits have become rather long and more regular, and include the performance of public rituals, as happened on 2/6/2011, when 200 Jewish extremists performed a public congregational prayer in the mosque, with the participation of members of the Israeli police assigned for their protection.³⁷

It can be said without exaggeration that, time-wise, the mosque has become divided between Muslims and Jews; with the police providing full daily protection to all those wishing to enter it during times other than those designated for Muslims. This police protection is based on rulings issued by the Israeli Supreme Court in this regard; with the result that hundreds of settlers enter the mosque routinely.

The most noticeable attack carried out by the Israeli police came on 20/4/2011, when a policeman threw an incendiary bomb in to the wooded area east of the mosque that would have caused a great fire were it not for the quick response of the worshippers who immediately put it out. The Israeli police entered as soon as the fire was extinguished in order to clear its traces.³⁸

Finally, we cannot overlook the unprecedented steps and measures taken by the police to limit the presence of worshippers in the mosque during Ramadan, the time when vitality usually returns to the mosque with police measures failing to limit the number of worshippers attending. The first attempts to break into the mosque came on the first night of *Tarawih*, on 31/7/2011, carried out by 20 settlers who approached from the direction of the Lions Gate.³⁹ On the first Friday of the month, 5/8/2011, the Israeli police broke into the mosque and emptied it of those worshippers practicing *I'tikaf* (retreat in a mosque), claiming they had no right to stay there overnight;⁴⁰ in a move designed to consecrate the temporal division of the mosque. The police imposed tight entry restrictions, barring men under 50 and women under 45 from entering the mosque. They closed the Qalandiya crossing to buses, and forced those coming to pray to disembark from their buses at the Qalandiya checkpoint and continue either by taking other means of transportation or by walking.⁴¹ In spite of these severe measures, the number of worshippers on the first Friday reached 120 thousands;⁴² and on the second, 170 thousands.⁴³ This prompted the police to intensify their measures on the third Friday, with the result that only 70 thousand worshippers were able to reach the mosque.⁴⁴ What happened on this third Friday constituted a great challenge to the Palestinians; so their religious scholars, leaders and authorities called for dense presence in the mosque on the night of the 27th of Ramadan; with the result that their numbers on that night reached 300 thousands.⁴⁵

2. Jerusalem's Islamic Holy Sites

In addition to the attacks on *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the most prominent attacks on Islamic holy sites were as follows:



a. Hosh Al Shahabi

On 13/1/2011, *al-Aqsa* Foundation for Endowment and Heritage issued a statement pointing out that the Israeli authorities had inaugurated Hosh Al Shahabi, which is part of Ribat al-Kurd, located north of the Iron Gate in *al-Aqsa*'s Western Wall. They opened it to Jewish visitors under the name of the "Small Wailing Wall."⁴⁶



b. The Mamilla Cemetery

On 25/6/2011, under Israeli police protection, more than 100 graves in the Mamilla Cemetery were razed for the benefit of establishing the Center for Human Dignity–Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem (MOTJ).⁴⁷ This museum is being built and sponsored by the Simon Wiesenthal Center (SWC), as an additional branch to its two other Museum of Tolerance branches already established in Los Angeles and New York.⁴⁸ On 12/7/2011, the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee approved the plan to build this museum,⁴⁹ which will swallow up most of the remaining area of the cemetery of no more than 20 thousand square meters; its original size having been 10 times as large. On 25/9/2011, the President of the Council of Islamic Cemeteries in Jerusalem, Mustafa Abu Zahra, declared that great quantities of water were flooding the western side of the cemetery, due to two open pipes belonging to Jerusalem's municipal water company, the Gihon Company.⁵⁰ And on 13/10/2011, a number of extremist Jews burned a tree in the cemetery and smashed 15 graves.⁵¹

c. 'Ukasha Mosque

On 14/12/2011, Jewish extremists torched the historic 'Ukasha Bin Muhsin Mosque in West Jerusalem and defaced its walls with obscene graffiti, consisting of offensive comments about the Prophet Muhammad. The Israeli authorities placed this mosque at the disposal of the "Guardian of Absentee Property" and turned its courtyard into a playground for children. This attack was one of a series of attacks by Jewish extremists who belong to an extremist organization carrying out a campaign called "Tag Mehir" (price tag).⁵²

3. Jerusalem's Christian Holy Sites

a. The Issue of the Cremisan Monastery

On 9/9/2011, the Israeli army handed the nuns of the Cremisan Monastery, northwest of Beit Jala, a military order from the head of the Israeli Regional Planning and Construction Committee. The order notified the owners of land threatened by the Separation Wall north of Beit Jala city, in Bethlehem Governorate, that they should submit their objections to the proposed new route of the Separation Wall in the area within 30 days.⁵³

b. The Dwindling Number of Christians in Jerusalem

Data issued by the CBS for 2010 showed that the number of Christians in Jerusalem continued to decline; 14,500 persons, among them, 11,600 Christian Arabs. This means that Christian Arabs now represent 1.5% of the city's population.⁵⁴ If this rate of decline continues, the Christian Arab presence in Jerusalem will cease to exist in less than 15 years.

4. Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in the Rest of Historic Palestine

a. The "Tag Mehir" Movement

The year 2010 witnessed the burning of mosques in the WB. Usually, the arsonists would leave behind a phrase saying "burning done" followed by a number. But what is striking is that, during 2011, those carrying out these acts were signing the name of the extremist settlement movement "Tag Mehir," which was created to oppose any policy of evacuating settlements. Many of its operations in the WB were signed Migron, in reference to a settlement outpost near Ramallah that the Israeli Supreme Court was considering evacuating. In August 2011, the court ruled that the Israeli government should evacuate it completely by 31/3/2012.

The second important event that saw a great number of attacks on holy sites, properties and citizens, committed by the same movement, happened when the PLO went to the UN seeking recognition for the state of Palestine. Table 3/6 shows the escalation in arson attacks on mosques after September 2011.

What is striking when looking closely at the attacks perpetrated by the movement is how at ease its members were storming Palestinian towns. This attitude took the group to the point of trying to attack al-Hassan al-Kabir Mosque in the center of the town of Bir Zeit on 9/9/2011.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the attacks follow a pattern; the arson starts by breaking windows or by looking for back entrances



from where to throw flaming tires or incendiary materials inside. They failed in reaching their goal when on 7/12/2011 they faced a tightly shut and protected ‘Ali ibn Abi Taleb Mosque in Bruqin near Salfit. This mosque had received two demolition notices, prompting the inhabitants to take protection measures.⁵⁶

b. Attacks Perpetrated During 2011

During 2011, both the Israeli army and the settlers played their own role in storming and attacking holy sites, and assaulting those who sought to safeguard them from attacks. The following table displays the most notable of the attacks and violations committed against the holy sites:

Table 3/6: Most Notable Israeli Attacks on the Holy Sites in the Rest of Historic Palestine 2011⁵⁷

Date	The Event
16/1/2011	Construction of a Judaized tourist resort above al-Qishla Cemetery in Jaffa begins after the razing and concealing of the Islamic graves.
16/1/2011	Settlers desecrate al-Nuzha Mosque in Jaffa, throwing stones and chanting anti-Muslim slogans.
17/2/2011	The Yazra Mosque in Tubas Governorate is demolished.
23/2/2011	Israeli authorities prosecute and fine ‘Abd al-Majid Muhammad, who is in charge of the holy sites file in <i>al-Aqsa</i> Foundation, because of the restoration of an Ottoman mosque in Jerusalem.
24/2/2011	Confiscation notice served on an endowment land in Acre, with the aim of allowing a railway line to pass through it.
28/2/2011	Arson attack on Salman al-Farisi Mosque in the village of Burin.
28/2/2011	Notification given for the demolition of ‘Ali ibn Abi Taleb Mosque in the town of Ramadeen, south of Hebron.
3/3/2011	Break in at the Nabi Yunus Mosque in Halhoul, the intruders perform Jewish rituals.
19/3/2011	Israeli forces storm Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Mosque in the town of Housan, west of Bethlehem.
22/3/2011	The Israeli army breaks into ‘Awarta’s old mosque.
29/3/2011	Settlers desecrate Nabi Yunus Mosque in Halhoul.
3/4/2011	Jewish parties raze and destroy the cemetery of al-Naghmaghiya Village, south west of Haifa, which has an area of more than 15 donums.
9/4/2011	The Israeli authorities offer a mosque in the city of al-Taiba for sale in public auction.
12/4/2011	A group of settlers write Hebrew sentences on the gravestones and the walls of the cemetery adjacent to Martyrs Street in Hebron. ⁵⁸
20–21/4/2011	Closing of the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron for two days.
23/4/2011	Israelis attack Christian worshippers in Jerusalem.
3/5/2011	Setting fire to the mosque of the Hawwara School in Nablus.

Date	The Event
21/5/2011	Settlers throw stones at Khalid ibn al-Walid Mosque near Hebron.
7/6/2011	Setting fire to al-Maghir Mosque, east of Ramallah.
12/6/2011	An Israeli ruling to demolish 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb Mosque in Bruqin near Salfit.
14/6/2011	Notification of demolition for the mosque of al-Ma'sara Village, southwest of Bethlehem.
19/6/2011	Extensive unearthing and digging operations in al-Qishla Cemetery in Jaffa.
22/6/2011	The Israeli Supreme Court denies an application to reopen Beersheba's Grand Mosque for prayer and decides to turn it into a museum of Islamic and Oriental heritage. Despite this, the site was turned into a Jewish museum on 27/12/2011.
7/7/2011	Israeli parties try to obliterate the features of the mosque of the depopulated village al-'Abbasiyyah.
9/8/2011	Installation of a new Israeli checkpoint at the entrance of the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron.
15/8/2011	Jewish extremists perform Jewish religious rituals in the cemetery of Beit Ummar in Hebron district. ⁵⁹
5/9/2011	Israeli settlers set fire to al-Nourain Mosque in Qasra Village, southeast of Nablus.
7/9/2011	Vandalizing of the Prophet Lot Mosque in Hebron.
8/9/2011	Graffiti hostile to Muslims and Arabs written on the walls of the historic Yatma Mosque, south of Nablus.
9/9/2011	Settlers write offensive graffiti on the walls of Birzeit Grand Mosque.
25/9/2011	Digging at al-Qishla Cemetery in Jaffa.
25/9/2011	Closing of the Ibrahimi Mosque to Muslims for two days.
3/10/2011	Arson attack on al-Nur Mosque in the village of Tuba Zanghariya in the Galilee.
6/10/2011	Demolition notice served by the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality on two gates and stairs on Sea Mosque in Jaffa.
7/10/2011	Vandals attack al-Kazakhana and Christian cemeteries in Jaffa.
11/10/2011	For the third time, the occupation demolishes the Yarza Mosque in the Jordan Valley, east of Tubas.
20/11/2011	Demolition notice served on a mosque west of the town of Nahhalin. ⁶⁰
21/11/2011	A Jewish extremist breaks into Hasan Beik Mosque in Jaffa.
24/11/2011	The demolition of Khirbet al-Maqfareh Mosque, south of Yatta in the Hebron Governorate.
7/12/2011	Attack with a bomb burns parts of Kresa Mosque in Dura in Hebron.
7/12/2011	Settlers try to burn 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb Mosque in Bruqin, west of the city of Salfit. ⁶¹
15/12/2011	Attack on Nabi Matta Mosque in Hebron.
15/12/2011	Israeli settlers set fire to al-Nur Mosque in the village of Burqa, east of Ramallah.
17/12/2011	Assault on Saint John the Baptist Church on the banks of the Jordan River, near the border with Jordan.
19/12/2011	Racist slogans written on the walls of the Sahaba Mosque in Bani Na'im in Hebron.



c. A Bill to Ban Adhan

On 8/12/2011, the extremist Member of the Knesset from the ultra-nationalist Yisrael Beitenu Party, Anastassia Michaeli, proposed, along with five colleagues, a law to ban the call to prayer (adhan) being made using loud speakers by mosques in mixed Jewish-Arab areas, such as Nazareth and Jerusalem, including in the Old City and *al-Aqsa* Mosque. “The proposal aims to prohibit mosques from sounding the nighttimes and early morning calls of the Muezzin—who uses a public address system to beckon worshipers to pray—in order to avoid disrupting nearby residents.”⁶² Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed his support of the proposed law on 11/12/2011.⁶³

Second: The Population Under Occupation

Demographic balance remains a great concern for Israeli decision-makers. This concern seems to grow deeper year on year as the increase in the Arab population goes beyond all expectations; Arabs will represent 40% of the population by the year 2020. The fact that the occupation authorities use two parallel strategies to achieve the desired demographic balance, increasing the Jewish population on the one hand, and decreasing the Arab population on the other. Over the last four decades, increasing the Jewish population proved to be impossible; for Jewish internal migration toward cities surrounding Jerusalem continued to absorb a big percentage of the natural population growth as well as the immigrants coming from abroad who had previously stayed in the city. Attempting to limit the Palestinian population became the better solution for the Israeli authorities. This was to be done by expelling a large number of Palestinians from Palestinian population centres to outside the cities. Those who remain within Jerusalem’s city limits were to be driven to the farthest point possible from the Old City and the city centre, in order to reduce the mass of this population bloc.

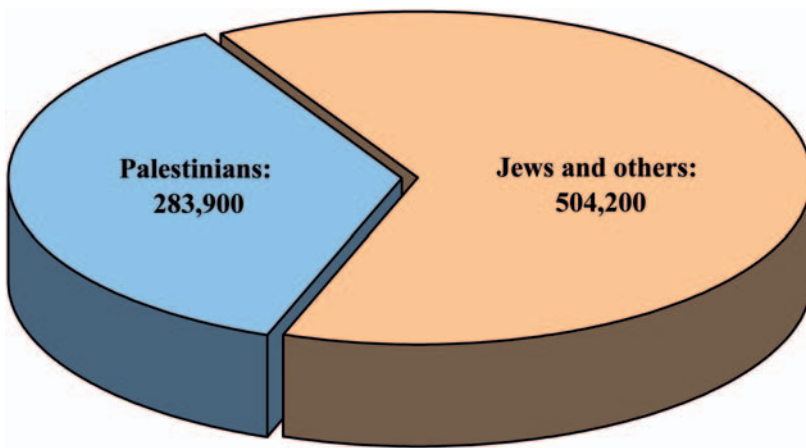
1. The Demographic Battle's Reality⁶⁴

Table 4/6: Number of Residents in Jerusalem 2009–2010⁶⁵

Group	Year	Population	% Annual growth	% of the total population
Palestinians	2009	275,900	2.9	35.7
	2010	283,900	2.9	36
Jews and others*	2009	497,000	1	64.3
	2010	504,200	1.4	64

*This category includes Jews, non-Arab Christian residents, as well as those not classified by religion. As for the “others,” their number in 2010 reached 12,400, 1.6% of the city’s population.

Number of Residents in Jerusalem at the End of 2010



Careful reading of the Statistical Yearbook of Jerusalem 2011 and of the numbers released by the CBS related to Jerusalem show the following:

a. In 2009, the total number of residents of the city amounted to 773,000; while in 2010, it was 788,100.

b. During 2008, the Israeli authorities conducted a census that resulted in an altering of the number of Arab and Jewish inhabitants, which had previously been based on the estimates of the 1995 census.⁶⁶ Thus they lowered the number of Arab inhabitants from 268,600 to 268,200. They also lowered the number of Jewish inhabitants from 495,000 to 492,200.⁶⁷

c. The number of Christian Arabs continued to decline significantly, as mentioned earlier.

d. This re-count led a jump in the Arab population increase from 2.7% before the census to 2.9% after it.⁶⁸ Simultaneously, it led to altering the Jewish population increase to 1% for 2009 and 1.4% for 2010, after having been 1.6% before the census.⁶⁹ It thus became lower than the Jewish population increase state-wide, which came to 1.7% for 2010. Still, this increase remained higher than those in other major Jewish cities, such as 0.9% in Haifa and 0.1% in Tel Aviv.⁷⁰

e. The net internal migration of the Jewish population continued its negative trend; as during 2010, around 11,100 Jews arrived in the city from its surroundings, while around 18,300 others left the city during this same year. Thus the resultant net internal migration came out negative, with around 7,300 more Jewish residents leaving the city than those arriving in it.⁷¹

f. Population increase varied greatly among Jerusalem's settlements. The Har Homa (Jabal Abu Ghneim) settlement continues to be the most successful in attracting Jewish citizens. Thus in 2009, the total population growth was 2,109 persons, with 21.6% annual growth. As for the other settlements, their annual population growth varied between -1.4% in East Talpiot, -1% in east Gilo, -0.2% in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City; while other settlements registered limited positive rates; 0.4% in west Gilo, 1.1% in Pisgat Ze'ev, 1.2% in Ramat Shlomo, and 1.5% in Neve Yakov.⁷²

g. In spite of the fact that these settlements registered a decline in population, Israel continues to expand them. An example of this is the Gilo settlement where the government approved an expansion of 5,377 residential units during 2011.⁷³ Oddly, it places these settlement expansions under the title of "natural growth."⁷⁴

h. The limited number of Jewish immigrants moving to Jerusalem from abroad continued. In 2010, they numbered under 3,400 (from a total of 22,800 immigrants who came to Israel from abroad).⁷⁵ A study of the immigrants to Jerusalem in the period 2002–2009 shows that 58% of them came from the US and Western Europe, indicating religious motives for their immigration.⁷⁶

i. During the period 2006–2009, the ratio of ultra-orthodox Jews to the city's total Jewish population was fixed at 29%, which is four times the state-wide ratio of 8%.⁷⁷

j. Due to the high proportion of religious Jews, internal migration became concentrated between Jerusalem and the WB settlements. For, of the 7,138 Jews who left the city during 2009, 3,631 of them (50.9%) headed to the WB settlements.⁷⁸

k. According to estimates by the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS), by the end of 2009, Palestinians continued to make up the majority in Jerusalem's eastern part. For, of a total population of 466,600 living in this part of the city, 272,900 were Palestinians, representing 58% of the population, compared to 193,700 Jews, representing 42%.⁷⁹

2. Attempts to Expel the Palestinians

a. The Shu'fat Crossing: a New "International" Crossing

In its quest to reduce the number of Palestinian inhabitants, the Jerusalem Municipality faces the dilemma of not being able to specify their exact place of residence. Over recent decades, and with the continuous restrictions on housing and living within the municipal boundaries, a great number of Jerusalemites got used to living outside these boundaries in the suburbs adjacent to the city, such as al-Ram, 'Anata and al-'Eizariya; simultaneously adopting the address of any of their relatives or that of an unoccupied property. All these measures aim to secure their blue residency cards. And although the municipality was aware of these measures, it did not then have an effective means to limit this moving mass of population or estimate their numbers. It has, however, belatedly started to gradually develop these means.

As plans were being made for the construction of the Separation Wall, the Israeli authorities were also planning to use it as an effective means to cut off the largest possible number of Palestinians from their city, once and for all. So they deliberately placed some Palestinian population concentrations that were within the municipal boundaries outside of those boundaries; among them, the town of Kfar 'Aqab, part of 'Anata, Dahiyat al-Barid, Ras Khamis, and Shu'fat refugee camp.

With the start of the Wall's construction, limiting the Jerusalemites' movement became a reality, as passage became confined to certain military checkpoints. The Israeli authorities adopted a plan to limit the number of these crossings and turn them into "international crossings" where stringent entrance measures are applied. For the Palestinian inhabitants, passing these international crossings each day poses great hardship, and forces those living outside the Wall to go to nearby WB urban centers and abandon their commute to Jerusalem.

The first crossing of this kind was that of Qalandiya, which limited the communication between Jerusalem and Ramallah and the northern WB cities.

However, the fact that not all sections of the Wall in the other directions were completed prevented the establishment of other crossings. During 2011, Israeli authorities completed the Wall's construction in the areas of Shu'fat, 'Anata and Ras Khamis in full. They started work on the infrastructure necessary for turning the Shu'fat crossing in to something more like an "international crossing." They inaugurated it on 12/12/2011, thus forcing the residents of those three towns to enter Jerusalem through it.⁸⁰

Shu'fat Crossing, Fully Equipped



b. Evacuating the Bedouin Communities in East Jerusalem

On 11/9/2011, the Israeli government voted in favor of the Praver Plan, under which tens of thousands of Bedouins would be uprooted from their homes east of Jerusalem.⁸¹ Concerns have been raised about the proposed relocation site. The site is located close to al-'Eizariya and does not meet minimum standards in terms of distance from municipal dumping grounds so is likely to pose a health hazard to the communities, as well as providing limited access to grazing lands. OCHA-oPt confirmed that the occupation authorities intend to execute the eviction orders early in 2012. These orders affect 2,300 Bedouin who reside in 20 communities in the hills to the east of Jerusalem, of whom children represent 66.7%. The OCHA-oPt report stated that 302 Bedouins were evicted from the area by force during the period 1/1–1/9/2011.⁸²

These evictions come in preparation for the completion of the last section of the Separation Wall that wraps around Ma'ale Adumim and its surroundings and brings them within the city's limits; as these Bedouin encampments are present in the vicinity of Ma'ale Adumim and in the area that separates it from Jerusalem's Municipal boundaries.

c. Inclination Towards Modifying Jerusalem's City Limits

On 13/12/2011, Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat officially announced his intention to separate the neighborhoods to the city's northeast, which include the Shu'fat refugee camp, 'Anata, Ras Khamis, Dahiyat al-Barid, and Kfar 'Aqab, from the municipal boundaries and hand them over to the PA. He further announced his intention to modify those boundaries so that the Ma'ale Adumim settlement and its vicinity will be brought within the city's limits.⁸³

This step had been a point of contention among Israeli planners over the past few years. Some of them saw that it is the only effective method to alter the demographic balance in the city. Others expressed their apprehension lest this move be an ill advised expansion in directions far from the Jewish center of the city that would end in failing to attract residents. It seems that, with this announcement, the mayor has made up his mind in this regard, at least in what concerns the Adumim eastern bloc. It is not clear if he has the same intentions regarding the northern and southern blocs.

At least what is clear is that separating those Arab communities from Jerusalem will place 22 thousand to 55 thousand Palestinian inhabitants, who hold blue ID cards and were counted in past censuses, permanently outside the city's limits; while the Adumim bloc will add approximately 32 thousand Jewish residents to the city. If this move is completed, it is expected that it will lead to altering the demographic balance by reducing the Palestinian proportion of the population to between 30–31.7%; the ratio sought by the Inter-Ministerial Committee charged with the task of examining the rate of development in Jerusalem, known as the "Gafni Commission."⁸⁴

3. Demolition of Houses and Structures

A report by the Land Research Center (LRC) stated that, during 2011, 41 houses, inhabited by 282 Palestinian citizens, among them 177 children, were demolished; while 134 received demolition orders, in addition to two residential towers,

al-Rasheed and al-Zahra' in Beit Hanina. As for structures, 56 were demolished and 17 others were threatened with demolition.⁸⁵

Furthermore, in 2011, there was a plan proposed to cleanse the whole neighborhood Um-Harun, consisting of 32 houses. Furthermore, 14 residences were threatened with eviction and possible take over while the Hijjo family residence in Silwan was seized by Israelis.⁸⁶

4. The Palestinian Citizens' Deepening Cost of Living Crisis

The figures released by the JIIS for 2009 reveals the extent of poverty in Jerusalem and Israel:

Table 5/6: Extent of Poverty in Jerusalem and Israel 2009⁸⁷

Category	Families (%)	Children (%)
Within the non-Jewish population	69	82
Within the Jewish population	23	45
In Israel	21	36

Table 5/6 shows that the ratio of non-Jewish families living below the poverty line in Jerusalem has risen from 60% in 2008⁸⁸ to 69% in 2009, an increase of 9% in a single year; while the percentage of Jewish families under the poverty line remained about the same. At the same time, the Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights (JCSER) indicated that 80% of Palestinian heads of household owe the municipality astronomical figures in taxes and fines.⁸⁹ A peddler from Jaffa Gate served a year in jail because of his inability to pay fines. In December 2011, his debt stood at 330 thousand shekels (approximately \$87 thousand).⁹⁰

5. The Decision to Force Curriculum Changes on Jerusalem Schools

On 7/3/2011, the Educational Sector of Jerusalem Municipality (ESoJM) released a circular demanding that private schools in East Jerusalem receiving budgetary allocations from the Israeli authorities purchase textbooks prepared by the Jerusalem Education Administration (JEA) rather than the PA, where the JEA is a joint body of the municipality and the Israeli Ministry of Education.⁹¹ And so, on 6/9/2011, at the start of the academic year, the JEA distributed altered copies of the textbooks, from which it removed whole pages and subjects, leaving them blank so it was clear that they had been censored.⁹² This method is in keeping with the JEA objective of graduating citizens without identity who would constitute cheap labor for the Israeli market.

The gravity of this decision stems from the fact that most, if not all, private schools in Jerusalem receive regular financial allocations from the Israeli municipality, which sometimes make up 30% of their budgets, thus limiting their immunity in the face of Israeli measures.

Following the announcement of this decision and the start of the school year, the Civil Campaign for Preserving the Palestinian Curriculum in Jerusalem called for declining to receive the altered books or the municipality's representatives. Moreover, the Parents' Committee Union announced a two-hour suspension of classes on 8/9/2011,⁹³ and a one day strike on 13/9/2011.⁹⁴

These steps coincided with an announcement by East Jerusalem Education Directorate that it would provide all the textbooks in their original form, free of charge, in sufficient numbers and without exceptions.⁹⁵ The directorate was successful in smuggling the textbooks into the city.

These moves led to overriding the decision to impose altered curriculums on private schools in 2011. However, this does not mean abrogating the decision; especially that, quite simply, the Israeli municipality can trade off its financial allocations for teaching altered curriculums; then the private schools would not be able to easily refuse.

6. The Policy of Targeting Children

Since 2009, Israeli authorities have been targeting children in the neighborhoods threatened with eviction, namely, in al-Bustan neighborhood. Later they widened this targeting to include al-'Isawiyyah. A report by The Association for Civil Rights in Israel stated that "according to data supplied by Israel police, over the past year [2010] more than 1,200 Palestinian minors from East Jerusalem have been investigated on suspicion of participating in throwing stones." Among those detained, there were children younger than 12. Furthermore, the report mentioned that the police are known to break into homes at night to pull children out of their beds, blindfold them, handcuff their hands, and take them in for questioning in interrogation centers.⁹⁶

7. Escalating the Policy of Shutting Down Institutions

Since 2003, Israeli authorities have been following a policy of shutting down Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem, with the aim of limiting Jerusalemite society's ability to confront and adapt itself to the occupation's measures. The year 2011

witnessed escalation in this regard when, on 25 and 27/10/2011, the Israeli authorities broke into four development institutions in the city and stuck closure orders on their doors.⁹⁷ Then on 1/12/2011, an Israeli court extended their closure for a year, on the grounds that they are financed by “terrorist” organizations.⁹⁸ The institutions affected by the closing order were:

- a. Al-Quds Foundation for Development, which works on bolstering Jerusalemites’ perseverance, and execute infrastructure and restoration of property projects, in addition to providing legal support and intervention.
- b. The Sa’ed Institution is an educational institution working on strengthening schools’ infrastructure and providing educational support in the city.
- c. The Shu’a’ Women’s Association is a development society dedicated to the empowerment of women.
- d. Work without Borders Foundation helps people find job opportunities through the Internet and is based in Kfar ‘Aqab.

Third: The Settlement and Judaization Process in Jerusalem

In mid-2011, a Jerusalem Day poll was conducted by the Geocartography Knowledge Group on behalf of Israel’s Channel One News. The survey showed that 66% of Israelis opposed handing over any part of Jerusalem to the PA. A 73% majority opposed placing Jerusalem’s holy sites under international control. In addition 67% of Israelis want to simply get on with building up and developing the city as the capital of Israel.⁹⁹ On the other hand, *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper published a survey which showed that only 15% of the Israeli public favored Jerusalem for residential purposes.¹⁰⁰

1. Consolidating Jerusalem’s Standing as the Center of the State

The year 2011 witnessed a practical and political reassertion of the Basic Law: “Jerusalem, Capital of Israel,” which considers Jerusalem “the seat of the President of the State, the Knesset, the Government and the Supreme Court.” It “shall be given special priority in the activities of the authorities of the State so as to further its development in economic and other matters.”¹⁰¹ In February 2011, a plan was revealed to build an army base adjacent to the Augusta Victoria Hospital on a 32 donum piece of land on Mount Scopus. This plan includes the command and staff school, the school for national security and the military academy.¹⁰²

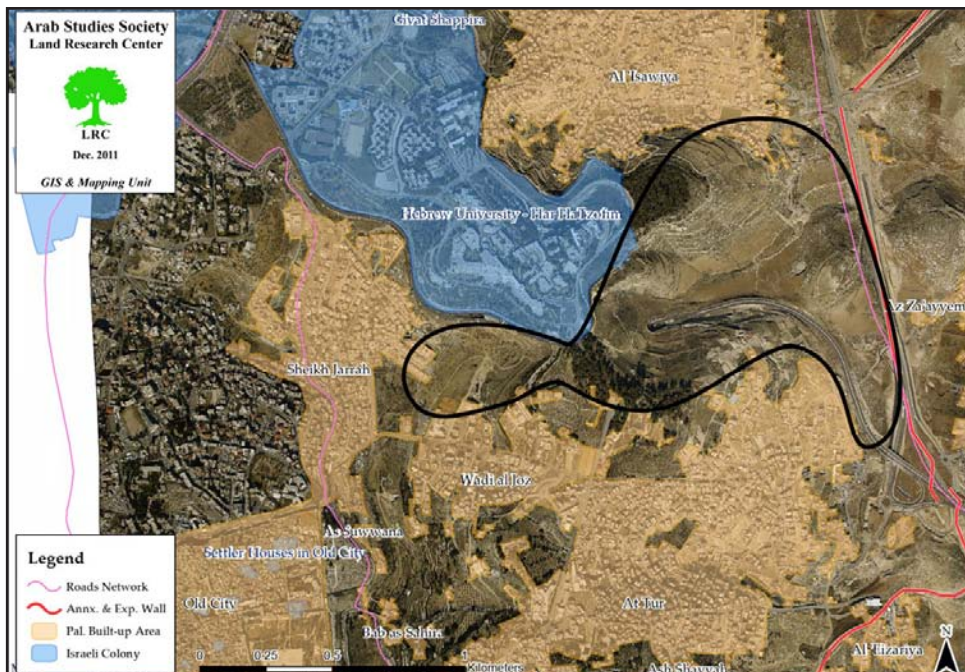
This is considered the first army base situated within the limits of the city's eastern part since its full occupation in 1967.

On 1/6/2011, the Knesset Economic Affairs Committee held a special session to discuss moving government offices from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, a step which is likely to create 3,500 job opportunities in the city.¹⁰³ On 19/6/2011, the owners of Channel 10 announced at a press conference with Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat that the channel would move its news department to Jerusalem at the beginning of 2012.¹⁰⁴ Then on 22/6/2011, Israeli activists launched a campaign on Facebook asking Israeli ministers whose ministries are located in Tel Aviv to relocate to Jerusalem. They threatened to close the entrances of those ministries with chains if their demands were not met.¹⁰⁵ At the end of June 2011, the Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA) announced that it would invest 15 million shekels (about \$4.4 million) in developing Yatsiv Street in the Atarot Industrial zone.¹⁰⁶ All of these decisions were made following a cabinet meeting that the Israeli government held in the citadel of Jerusalem in the Old City on 29/5/2011, during which it launched the Merom Plan for the development of the city and allocated 290 million shekels (\$83.6 million) to its fulfillment. This five-year plan aims to "strengthen the capital economically through two primary channels: tourism and high-tech."¹⁰⁷

2. The Biblical Park Project in al-'Isawiyyah

On 4/4/2011, the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee approved Plan no. 11092A, turning 700 donums of al-'Isawiyyah and al-Tur lands, northeast of Jerusalem, into a national park with a religious character, based on a claim that the area contains valuable Jewish relics that go back to the period of the Second Temple. This park is a joint project of the Jerusalem Municipality, the JDA and the Israel Nature and Parks Authority. It will extend on Mount Scopus Slopes to connect the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to the E1 project, and establish geographic contiguity between them, while isolating the north Jerusalem neighborhoods totally from the Old City.¹⁰⁸ So on 10/1/2012, they started razing 70 donums of this area to start work on constructing the park,¹⁰⁹ after having razed, on 20/12/2011, a football field belonging to the Ibrahimi College, situated between the school and the area where work on establishing the park will begin.¹¹⁰ The following two pictures show the location of the biblical park scheduled to be built in al-'Isawiyyah and how it will devour all the empty spaces available for urban expansion in Wadi al-Joz, al-Tur and al-'Isawiyyah neighborhoods:





3. Developments in Building the Wall Around Jerusalem

A report by OCHA-oPt indicated that, after amendments made to its proposed path, the total length of the Wall has become 142 km. Of this total, at the end of 2011, 90 km had been built, representing 63% of the total length. As for the areas under construction during 2011, they have a total length of 14 km, representing 10% of the Wall. There remained 38 km, 27% of the Wall's length, scheduled for implementation. Most of this remainder is located in the E1 area, or what is known as the Adumim bloc,¹¹¹ and is scheduled to be completed by 2014.

During 2011, construction was centered on three main points: the first in the area of Shu'fat and Ras Khamis, in preparation for closing the Wall completely and opening the Shu'fat crossing as an international crossing. The second was in the southern block of the Wall, in the Beit Jala area, which serves to complete the separation of the Etzion settlement bloc from the Palestinian population centers in its vicinity; also in al-Walaja and al-Khader, which serves to finish encircling the group of villages situated close to the Green Line.¹¹² As for the third point, it falls in the vicinity of the Qalandiya Airport, where there are completed sections of the Wall. On 6/12/2011, the Israeli authorities began establishing a 300 meter no go buffer zone for Palestinians to bolster the Wall, in preparation of turning the whole Qalandiya Airport area into an industrial zone;¹¹³ a matter that was actually announced at the beginning of 2012.¹¹⁴

4. Consolidating the South Jerusalem Settlements

By careful observation of the announcements connected to Jewish settlement, whether those related to approval of starting construction by the Jerusalem Municipality or the Jerusalem District Planning and Building Committee, or those of the Ministry of Construction and Housing tenders, it becomes clear that the Israeli municipality strongly believes that the south Jerusalem settlements will achieve what was not achieved in the past by attracting Jews to come live in the east of the city. This tactic is encouraged by the unparalleled success of the Har Homa settlement, situated south of the city, close to the Jewish center in the west of Jerusalem.

A close examination of table 6/6, which monitors the development of settlement units during 2011, reveals that the share of the southern settlement blocs between Gilo (which includes Har Gilo), Har Homa and Giv'at Hamatos constitutes 73% of the residential units that witnessed growth this year.

Table 6/6: Israeli Plans and Tenders to Build Housing Units in a Number of WB Settlements Including Jerusalem, 1/1/2011–20/12/2011¹¹⁵

Location	Settlement	No. of approved or proposed units for construction	Total no. of housing units in each governorate
Jerusalem	Giv'at Ze'ev	980	15,487
	Ramot	236	
	Ras al-'Amoud	200	
	Shim'on Hatezdik	13	
	Gilo	5,377	
	Ramat Shlomo	1,299	
	Pisgat Ze'ev	916	
	Sheikh Jarrah	386	
	East Talpiot	90	
	Giv'at Hamatos	2,610	
	Har Homa	3,340	
	Ma'ale Adumim	40	
Qalqilya	Karnei Shomron	46	46
Nablus	Shilo	119	119
Salfit	Ariel	277	277
Ramallah	Beit Arye	100	100
Bethlehem	Betar 'Illit	982	1,299
	Efrat	317	
Jericho	Masua	80	80
Total		17,408	17,408

5. Putting Jerusalem Light Rail into Operation

On 19/8/2011, Jerusalem Light Rail (JLR) began limited passenger service; and on its first day, it had more than 40 thousand passengers.¹¹⁶ This project is considered the most ambitious and most controversial transportation project undertaken by the Jerusalem municipality since its founding.

The project goes back to the 1990s when the Israeli government was discussing mechanisms that would allow them to effectively connect the eastern and western parts of the city, in a manner that would prevent dividing the city in the event of any future peace settlement. The government also faced the problem of connecting the settlements in the east of the city to its Jewish center in the western part, to

bring life and vitality to these settlements and increase their appeal to Israeli Jews. This is in addition to creating geographic contiguity among them that lets their inhabitants feel that they are living in neighborhoods within a city, and not in isolated fortresses in an ocean of Arabs. The JLR project was approved in 1999; however, its implementation did not start until 2006, when the contract was awarded to a specifically formed consortium named CityPass. This consortium was made up of five companies; the French company Alstom is the engineering partner in it, while the company Veolia (also French) is the service operator. Work on establishing the first and main line of this rail was postponed several times because of objections from religious Jews. The overall cost of establishing the first stage was 2.2 billion shekels (\$660 million).¹¹⁷

In spite of the fact that the rail project has bitten off large areas of Palestinian neighborhoods, deliberately narrowing the main streets through which it passes, and in spite of the fact that it was built with the aim of bolstering settlement activity east of the city and attracting Jewish citizens to it, and despite it not running on the Sabbath, it still faces objections from ultra-orthodox community demanding some carriages be segregated along gender lines so that men and women are not forced into close proximity. Generally, there are further objections to its slowness, and to the fact that it does not solve the congestion problem.¹¹⁸

Jerusalem Light Rail



Fourth: Political Developments

1. Jerusalem in the Negotiation Documents

On 23/1/2011, Al Jazeera television revealed the existence of a large number of documents and records made of secret negotiations between representatives of the Palestinian and Israeli governments, starting with the Annapolis Summit. Perhaps the fast-moving events in the Arab world that followed the publication of these documents overshadowed them and blocked the attention, analysis, and media coverage they deserved. The Al Jazeera ‘Palestine Papers’ contain many records of negotiations and letters that dealt with the subject of Jerusalem; as this subject was present in most of the sessions of what is called “the trilateral or tripartite mechanism” joining together the Palestinian negotiator, Israeli negotiator and their American sponsor. It was also present in most of the “bilateral mechanism” meetings that took place periodically between the leadership of the Palestinian negotiating team and its Israeli counterpart to evaluate progress in the areas under consideration.

a. Al-Aqsa Mosque

The Palestinian negotiator expressed clearly his willingness to discuss “creative ways” to reach a settlement on the matter of the mosque. This was quite clear in two statements made by Sa’ib ‘Uraiqat, the chief Palestinian negotiator, to the American Middle East Envoy George Mitchell during their meeting on 21/10/2009. The first comment was that he was ready and willing to discuss everything, including the Old City adding, “except for the Haram [*al-Aqsa Mosque*] and what they call Temple Mount. There you need the creativity of people like me.”¹¹⁹ That was an attempt on ‘Uraiqat’s part to encourage the Israelis to accept a settlement freeze and enter into direct negotiations. In the second statement, ‘Uraiqat’s position was more detailed, in the context of reviewing the progress of detailed discussions in the relevant committees. When Jonathan Schwartz of the US negotiation team asked him about Jerusalem, ‘Uraiqat answered:

It’s solved. You have the Clinton Parameters formula [in reference to Clinton’s proposals following the negotiations’ collapse in 2000]. For the Old City sovereignty for Palestine, except the Jewish quarter and part of the Armenian quarter... the Haram [*al-Aqsa Mosque*] can be left to be discussed – there are creative ways, having a body or a committee, having undertakings for example not to dig. The only thing I cannot do is convert to Zionism.¹²⁰

The last phrase suggests that he was ready for any compromise short of publicly converting to Zionism.

b. The Old City

During those meetings, the Old City did not occupy much space in the discussion; as the principle subject was generally Jerusalem and land exchange, with emphasis on the issues that the Palestinian delegation considered “contested,” such as settlement building and sovereignty over *al-Aqsa*. The Palestinian negotiator’s position in this regard can be garnered from the land-swap map presented by the Palestinian side on 4/5/2008. On this map, the Jewish and the Armenian Quarters are among the areas given to the Israelis.¹²¹ This position was repeated with the same clarity in the ‘Uraiqat-Mitchell meeting of 21/10/2009, during the discussion about how the issue of Jerusalem is “solved” on the basis of Bill Clinton’s parameters; which means giving up an area close to third the area of the Old City, with the borders of the Palestinian state beginning directly at the edge of the Western Wall, in which case *al-Aqsa* Mosque would become a border area.

c. Sheikh Jarrah

While the inhabitants of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood to the north of the Old City were engaged in a long and bitter struggle with settler organizations and the Israeli state agencies that support them, and with the ruling to expel the first Palestinian family from their home in July 2008, the focus of the Negotiation Support Unit (NSU) was on how to benefit from this event to speak about an Israeli precedence of resettling Palestinian inhabitants, in reference to the internal population transfer scheme, as the exchanged letters among the members of this team on 20–21/7/2008 indicated.

Two weeks before the expulsion order was issued, and in his meeting with Tzipi Livni on 30/6/2008, Ahmad Qurei‘, the chief Palestinian negotiator, said to Livni, “so for an area in Sheikh Jarrah, I have to see an equivalent area.”¹²² This came in the context of exchanging lands in Jerusalem. Livni’s reply to him was “This is about making progress on issues on the table.” Qurei‘ was saying that giving up Sheikh Jarrah to the Israelis is a matter already conceded by the Palestinians, along with asking for a substitute. Livni’s response was simply to ignore the subject, telling him later, when they were discussing the issue of Jerusalem, that she cannot refer to this subject and she is going to “just listen.”¹²³ This was after the Knesset

gave preliminary approval to a bill that requires the Israeli government to conduct a referendum on giving up territory annexed by Israel, including Jerusalem.

In a meeting between Sa'ib 'Uraiqat and Robert Serry, the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Serry told 'Uraiqat that he had visited Salam Fayyad and discussed the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. He added, "One thing is we need to find a dignified solution for the Sheikh Jarrah families—give them a package to rent something in the area, in Jerusalem. We have also been talking to the Jordanians." 'Uraiqat seems to have been convinced of this "dignified solution." His only comment was, "It has to be Salam [Fayyad], not you [the UN] or the Jordanians, to pay them."¹²⁴

Sheikh Jarrah is likely to be just the first among the Jerusalem neighborhoods to be threatened with mass expulsion and its fate will probably be met by the other neighborhoods, whose total population comes to about six thousand people. This matter is understood by any observer of Jerusalem's affairs, and cannot have been missed by the Palestinian negotiator.

d. Settlement and Land Exchange

On 4/5/2008, in a meeting with Tzipi Livni, the Palestinian negotiating team presented maps outlining proposed land swaps with Israel. Although the proposals were based on the principle of a 1:1 ratio, with the exchanged lands having the "same size and value," it offered the Israelis a total of 41.67 km² in exchange for 9.43 km² for the Palestinians, meaning a ratio of 4.4:1 in Jerusalem, according to Israel's unilaterally declared border within Jerusalem as well as adding "No Man's Land."¹²⁵ The principle of "same value" remained merely verbal while the maps presented suggested something different. The Israeli negotiating team met the idea of the "same value" with derision; the Israeli negotiator Tal Becker said to Qurei', "How can we measure this? Land has the same value"; while Livni commented "Or is it only a slogan?"¹²⁶

These generous offers prompted Sa'ib 'Uraiqat to say, on more than one occasion, that what he and his negotiating team were offering was "the biggest Yerushalayim in history," insisting on using the Hebrew word for Jerusalem. He repeated his use of Hebrew for Jerusalem several times including during the meeting of the Palestinian negotiating team with Livni and her team on 30/6/2008 when Livni said of Jerusalem, "since I cannot refer to it, I won't say anything. I am going to just listen."¹²⁷

Regarding Jerusalem's settlements, the Palestinians "suggested that 63% of all settlers be included in less than 2%." In exchange, the Palestinians demanded finding a different solution to the Ma'ale Adumim and Har Homa settlements, because they interrupt the Palestinian geographical and population contiguity. The Palestinians proposed keeping these two settlements but placing them under Palestinian sovereignty. The settlers would become a minority in the Palestinian state, similar to the Palestinian minority in Israel, but with a willingness to grant them special arrangements to guarantee their security. In his meeting with Livni on 4/5/2008, Qurei' told her, "there is common interest in keeping some settlements. This is the concession that we make for the purpose of meeting your legitimate interests and making the two-state solution feasible."¹²⁸

e. No to Jordan

On 5/5/2009, Sa'ib 'Uraiqt met with his NSU team to prepare a draft of the final proposal from the Palestinians. 'Uraiqt wanted to hear their views and suggestions for the upcoming meeting between Mahmud 'Abbas and Barack Obama. He asked them to look into the comments of all parties including Jordan, while stressing, "We don't want Jordan involved in Jerusalem."¹²⁹ This stance is hardly surprising, for when he was talking about "creative ways" to reach a settlement on *al-Aqsa* Mosque, he dealt with the Jordanian Ministry of Awqaf Islamic Affairs and Holy Places as if it does not exist, presenting his own suggestions for the mosque's administration.

2. Deportation of Jerusalem MPs

The issue of deporting Jerusalem MPs came to light following the PLC elections on 25/1/2006 won by Hamas. The then Israeli minister of interior issued decrees to revoke the citizenship of three Jerusalem MPs, Ahmad 'Attoun, Muhammad Totah and Muhammad Abu Tair, in addition to that of the Minister of Jerusalem Affairs in that government, Khalid Abu 'Arafah. These decrees were issued in spite of the fact that the Israeli government had formally permitted the holding of Palestinian elections in the east of Jerusalem.

The deportation decree was not immediately implemented, however the Israeli authorities arrested all of the MPs, only to release them separately between 2009 and 2010; thus bringing the issue of their deportation once again to the forefront. On 30/6/2010, Israel arrested MP Abu Tair on a roadblock and took him for

questioning;¹³⁰ he was then sentenced to expulsion after more than four months imprisonment. The three others, who received the same sentence, decided to seek asylum at the International Red Cross (IRC) headquarters in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem, both to bring back their issue to life and to avoid getting expelled. Their sit-in there lasted a whole year, sleeping and meeting their families in the protest tent in the courtyard of the IRC building in Jerusalem. This sit-in turned the protest tent into a center that attracted the mass media and public protests. This infuriated Israel to the extent that it made a decision to end this sit-in, even if by force. On 26/9/2011, an Arabist unit of the Israeli army, in cooperation with the Minorities Department of the Central Investigations Unit, carried out a kidnapping operation of MP ‘Attoun from inside the IRC headquarters;¹³¹ and he was taken into custody. A ruling was issued to release him on bail, on condition that he signs a personal pledge that he would not enter the city except after gaining a permit from the Israeli authorities. ‘Attoun rejected the offer, which led to an extension of his detainment. On 6/12/2011, the military court in ‘Ofer Prison decided to deport him to Ramallah.¹³²

As for Muhammad Totah and Khalid Abu ‘Arafah, on 7/12/2011 they received a call from the Israeli intelligence authorities telling them that if they did not leave the IRC headquarters within 48 hours, they would be removed by force.¹³³ On 23/1/2012, Israeli intelligence carried out its threat by kidnapping them and taking them into custody.¹³⁴ The issue of the treatment of the Jerusalem MPs is a stark example of Israel’s policy of punishing Palestinians for the choices they made in free elections. That these elections were held in the east of Jerusalem with Israel’s approval made no difference. The peaceful sit-in continued for more than a year and action from the international community and the Arab and Islamic worlds failed to materialize once again. The Israeli authorities executed two military operations inside the headquarters of an international humanitarian organization, protected by international law, without facing any consequences, however nominal, from any branch of the UN.

3. Draft Law of Jerusalem “Capital of the Jewish People”

The Israeli state was keen to stress just how important it considers Jerusalem to be to it, claiming full and “final” possession of the city and any other neighboring land that it decides to annex. This was expressed in the 1967 amendments to the “Law and Administration Ordinance,” which stipulated that the minister of

interior has the power to extend the state's boundaries to include any part of "the land of Israel"; expressed thus: "The law, jurisdiction and administration of the State shall extend to any area of Eretz Israel designated by the Government by order."¹³⁵ These amendments also included considering Jerusalem, with its two parts, a unified municipality. The Israeli Knesset reasserted this in the Basic Law: "Jerusalem, Capital of Israel" issued in 1980; which states that "Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel," and that it is "the seat of the President of the State, the Knesset, the Government and the Supreme Court."¹³⁶

It seems that, for a large number of Israeli politicians, these assurances are no longer enough; for with the growing obsession with the "Jewishness" of the state, they now want this to be reflected directly in Jerusalem.

4. Developments in Moving the American Embassy to Jerusalem

Although, according to UN resolutions, the east of Jerusalem is considered occupied territory from which Israel must withdraw, the American Congress passed the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995, for the purpose of initiating and funding the relocation of the Embassy of the US in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Since then, every American president has suspended, for a period of six months, the limitations set forth in some sections of this Act.¹³⁷ This suspension is also used to blackmail the Palestinian political leadership at critical junctures. When the PLO decided to make its bid to the UN Security Council for membership for the state of Palestine, it was counteracted by a bill in the Congress, drafted in March 2011. The bill called for the "Removal of Waiver Authority-The Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995" and stated that "the United States Embassy in Israel should be established in Jerusalem as soon as possible, but not later than January 1, 2013." Then it added, "Not more than 50 percent of the funds appropriated to the Department of State for fiscal year 2013 for 'Acquisition and Maintenance of Buildings Abroad' may be obligated until the Secretary of State determines and reports to Congress that the United States Embassy in Jerusalem has officially opened."¹³⁸ They brought this bill to attention once again in September 2011,¹³⁹ and the possibility of passing it still exists, in light of the entrenched trend of unlimited support for Israel in American decision-making circles.

Fifth: Jerusalem: a Look at the Near Future

If we put aside the numerous details of the Judaization of Jerusalem and pursue a far-reaching, more comprehensive overview, we find that Israeli decision-makers, in particular on the municipality level, are pushing with all their might towards reaping certain fruits, the seeds of which were sown years ago. Perhaps the most important fruit sought after by Jerusalem's Mayor Nir Barkat is the tipping of the demographic scales in favor of the Jewish population. This is a cherished dream of Israeli planners that the former mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, tried to realize. It seems that realizing this dream today has become possible, in case the mayor was able to wrest crucial decisions on the political level, such as changing Jerusalem's territorial boundaries and strict application of the law revoking resident IDs of those Jerusalemites proven to live beyond the Israeli recognized municipal boundaries. Such achievements would open the door to Barkat for a new term as mayor, with the next elections scheduled to be held in the summer of 2013. As for the basic tactics for settling the demographic issue, which are likely to be consolidated in the coming two years, they are:

1. Applying a strict system that monitors Jerusalemites' movements through checkpoints to and from the city. This started with the application of the magnetic cards system, which would build for the municipality accurate databases that include the residences and work places of all Palestinian Jerusalemites, based on the hours of their passing through the checkpoints. By virtue of these databases, an extensive campaign can be conducted to withdraw residence cards and limit the Palestinian population mass once and for all; an issue that has long plagued Israeli decision-makers in Jerusalem.

2. Speedy and effective fortification of the southern settlements' ring, working to turn it into a solid block of modern Jewish suburbs, linked to the city's Jewish center by direct roads and expressways that do not pass through any Palestinian neighborhood. The focus is on building housing units that are small in size and low in price, which would appeal to young Jewish couples and so boost the rate of natural population growth of the city's Jews.

3. Overcoming the financial obstacles that were delaying the completion of the eastern part of the Wall, "Jerusalem Envelope," that encircles the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc and connects it directly to the city. Concurrently, seeking to empty its surroundings of its Bedouin population and improve the infrastructure in the area

connecting it to the municipal boundaries, commonly known as the E1 Corridor. Finally reaching the point of declaring an official alteration of the boundaries and the annexation of the Adumim bloc to the city.

On the level of religious and cultural identity, it is clear that extremist Jewish associations are bent on completing the Western Wall area rehabilitation project as soon as possible, including removal of what remains of the Mughrabi Hill, enlarging the prayer area, building an iron bridge, and opening a new gate in the city's wall to welcome more Jewish visitors. This plan is shared by municipality and government circles, but faces Palestinian, Jordanian, Arabic, Islamic and international opposition that delays the completion of these projects. Hence, it is expected that the Mughrabi Hill issue will witness fundamental developments or maybe leaps to overcome the obstacles that delay the project's implementation. It is also expected that *al-Aqsa* Mosque will be subjected to wider, larger and better organized incursions, especially after the changes made in the rules of engagement between the Israeli police and the Jews storming the mosque. It is further expected that the police will consolidate their control over the Palestinians' presence in the mosque during Ramadan.

Sixth: Israeli Settlement Expansion

Israel continued its settlement plans in the WB, including Jerusalem, brushing aside Palestinian demands and even those of the world community to stop these practices. By the beginning of 2012, the number of settlers in the WB, excluding East Jerusalem, had reached 342 thousand; while in East Jerusalem, their number was 200 thousand.¹⁴⁰

Israel continues the construction of settlements in occupied Jerusalem and the rest of the WB. It also continues the systematic Judaization of the holy city's landmarks, indifferent to international protests condemning its settlement activities. The Netanyahu government encouraged Israelis to move to WB settlements and settlers to buy through offering subsidies. In addition, settlers are provided with sensitive information through political and military channels; it was revealed that there are dozens of political figures and army officers and soldiers leaking this information to Israeli right wing activists who carry out acts of violence against Palestinians in the WB and are active in resisting the evacuation of the settlement



outposts. There is also what are called “price tag” acts, which are acts of vandalism carried out by settlers against the Palestinian people with the tacit approval of the Israeli government. There was also revelation of the means through which the settlement outposts in the occupied WB are legitimized. These, according to Israeli reports, include falsifying title deeds, seizing Palestinian agricultural lands and building on them, encircling lands with walls and guard dogs, as well as other methods of robbery and fraud.

The EU has opposed Israel’s policy of forced expulsion of Palestinians from Area C, which constitutes 62% of the WB. The EU has pointed out that the Israeli policy in these areas aims at multiplying the settlers’ numbers while reducing those of Palestinians. Furthermore, this policy will turn these areas into pockets or “fingers,” cut off from the rest of the WB; and therefore would prevent the possibility of establishing a Palestinian state in accordance with the two-state solution on the borders of 4/6/1967.

Attacks by settlers and Israeli forces in all the Palestinian governorates continued; emboldened by approval of more settlement plans and the demolition of agricultural structures and homes in the Jordan Rift Valley area, in the eastern WB.¹⁴¹

The settlers receive strong and clear support from the political establishment. Prime Minister Netanyahu has declared, “We will continue developing Jerusalem, its neighborhoods, and people,” adding, “This is our right and obligation, not as punishment to the Palestinians but as our basic right.”¹⁴² As for the head of the Israeli Knesset, Reuven Rivlin, he commented on settlement in the WB by saying, “Populating the land of Israel is a part of Zionism, which was once based entirely on a policy of settlement.” He added, “When our neighbors decide to allow us to live in the country together, there will be peace,” and also said, “I whole-heartedly believe that the land of Israel is ours in its entirety.”¹⁴³

Moreover, the Israeli authorities continued to sanction tenders to build new settlement units. The PLO Department of International Relations confirmed in a report issued on 5/9/2011 that during August 2011 Israel approved the building of 3,050 new settlement units, most of which were in East Jerusalem.¹⁴⁴

As for the Peace Now Movement, it indicated in its report issued on 7/9/2011 that the pace of construction in WB settlements is almost double that in the territories occupied in 1948. Within the latter the construction rate stood at one housing unit for every 235 Israelis, while in WB settlements, it is two housing units

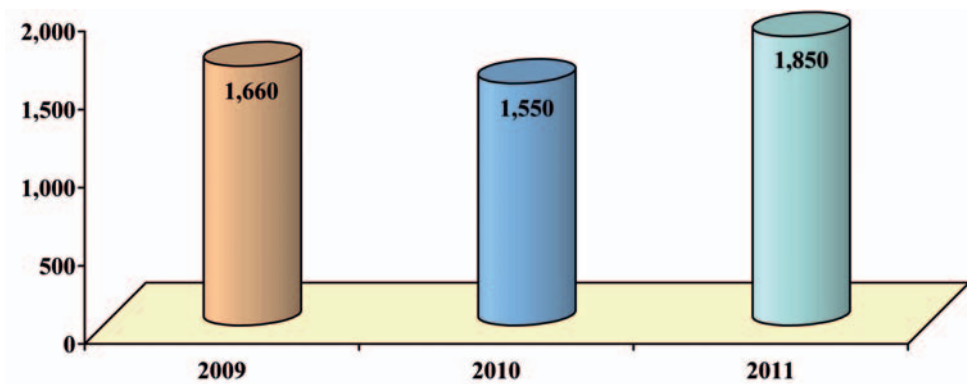
for every 246 Israelis. Also according to this report based on aerial photos and field visits, over 10 months (October 2010 to July 2011) immediately following the end of the partial and temporary building freeze, construction began on 2,598 housing units in the WB, of which 63% of them (1,642 units) are ground level houses (villas and cottages) and more than half of them (52%) are for religious Jews. The Peace Now Movement added that the construction of 3,700 housing units continued throughout the construction freeze period. The report added that ground works began for the construction of at least another 317 units; and 100 housing units were added in mobile homes. Moreover, it has become evident that at least 383 units under construction are considered “illegal” according to the Israeli planning and building laws that apply to settlements, and 157 of them are located in illegal outposts;¹⁴⁵ bearing in mind that all settlement construction is illegal.

Another report by the Peace Now Movement monitored at least 3,500 units under various stages of construction during 2011, located in 142 settlements and outposts in the WB.¹⁴⁶ The following table shows the rise in the pace of construction in the settlements compared to 2009 and 2010:

Table 7/6: Number of Housing Units Built in the WB Settlements, East Jerusalem Excluded, 2009–2011¹⁴⁷

Year	2009	2010	2011
No. of housing units	1,660	1,550	1,850

Number of Housing Units Built in the WB Settlements, East Jerusalem Excluded, 2009–2011



The first Peace Now report mentioned above indicated that the planned route of the Separation Wall penetrates the depth of the WB in four “fingers.” Thus, in the Ariel finger, 245 housing units are under construction; in Gush Etzion, 329 housing units; in the Karnei Shomron-Kedumim finger, 114 housing units; and in the Ma‘ale Adumim area, 212 housing units.¹⁴⁸

In its 2011 annual report, the PA’s Information Center Concerning Colonization and Annexation Wall Affairs indicated that they had monitored, until the end of 2011, the presence of 474 settlement sites in the WB. In these, there are 184 settlements, 171 settlement outposts, 26 other settlement sites, and 93 buildings that were, partially or totally, overtaken by settlers in Jerusalem. According to the same report, the total area of settlements has reached 140 km², that is, about 2.5% of the total WB area. However, half of these lands are vacant lots; it seems that Israel plans to keep them in reserve for future expansion.¹⁴⁹

In the Ministry of Housing’s official list of upcoming tenders during 2011, there were 2,057 residential units in East Jerusalem, in addition to 1,577 units for the rest of the WB.¹⁵⁰

Seventh: Confiscation of Palestinian Land and Water Resources

Palestinian civil and official institutions documented an increasing severity in Israeli attacks on the WB during 2011, indicating that these attacks targeted citizens, lands, residences and farms.

The annual report of the LRC registered the following violations committed by Israeli government bodies and settlers in 2011, in all WB governorates, including Jerusalem: demolition of 200 Palestinian residences and threatening 500 others with demolition; Demolition of 400 structures and threatened 300 others with demolition by making it impossible to gain construction permits to build homes, making demolition costly, and forcing Palestinians to tear down their homes with their own hands.

According to the same report, the area of encroached upon agricultural lands totaled approximately 12 thousand donums, of which 11 thousands

were confiscated, and the rest were threatened with forced eviction. This is in addition to razing, burning and vandalizing more than two thousand other donums of agricultural land. The center reported that total or partial damage affected more than 20 thousand trees, 50% of which were uprooted or totally burned, while sewage, which ruins trees, crops and soil, was poured on wooded lands.¹⁵¹

Concerning the city of Jerusalem, Israel confiscated or stole 3,158 donums of Palestinian land; chopped down, uprooted or burned 1,098 trees, demolished 41 residences in which 282 Palestinian citizens used to live, among them 177 children; threatened 134 residences with demolition, in addition to tearing down 56 structures and threatening 17 others with demolition.¹⁵²

The Jordan Rift Valley did not escape Israel's confiscation tactics. A report by B'Tselem–The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, revealed how Israeli authorities had plundered and looted the Jordan Rift Valley's natural resources, motivated by a wish to impose facts on the ground in order to annex the area. The report asserts that Palestinian owners are forbidden from using 77.5%, or 1.249 million donums, of the Jordan Rift Valley;¹⁵³ and that Israel is plotting to obtain 140 thousand donums of Dead Sea lands. The Israeli official in charge of this file claims that the land is state land. The first section of the land lies adjacent to the Dead Sea that had dried up since 1946, and therefore these dried-up lands are no longer the local Palestinians' private property; instead they are the property of the state.¹⁵⁴

On the Palestinian domestic front, an Israeli plot was uncovered that aimed at confiscating one million donums of Arab land in the Negev. This plot is found among the recommendations of the governmental committee formed in 2008 and headed by the retired Chief Justice Eliezer Goldberg. Israel hopes to settle 300 thousand Jews in the Negev over the coming decade.¹⁵⁵

The following table lists examples of land confiscated in the WB, including Jerusalem:

Table 8/6: Examples of Lands Confiscated in the WB 2011

Area	Confiscated lands (donums)
Yassuf Village	600 ¹⁵⁶
‘Azun	400 ¹⁵⁷
Beit Ummar	800 ¹⁵⁸
Batir Village in Bethlehem	148 ¹⁵⁹
Bethlehem	7,000 ¹⁶⁰
Qalandiya	400 ¹⁶¹
al-Khader	150 ¹⁶²
Brikot of Beit Ummar	600 ¹⁶³

As for the issue of Palestinian water, Minister-Head of the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) Shaddad ‘Attili accused Israel of destroying wells and ponds used for collecting rain water (a method used since Roman and Ottoman times) belonging to Palestinian rural communities in WB, with the aim of driving them out. ‘Attili accused Israel of systematically destroying the water infrastructure. He added that this destruction is carried out in Area C in the WB, which is under full Israeli control and represents 60% of the WB.¹⁶⁴

A 2011 report by the Palestinian Hydrology Group states that the available renewable water resources in Jordan, Israel and Palestine total 2.8 billion cubic meters (BCM). The Palestinians are allocated 8.2% of the total available water resources in the Basin while Israel uses 57.1%. It added that total water use in the settlements is 75 million cubic meters (MCM)

a year, of which 44 MCM is pumped from wells in the WB. Total daily per capita water use for settlers is 780 liters per capita per day (l/c/d), where 461 l/c/d come from the WB. Total daily per capita water use of each Palestinian in the WB is 192 l/c/d. This means that each settler uses four times more than each Palestinian.¹⁶⁵

Eighth: Destruction of Palestinian Agriculture

The Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture announced that its slogan for 2012 is “National Product = Resolution” in defiance of Israel’s destruction of the Palestinian agricultural sector that targets its infrastructure and damages local produce.

The ministry also stated that the losses of the agricultural sector in the Gaza War of 2008/9, known as “Operation Cast Lead” by Israelis and as “the Battle of al-Furqan” by Palestinians, exceeded half a billion dollars; adding that direct damages came to \$174 million, while indirect damages came to \$413 million.¹⁶⁶

Israeli measures and policies led to a number of negative consequences and manifestations that have contributed to the marginalization and distortion of Palestinian agriculture. The following are representative examples of these:

1. Lack of investment in agricultural infrastructure, in particular in research stations, marketing, laboratories, and agricultural roads.
2. Heavy subsidies to Israeli farmers and settlers, which limits the competitiveness of Palestinian farmers. This led to flooding the Palestinian market with subsidized Israeli agricultural products.
3. Expropriation of water resources and agricultural lands, settlement measures, continuous attacks, and settlers terrorizing Palestinian farmers.
4. Building the Separation Wall, which isolated large agricultural lands behind it, in addition to the lands on which it was erected.
5. Limiting freedom of movement of goods, individuals and agricultural services.

6. Uprooting trees, which are considered a main source of income to many small farmers, in addition to their being a natural treasure and a source of biodiversity.
7. Preventing shepherds and cattle owners from reaching natural sources of grazing, especially in areas close to military camps and settlements.

All of this led directly or indirectly to distortions and additional expenses borne by the Palestinian farmer. It also contributed to reducing the added value and profit of farmers. It turned agriculture into an unprofitable occupation, by marginalizing it and limiting its role in the national economy.¹⁶⁷

In addition to Israeli practices against Palestinian farmers and agriculture in general, Israeli forces often raze agricultural lands, cut trees, and even demolish agricultural villages more than once. For example, on 9/2/2011, Israeli forces demolished six residential structures and 21 animal pens in the community of Khirbet Tana in the Nablus Governorate. These demolitions displaced six families (52 people) and affected a total of 106 people. This is the third time since January 2010 that the community has experienced wide-scale demolitions, and the fourth time since 2005.¹⁶⁸

In the Jordan Rift Valley, acts of demolition, razing and uprooting whole Palestinian villages are on the increase. Israeli authorities went as far as attacking people, killing livestock and destroying agricultural crops. As for the territories occupied in 1948, specifically in their south, they were subjected to a fierce campaign of destruction, razing and uprooting by the Israeli authorities. Thus the Israelis destroyed the village of Abu Jroul more than 40 times; they have further cut and ruined thousands of fruit trees, in particular olive trees.¹⁶⁹ Also in May 2012, al-‘Araqib Village was subjected to destruction for the 38th time.¹⁷⁰

The following table lists a number of cases of Israeli attacks on Palestinian trees and agricultural lands in the WB:

Table 9/6: Number of Israeli Attacks on Trees and Lands 2011

Area	Type of attack
Qasra Village south of Nablus	Uprooting 500 olive trees ¹⁷¹
Al-Toyour area east of Beit Dajan	Uprooting 420 olive trees ¹⁷²
Khirbet Um Nir in Hebron	Uprooting 600 olive trees ¹⁷³
Deir al-Hatab in Nablus	Burning 250 olive trees ¹⁷⁴
Bani Na'im in Hebron	Burning 20 cultivated donums ¹⁷⁵
Qalqilya	Burning more than 150 olive trees ¹⁷⁶
'Aqraba in Nablus Governorate	Burning 300 olive trees ¹⁷⁷
Beit Exa in Jerusalem Governorate	Stealing 100 perennial olive trees ¹⁷⁸
Jaloud Village in Nablus Governorate	Burning 150 donums ¹⁷⁹
Ramallah	Burning 100 olive trees ¹⁸⁰
Al-Walaja in Jerusalem Governorate	Uprooting 80 olive trees ¹⁸¹
Salfit	Cutting down 500 olive trees ¹⁸²
Beit Ula in Hebron	Uprooting 200 olive trees ¹⁸³
'Awarta in Nablus Governorate	Burning 20 donums ¹⁸⁴

On 9/10/2011, the Minister of State Mahir Ghuneim stated that, since the beginning of 2011, Israeli authorities and settlers have targeted 9,131 olive trees, between burning, uprooting, breaking and razing; of these, 1,307 were targeted since the beginning of September.¹⁸⁵ International and Palestinian aid and development agencies working to improve olive oil production have declared that the destruction of Palestinian olive trees by Israeli settlers will lead to a reduction in the 2011 yield, estimated to be worth about \$500 thousand.¹⁸⁶

Ninth: Demolition of Palestinian Homes

A report by OCHA-oPt indicated that, during 2011, almost 1,100 Palestinians, more than half of them children, were forcibly displaced as a result of the demolition

of their homes by Israeli forces. This is an increase of 80% when compared with Palestinians displaced during 2010. The report added that some 4,200 additional Palestinians were affected by the demolition of structures related to their livelihood. It stated that Israeli forces have destroyed over 620 Palestinian-owned structures in 2011, a 42% increase from 2010. These included 222 homes, 170 animal shelters, 46 rainwater cisterns or pools, two classrooms and two mosques (one of them was demolished twice). The report added that over 60% of the Palestinian-owned structures demolished in 2011 were located in areas allocated to settlements.¹⁸⁷

The following table shows the number of structures demolished in 2011, according to area:

Table 10/6: Demolitions of Palestinian Structures 2011¹⁸⁸

Month	January	February	March	April	May	June	July
WB Area C	20	68	77	15	31	131	29
East Jerusalem	9	1	1	0	2	1	2

Month	August	September	October	November	December	Total
WB Area C	0	20	62	40	87	580
East Jerusalem	0	2	1	3	11	42

Tenth: The Separation Wall

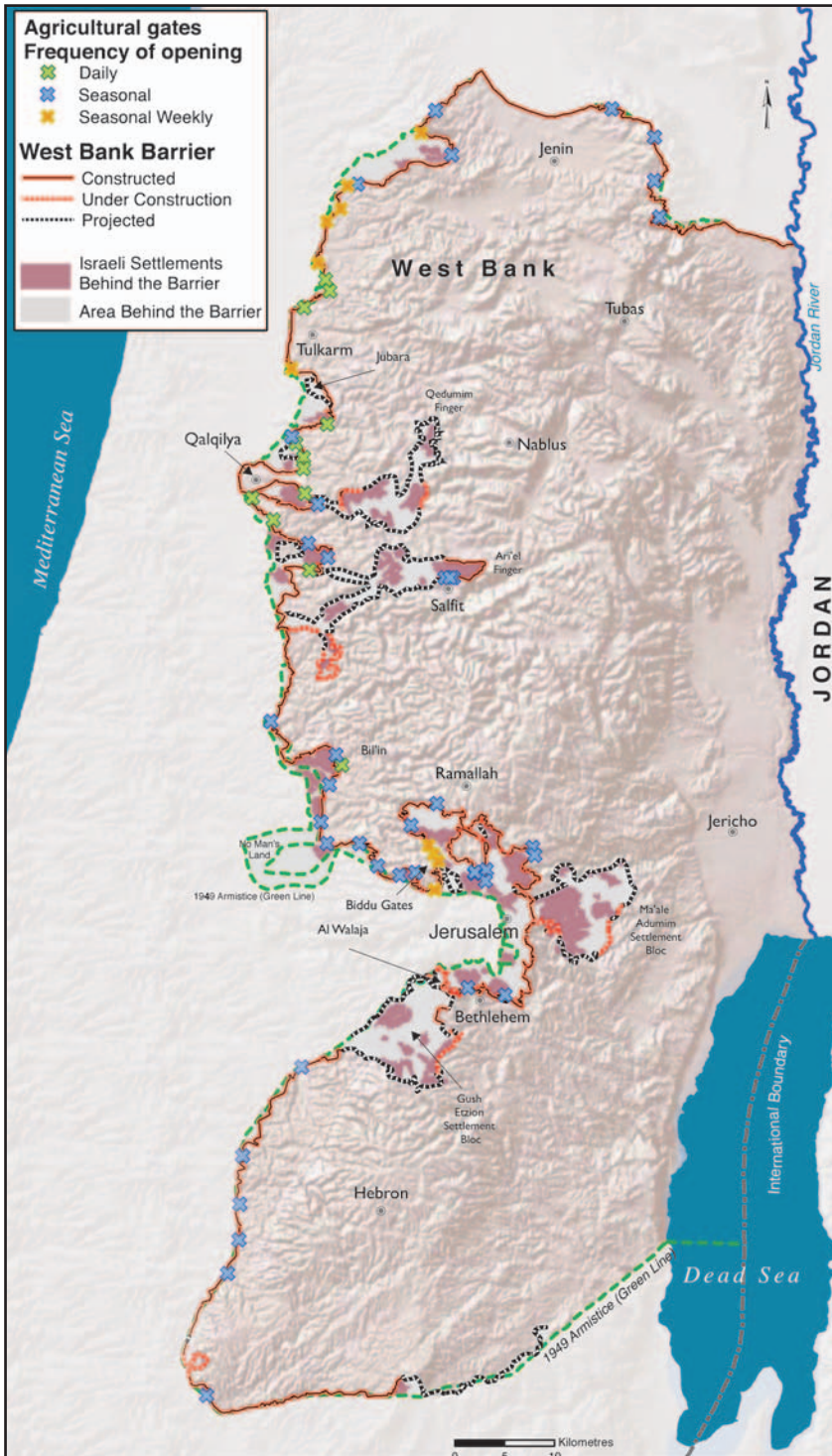
A survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) showed that the area of lands confiscated for the sake of building the Wall was 49,291 donums of state-owned lands, since the beginning of its construction and until the end of June 2008; distributed as follows:

- 22,141 donums in the north of the WB.
- 13,875 donums in the middle of the WB.
- 13,275 donums in the south of the WB.

According to the same report, the area of land isolated behind the Wall that has become hard to reach totals 274,607 donums, distributed as follows:

- 89,498 donums in the north of the WB.
- 123,526 donums in the middle of the WB.
- 61,583 donums in the south of the WB.¹⁸⁹

The Separation Wall Route in the WB, July 2011¹⁹⁰



During 2011, Israel continued building the Separation Wall in the WB. A report by B'Tselem revealed that the length of the completed part of the Wall, 85% of which runs inside the WB, has become 437.5 km long, representing 62% of its planned route. Another 58 km is currently under construction.¹⁹¹

In August 2011, Israel's Supreme Court approved the route of the Wall in the section that encircles the built-up area of al-Walaja, a Palestinian village located between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. This Wall, which is made of concrete and stands nine meters high and 700 meters long, will sever the village and isolate it from hundreds of donums of its farmland, leaving only one opening that connects it to the WB.¹⁹²

Regarding the village of Bil'in, the Israeli army started, on 26/6/2011, dismantling part of the Wall that cuts through its land. In July 2011, the military completed its relocation of that part of the Wall, seven years after public pressure from Bil'in residents and their supporters, and four years after Israel's Supreme Court ordered the rerouting of the Wall to run closer to the Modi'in Illit settlement. The rerouting returned 700 donums of farmland to the villagers; however, another 1,500 donums of their land remains expropriated west of the Wall.¹⁹³

Early in 2011, Israeli sources said that work on building the Wall in the Jerusalem area, the "Jerusalem Envelope," will be finished within one year. In effect, during 2011, the building of the remaining points of the Wall was completed. These points are located in the region of Qalandiya and west of Shu'fat in an area that exceeds 20 km². As for the neighborhoods threatened with becoming isolated from Jerusalem, these are: Shu'fat refugee camp, Ras Khamis, Ras Shehadeh which is part of Shu'fat lands, Kfar 'Aqab and Semiramis; this is after Abu Dis, al-Sawahrah al-Sharqiya, al-Ram and al-Dahiya were left outside the Wall, isolated from Jerusalem.¹⁹⁴

Concerning the north of the WB, 7,356 Palestinians in the Jenin area are living under harsh conditions because of the Wall. There are 11 communities in the occupied Jenin governorate living in tragic humanitarian conditions, in enclaves that emerged following the Wall's construction, where they are denied connection to their natural extension in Jenin. The most important of these isolated spots are the towns of Eastern Barta'a, Um al-Rihan, Khirbet Dahr al-'Abd, Khirbet 'Abdullah Yunus, al-Minthar, Dahr al-Maleh, 'Arab al-Hamdoun, and Khirbet al-Mukahhal.¹⁹⁵

The Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees (PARC) revealed in a report, which documents violations by settlers and Israeli soldiers during the olive harvest season, frightening facts established by the occupation that prompted a great number of Palestinian farmers to abandon their olive groves isolated inside the Wall. In a preliminary random survey of three Palestinian communities in the Jenin Governorate, PARC disclosed that the Wall caused Palestinian farmers to abandon 46.5% of the olive groves isolated by the Wall and which had an area of 750 donums.

In its report, PARC said that, for many Palestinian farmers, the Separation Wall has become a hindrance keeping them from their agricultural lands, which lie isolated inside the Wall. PARC estimated that losses due to farmers' abandoning about 350 donums of their isolated olive groves total about one million shekels annually (about \$300 thousand). PARC warned that, if the Israeli authorities continue to follow this policy towards the isolated lands inside the Wall, by 2020, 70% of these lands would be abandoned. This fact requires urgent action at the Palestinian political level, and from relevant public and civil institutions; to on the one hand remove the obstacles that keep Palestinian farmers from reaching their lands, and on the other hand to motivate those able to reach their lands through initiatives and programs that would contribute to using and exploiting these abandoned lands once again.

PARC brought to light the complicated procedures that Israeli authorities impose on farmers to keep them from reaching their lands. Among these, strictness in granting permits to able-bodied Palestinian farmers, and granting them only to old people. This of course results in olives being left unpicked. This is in addition to granting permits to the primary beneficiary of the land and denying them to his wife, children or siblings.¹⁹⁶

Conclusion

Israel is racing against time in its intensive program to Judaize Jerusalem and seal its future in any future peace settlement with the Palestinians. In the presence of an extreme right-wing and religious government, backed by a "Zionist society" with tendencies in the same direction, Judaization procedures and racist practices are getting more severe and cruel, targeting Islamic and Christian holy sites, as well as the Palestinian people and their land.

Israel's insistence on continuing its Judaization and settlement programs was a message to the Palestinian, Arab and international communities that Israel is ready to frustrate the peace process and empty it of any meaning. It is ready to brush aside UN resolutions and international efforts, even American ones, when they disagree with its settlement and Judaization policies. Thus, 2011 did not bring anything new on the level of Israeli policies towards the land and the holy sites, except for more vigorous and accelerated measures, which are likely to be the general feature of 2012, too.

Endnotes

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Chapter Seven

Demographic, Economic and Educational Indicators

Demographic, Economic and Educational Indicators

Introduction

Demographic, economic and educational indicators present an important and accurate impression of the situation of the Palestinian people. In this chapter, we will present the most significant of these indicators through the most recent data available at the end of 2011. The demographic indicators will cover the Palestinian people at home and abroad while the economic and educational indicators cover the WB and GS only, as it is still difficult to secure such information about the Palestinians abroad.

First: Demographic Indicators

The Palestinian people still suffer the many consequences of displacement and dispossession and the disruption to their social fabric because of the Israeli occupation, massacres and expulsions. There are 5.63 million Palestinians abroad and 1.87 million Palestinian refugees in the WB and GS, deprived of their right to return to their homes and land.

However, the Palestinians are a young population with a high natural growth rate and are, accordingly, expected to outnumber the Jews in historic Palestine within a few years. In addition, Palestinians abroad are becoming more resilient regarding the issue of the right of return as demonstrated by the rising number of pertinent activities and campaigns.

1. The Palestinian Population Worldwide

According to PCBS estimates, the number of Palestinians was 11.22 million at the end of 2011, up from 11.14 million at the end of 2010.¹

5.6 million Palestinians, 49.9% of the worldwide Palestinian population live in historic Palestine consisting of the territories occupied in 1948 and 1967. In the WB and GS, there are 4.23 million Palestinians while 1.37 million Palestinians live in the lands occupied in 1948 (Israel) respectively comprising 37.7% and 12.2% of the worldwide Palestinian population.

The following table shows the estimated worldwide Palestinian population according to place of residence at the end of 2011.

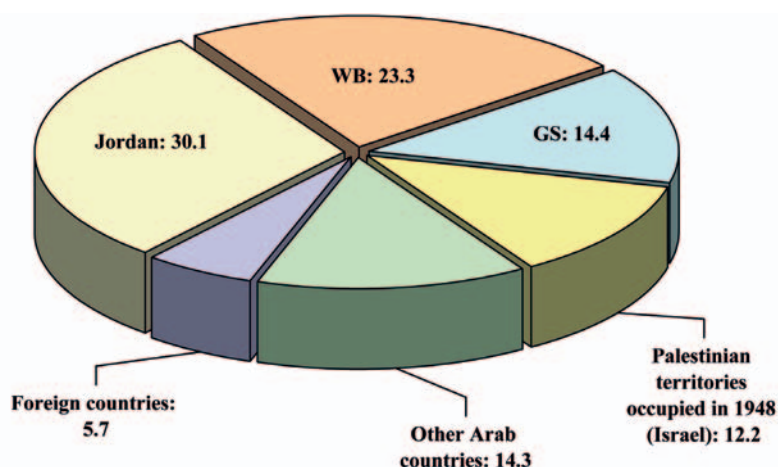
Table 1/7: Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate According to Place of Residence at the End of 2011²

Place of residence		Population estimate (thousands)	Percentage (%)
Palestinian territories occupied in 1967	WB	2,615	23.3
	GS	1,616	14.4
Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)*		1,367	12.2
Jordan		3,384**	30.1
Other Arab countries		1,606	14.3
Foreign countries		636	5.7
Total		11,224	100

*For the Palestinian population in the 1948 occupied territories; the number does not include the Palestinians in the 1967 occupied territories, including Jerusalem. Nor does it include Arab Syrians, Lebanese or non-Arab Christians or those classified as "Others." According to the figures in Chapter 2, the number amounted to 1.294 million after excluding the citizens in East Jerusalem and the Golan.

**The number of Palestinians in Jordan was estimated according to the figures available at the end of 2010 and the researcher's estimates based on the annual growth rates issued by the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DoS) in 2011, and which constituted 2.2%.

Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate According to Place of Residence at the End of 2011 (%)



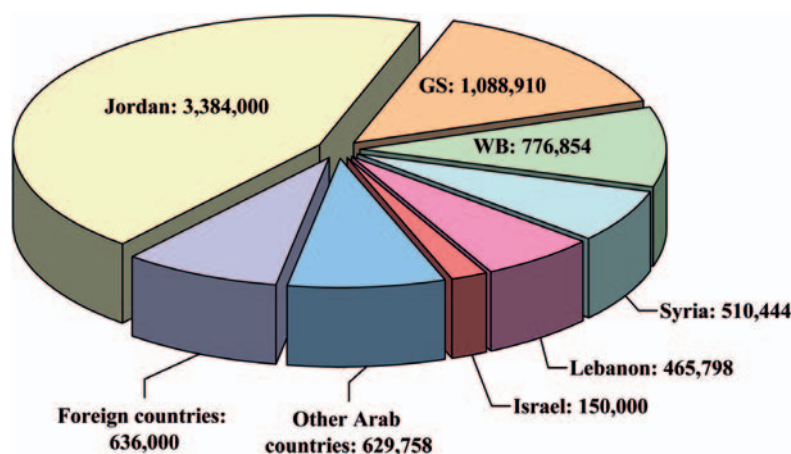
According to 2011 figures, the number of Palestinians in the Diaspora amounted to around 5.63 million, 50.1% of total Palestinian population. These people are predominantly concentrated in neighboring Arab countries, most significantly in Jordan where the number of Palestinians was estimated at 3.38 million at the end of 2011, 30.1% of total Palestinian population. Other Arab countries, including Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and the Gulf states, host around 1.61 million Palestinians comprising 14.3% of Palestinian population worldwide. Around 636 thousand Palestinians live in other foreign countries, making up 5.7% of Palestinians around the world.

Worthy of mention is the fact that Palestinian refugees are made up not only of those expelled outside Palestine. In fact, there are 1.87 million refugees living in the 1967 occupied territories in addition to 150 thousand refugees who were expelled from their land but are still living in the 1948 occupied territories (Israel). Thus, the number of Palestinian refugees is estimated at 7.6 million representing around 67.7% of the Palestinian population. There might be certain unreliability in calculating some figures due to changes of country of residence or citizenship, but this will be of marginal impact due to the large overall number of Palestinian refugees.

Table 2/7: Palestinian Refugees Worldwide; Population Estimates in 2011

Country	WB	GS	Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)	Jordan	Lebanon	Syria	Other Arab countries	Foreign countries	Total
Population estimate	776,854	1,088,910	150,000	3,384,000	465,798	510,444	629,758	636,000	7,641,764

Palestinian Refugees Worldwide; Population Estimates in 2011



2. The Demographic Characteristics of Palestinians

a. The WB and GS

At the end of 2011, the population of the WB and GS was 4.231 million, including 2.615 million in the WB (61.8%) and 1.616 million in the GS (38.2%).

Figures available for 2011 show that 1.866 million of the population of the WB and GS are refugees (44.1% of the total population of these two territories). Around 777 thousand refugees live in the WB representing 29.7% of its residents. In the GS, there are 1.089 million refugees amounting to 67.4% of the total Gazan population.

Table 3/7: Palestinian Total and Refugee Population in the WB and GS 2011³

Place of residence	Total population		Refugee population	
	Estimate	Percentage (%)	Estimate	Percentage (%)
WB	2,614,594	61.8	776,854	29.7
GS	1,616,490	38.2	1,088,910	67.4
WB & GS	4,231,084	100	1,865,764	44.1

The Palestinian population in the WB and GS is mostly young; those aged under 15 were estimated to be 40.7% of the population at the end of 2011. There is considerable difference between the WB and GS as the percentage was 38.6% in the WB compared to 43.8% in the GS. However, the elderly (65 years and over) constitute only a small percentage of total population, estimated at 2.9%, with 3.3% in the WB and 2.3% in the GS (see table 5/7).

Available data shows that the Crude Death Rate (CDR) is relatively low compared to the rates in other Arab countries. In addition, CDR is expected to decrease in the WB and GS from 4 deaths per thousand inhabitants in 2011 to 3.6 in 2015.⁴

Natural population growth rate in the WB and GS reached 2.9% in mid-2011 with 2.6% in the WB and 3.3% in the GS. Growth rates are expected to remain unchanged for the next five years as the low mortality rate and high fertility rate, despite its relative decline, will result in high natural growth rate (see table 5/7).

Regarding household size, available data shows a slow annual decline in the average household size in the WB and GS. Based on PCBS estimates, the average

household size decreased from 6.4 persons according to the 1997 population census to 5.8 in 2011. In the WB the average household size decreased from 6.1 persons in 1997 to 5.6 in 2011, while in GS it decreased from 6.9 persons in 1997 to 6.3 in 2011.⁵

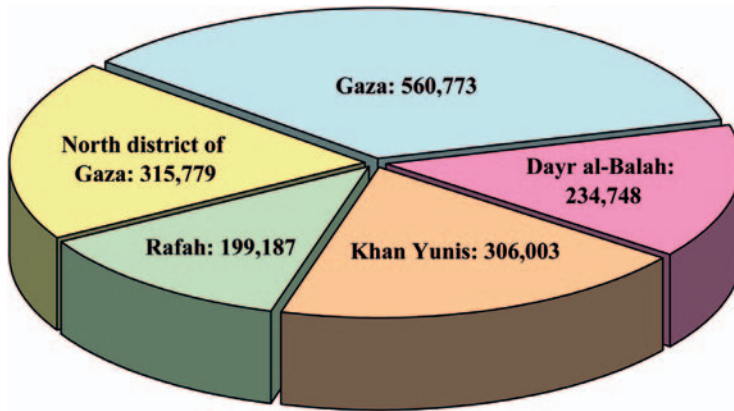
Figures also show that illiteracy rates among adults in the WB and GS are among the lowest rates in the world. Illiteracy rate among those aged 15 years and above was 4.7% in 2011, compared to 5.1% in 2010 and 13.9% in 1997. The illiterate person is classified as one who cannot read or write a simple sentence about their daily life.⁶

The following table shows the distribution of the population according to the estimates of the PCBS in the WB and GS governorates.

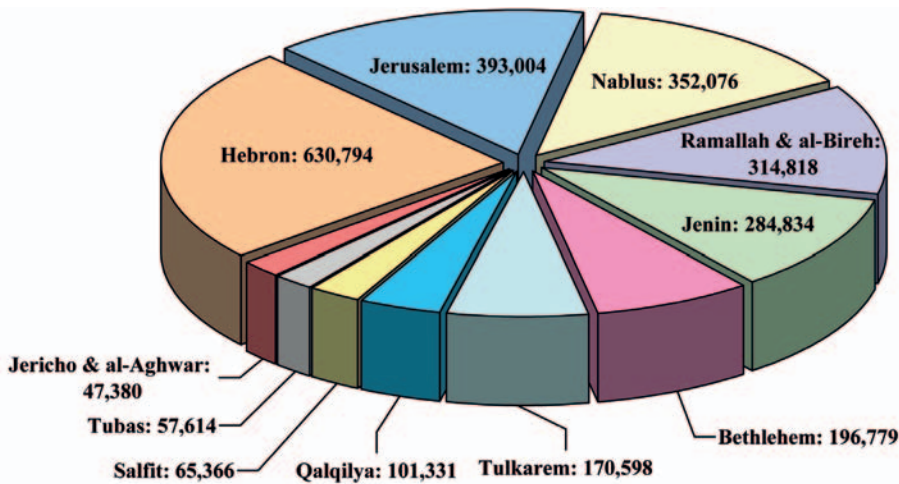
Table 4/7: Estimated Population Count by Governorate, 2007 & 2011⁷

Governorate	2007	2011	Annual growth rate 2007–2011
WB	2,345,107	2,614,594	2.7
Jenin	256,212	284,834	2.7
Tubas	48,771	57,614	4.3
Tulkarem	158,213	170,598	1.9
Nablus	321,493	352,076	2.3
Qalqilya	91,046	101,331	2.7
Salfit	59,464	65,366	2.4
Ramallah & al-Bireh	278,018	314,818	3.2
Jericho & al-Aghwar	41,724	47,380	3.2
Jerusalem	362,521	393,004	2
Bethlehem	176,515	196,779	2.8
Hebron	551,130	630,794	3.4
GS	1,416,539	1,616,490	3.3
North district of Gaza	270,245	315,779	4
Gaza	496,410	560,773	3.1
Dayr al-Balah	205,534	234,748	3.4
Khan Yunis	270,979	306,003	3.1
Rafah	173,371	199,187	3.5
Total (WB & GS)	3,761,646	4,231,084	2.9

Estimated Population Count in GS Governorates 2011



Estimated Population Count in WB Governorates 2011



The Palestinian population is distributed into 16 governorates including 5 governorates in the GS and 11 in the WB. According to statistics, Hebron is the largest governorate in terms of population, estimated at 14.9% of total Palestinians in the WB and GS. Gaza governorate follows with 13.3% and then Jerusalem comprising 9.3% of total population. Available data also show that the least populated governorate is Jericho and al-Aghwar with 1.1% of total population at the end of 2011.

b. The Palestinian Territories Occupied in 1948 (Israel)

There were around 1.37 million Palestinians in Israel at the end of 2011 compared to around 1.28 million in 2010. The available data regarding the number of Palestinians residing in Israel in 2010 shows that they are a predominantly young population. Those aged less than 15 years represent 38% of males and 37.2% of females while those aged 65 years and over represent 3.6% of males and 4.1% of females.⁸

The fertility rate of the Palestinians in Israel reached 3.5 births per woman in 2010 compared to 3.62 in 2007. This rate is relatively high when compared to the general fertility rate in Israel. Data also shows that the average Palestinian household size reached 4.4 persons per family in 2010 compared to 5 in 2007. Moreover, the Crude Birth Rate (CBR) for 2010 amounted to around 26.2 births per thousand inhabitants, while the infant mortality rate over the same period reached 7 deaths per thousand live births. The sex ratio in 2010 was 102.2 males per 100 females and the illiteracy rate amounted to 5.8% among Palestinians aged 15 years and over. However, these figures do not include Arabs in the occupied Golan Heights or the population in J1 of Jerusalem. Nor do they include the Lebanese who moved for a temporary residence in Israel. The Israeli authorities consider all these groups within its population and within the Arab population as a whole.⁹

c. Jordan

There were 3.38 million Palestinians in Jordan in 2011 compared to 3.31 million at the end of 2010, according to the researcher's estimates (see table 1/7). There is no updated data regarding the characteristics of the Palestinians in Jordan while figures available from 2007 show that they constitute a predominantly young population with 35.9% below 15 years of age and 5.2% for those of 65 years and over.

According to data published by the PCBS for 2010, the total fertility rate among Palestinian women in Jordan totaled around 3.3 births per woman and the average household size was 4.8 members. The infant mortality rate was 22.6 deaths per thousand live births, whereas the mortality rate among children aged under five reached 25.7% per thousand live births for the same year.¹⁰

According to UNRWA figures, the total Registered Persons (RPs) was 2,047,367 as of 1/1/2012 compared to 1,999,466 Registered Refugees (RRs) as of 1/1/2011. This means that the annual population growth rate of the RPs in Jordan alone is around 2.3%.¹¹

d. Syria

The number of UNRWA-RPs in Syria was 510,444 persons as of 1/1/2012, compared to 495,970 RRs as of 1/1/2011, an annual population growth rate estimated at 2.9%. Around 30.2% of Palestinian refugees in Syria lived in refugee camps as of 1/1/2012. Worthy of mention is that these figures do not include the Palestinians who were displaced to Syria in 1967 and 1970, since most of them are not registered with UNRWA.¹²

According to PCBS figures, those aged under 15 amounted to around 33.1% in 2009. The average household size was 4.1 members in 2010 while the total fertility rate was 2.5 births per woman. The sex ratio was estimated at 100.4 males for every 100 females in 2009. CBR amounted to 29.2 births per thousand persons and the infant mortality rate reached 28.2 deaths per thousand live births while mortality rate among children aged under five reached 31.5 deaths per thousand live births in 2010.¹³

e. Lebanon

There are 465,798 UNRWA-RPs as of 1/1/2012 compared to 455,373 RRs as of 1/1/2011 with annual population growth estimated at 2.2%. Around 50.1% of these live in camps, as of 1/1/2012.¹⁴ According to 2010 figures, the number of those aged under 15 years amounted to 30.4% while those 65 years and over amounted to 5%. The sex ratio was estimated at 102.5 males per 100 females during 2010 (see table 5/7).

Available data shows that the average household size was 3.9 members, while the fertility rate reached 3.2 births per woman in 2010. CBR was 25.8 births per thousand persons and the infant mortality rate reached 19 deaths per thousand live births while the mortality rate among children aged under five was 21.7 deaths per thousand live births for the same year.¹⁵

f. General Comparisons Among Palestinians

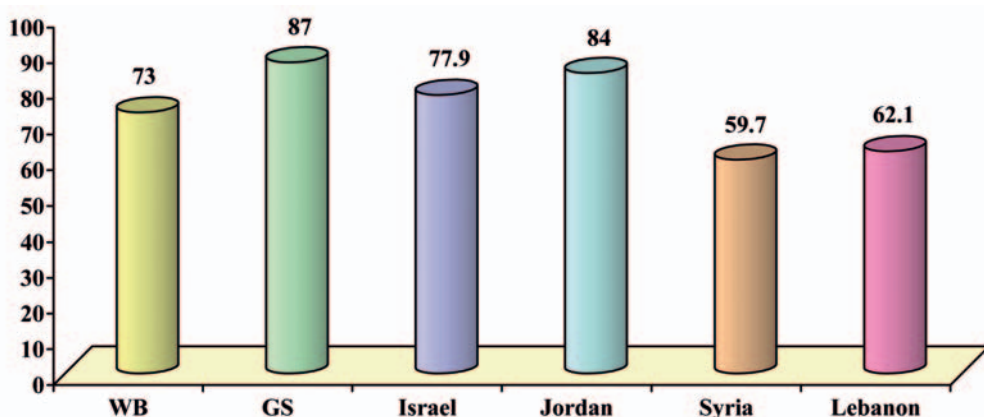
The following comparative table represents a summary of the most important comparisons of some demographic indicators of the Palestinian population, in 2010 and 2011 (unless otherwise indicated between parentheses).

Table 5/7: Selected Demographic Indicators of Palestinians by Residence¹⁶

Indicator	WB 2011	GS 2011	WB & GS 2011	Israel 2010	Jordan 2010	Syria 2010	Lebanon 2010
% of individuals 15 years or less	38.6	43.8	40.7	37.5	35.9 (2007)	33.1 (2009)	30.4
% of individuals 65 years or over	3.3	2.3	2.9	3.9	5.2 (2007)	4.4 (2009)	5
Dependency rate (per 100 individuals 15–64 years)	73	87	75	77.9 (2007)	84 (2007)	59.7 (2007)	62.1 (2007)
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	103.2	103.1	103.2	102.2	-	100.4 (2009)	102.5
CBR (births per 1,000 inhabitants)	30.1	37.2	32.8	26.2	29.2	29.2	25.8
CDR (deaths per 1,000 inhabitants)	4.1	3.9	4	2.7	-	2.8 (2006)	-
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	3.8 (2010)	4.9 (2010)	4.2 (2010)	3.5	3.3	2.5	3.2
Natural population growth rate	2.6	3.3	2.9	2.5	2.3	1.6	2.2
Average household size (individuals per house)	5.6	6.3	5.8	4.4	4.8	4.1	3.9

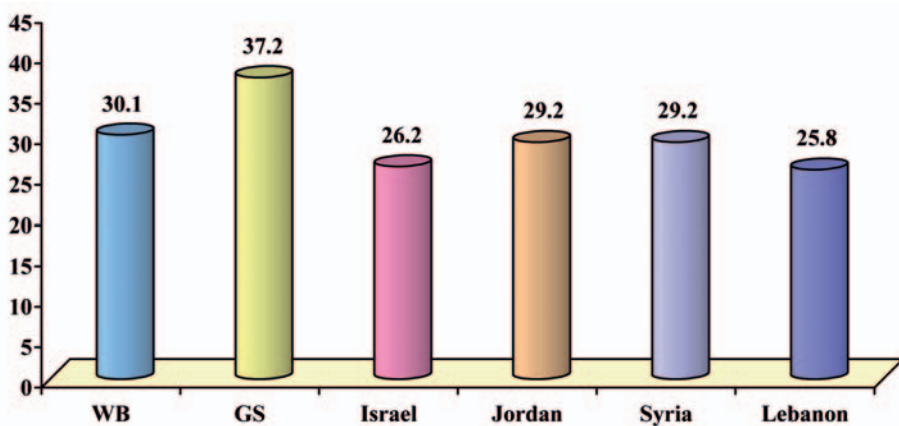
Note: (-) means data is not available and this should apply to all tables.

Dependency Rates of Palestinians by Residence (%)



Note: The dependency rates in the WB and GS are those of 2011, 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 2011, while those in Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon are in 2010.

From the previous table, we note the following:

- The percentage of Palestinians aged under 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. Syria and Lebanon see the lowest dependency rate.
- The percentage of Palestinians aged 65 years and over is highest in Jordan, then Lebanon and lowest in GS.
- CBRs are highest in GS and WB, and lowest in Lebanon and Israel with particular demographic pressure in GS.
- CDRs remained high in the WB and the GS where it amounted to 4 deaths per thousand inhabitants in 2011. This is primarily due to Israel's racist policies and killing of the Palestinians.
- The natural population growth rate (that is the difference between the birth and death rates) remained the same in the PA territories, yet it remained high in the GS as compared to the WB.

3. The Palestinian Refugees

The UNRWA has recently provided updated statistics regarding the number of refugees in the areas of its operation where recent digitization of UNRWA's registration records enables it "to present more detailed beneficiary statistics."

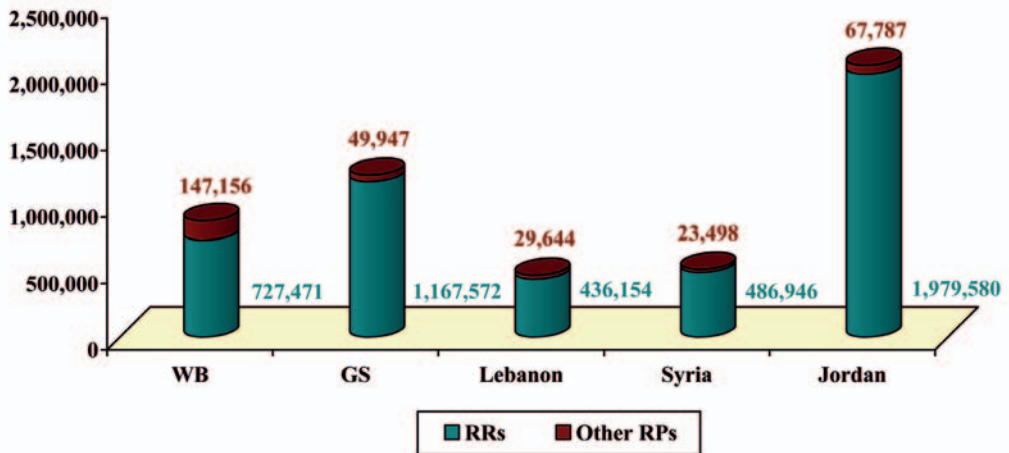
UNRWA classified those registered with it into two categories, labeling them “Registered Refugees” and “Other Registered Persons.” The latter category includes those eligible to receive the Agency’s services according to the UNRWA website, which does not provide any further explanation. It is likely that these include beneficiaries who do not qualify for UNRWA’s definition of the Palestinian refugee, which is a limited definition that does not cover all categories of refugees.

In fact, the new data created some confusion among researchers and specialists. It also triggered many questions that remained unanswered at the time of writing. It is not clear on what basis the Other RPs were categorized or how they amounted to more than 147 thousand in areas such as the WB. It is also not clear whether all of the 318 thousand persons classified as Other RPs or some of them were previously registered as Palestinian refugees. Questions were also raised regarding their citizenship when they were not Palestinians and the legal implications that follow from this registration. In addition, some observers did not find any logic in the mechanism pursued to identify the number of the refugees registered with the Agency as compared to previous years. This is because, according to statistics, the population growth of 1/1/2011 is estimated at strange rates such as 0.8% in Jordan, 6.9% in Lebanon, 8.9% in the WB, 5.5% in the GS and 5.1% in Syria. However, new population growth rates were provided on 1/1/2012, which are more logical but require more deliberation and scrutiny.¹⁷ In this context, the expert on Palestinian refugees, Salman Abu Sitta, has written a memorandum regarding the dilemma caused by the new criteria pursued by UNRWA for classifying refugees. Abu Sitta pointed out that based on UNRWA’s estimates for the last four years, the number of refugees at the beginning of 2012 should be 289 thousand less than the expected figure according to the natural growth defined by UNRWA itself.¹⁸ For its part, UNRWA said that it has provided an accurate categorization of its data and that it would proceed with presenting its services for beneficiaries whose number are on the rise.¹⁹

The following table shows the number of RRs and the Other RPs according to UNRWA estimates as of 1/1/2012.

Table 6/7: UNRWA's Figures as of 1/1/2012²⁰

Region	RRs	Other RPs	Total RPs
WB	727,471	147,156	874,627
GS	1,167,572	49,947	1,217,519
Lebanon	436,154	29,644	465,798
Syria	486,946	23,498	510,444
Jordan	1,979,580	67,787	2,047,367
Total	4,797,723	318,032	5,115,755

UNRWA's Figures as of 1/1/2012

However, if the growth rates used by UNRWA in recent years to count the number of refugees were adopted, the total number of refugees expected in early 2012 would be around 5.052 million persons of whom 846 thousand reside in the WB, 1.184 million in GS, 438 thousand in Lebanon, 491 thousand in Syria and 2.093 million in Jordan. Following the same hypothesis, this would mean that the category “Other RPs” included people who were counted as Palestinian refugees (around 254 thousand) whereas the remainder of UNRWA’s 318 thousand (64 thousand) were instead added to these records.

According to UNRWA figures, the number of those registered in its records in early 2012 increased by around 149 thousand from 2011 and at annual growth rate of 3%. We can also note that the highest growth rate of the RPs is in GS (4.2%) and the lowest is in Lebanon (2.2%).²¹ Table 7/7 summarizes the other most important characteristics of the Palestinian refugees at home and abroad.

The number of RPs in the five UNRWA regions of operation as of 1/1/2012 was estimated at around 5.12 million people, 40% of whom live in Jordan, 40.9% in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 (23.8% in GS and 17.1% in WB) and the other 19.1% in Syria and Lebanon.

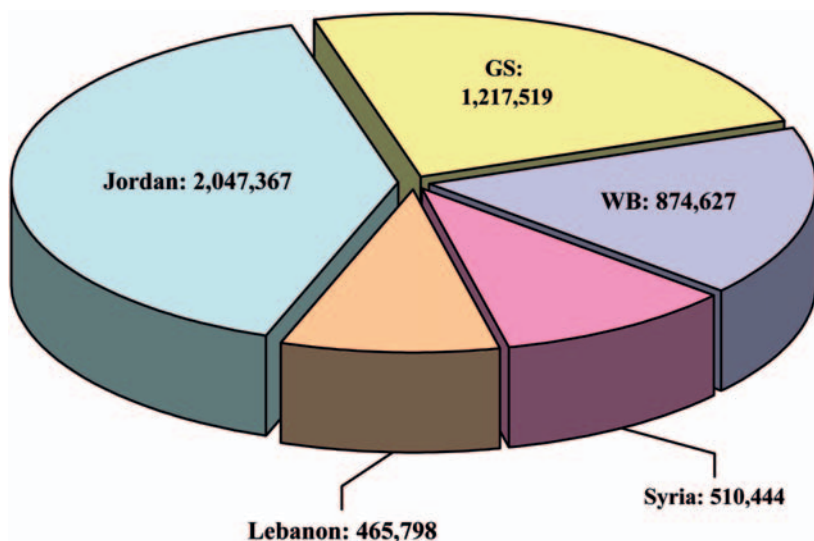
The RPs in Refugee Camps (RPCs) as a percentage of RPs amounted to 29% as of 1/1/2012, while UNRWA stated that the RRs in refugee camps as percentage of total RRs was 29.2% as of 1/1/2011. It is also noted that the percentage of those living in camps in Lebanon and the GS is the highest of all the other regions.

The average family size here does not represent the reality of many households (the extended family living together in one place). Rather, it reflects the nuclear family entitled to an independent family card. Accordingly, it is not strange to find the average size of the nuclear family less than the average household size. This is because this average decreases with time where we notice that in all areas of presence of Palestinian refugees the average family size slightly decreases with time. The general average decreased from 4.6 members per family in 2006 to 4.35 members in 2009.

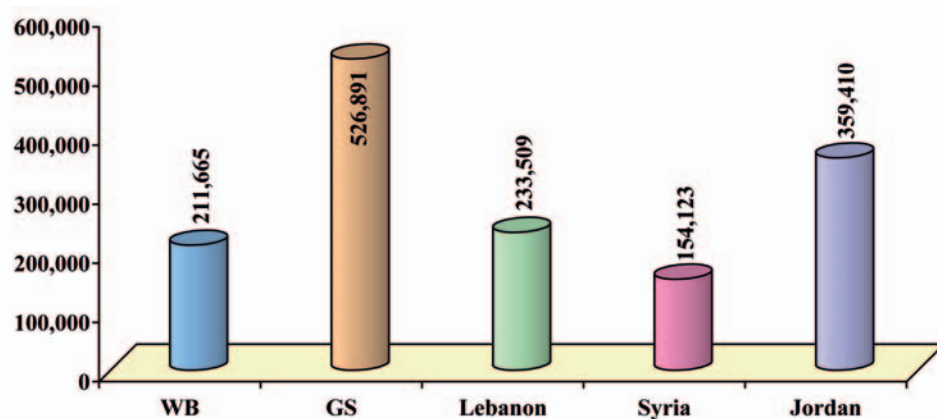
Table 7/7: UNRWA-RPs, Their Births and Families by Region²²

Region	RPs (1/1/2012)	Births (30/9/2009)	Average family size (30/9/2009)	Families (30/9/2009)	Refugee camps	RPCs (1/1/2012)	RPCs as % of RPs (1/1/2012)
WB	874,627	7,309	3.79	204,674	19	211,665	24.2
GS	1,217,519	23,710	4.43	248,057	8	526,891	43.3
Lebanon	465,798	3,539	3.73	113,594	12	233,509	50.1
Syria	510,444	7,892	3.99	117,806	9	154,123	30.2
Jordan	2,047,367	18,744	4.87	405,666	10	359,410	17.6
Total	5,115,755	61,149	4.35	1,089,797	58	1,485,598	29

UNRWA-RPs by Region as of 1/1/2012



UNRWA-RPCs by Region as of 1/1/2012



4. Demographic Growth Trends

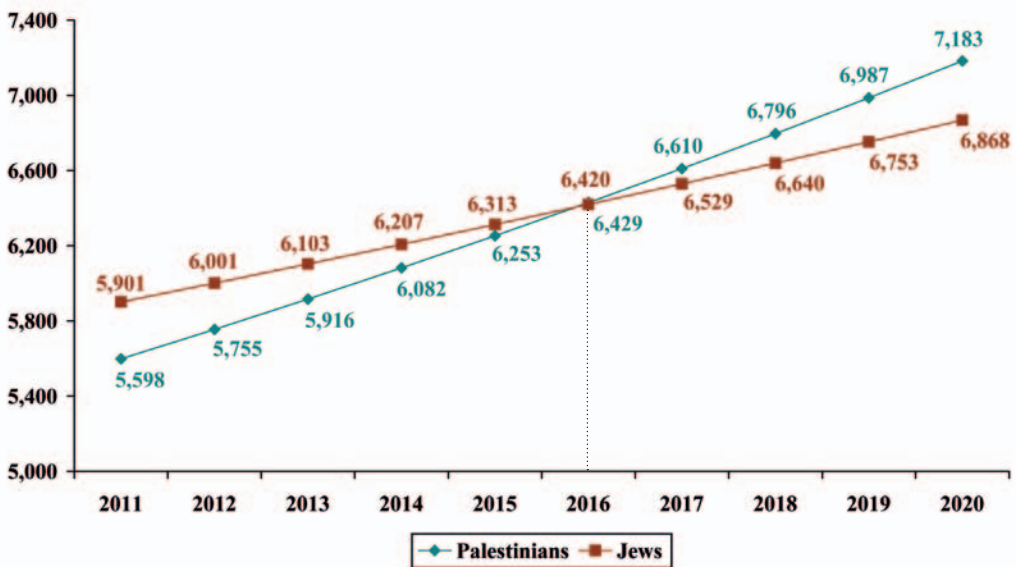
Despite the relative decrease in the natural growth rate among the Palestinian population, this rate remained high compared to other populations including the Israelis.

According to PCBS estimates, the number of Palestinians in historic Palestine amounted to around 5.6 million at the end of 2011, whereas Jews reached 5.9 million based on estimates by the CBS. Based on annual growth rates amounting to 2.9% for Palestinians in the WB and GS, 2.5% for Palestinians in the territories occupied in 1948 (Israel) and 1.7% for Jews, the number of Palestinians and Jews in historic Palestine will be equal during 2016. Both populations are expected to reach 6.4 million, assuming no change in the growth rates. By the end of 2020, Jews living in Palestine will comprise 48.9% of the population, around 6.9 million people compared to 7.2 million Palestinians.

Table 8/7: Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2011–2020 (thousands)²³

Year	Palestinians			Jews
	WB & GS	Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)	Historic Palestine	
2011	4,231	1,367	5,598	5,901
2012	4,354	1,401	5,755	6,001
2013	4,480	1,436	5,916	6,103
2014	4,610	1,472	6,082	6,207
2015	4,744	1,509	6,253	6,313
2016	4,882	1,547	6,429	6,420
2017	5,024	1,586	6,610	6,529
2018	5,170	1,626	6,796	6,640
2019	5,320	1,667	6,987	6,753
2020	5,474	1,709	7,183	6,868

Estimated Population Count of Palestinians and Jews in Historic Palestine 2011–2020 (thousands)



Second: Economic Indicators in the WB and GS

While the reasons for 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. The aggressive occupation seeks to destroy infrastructure, agricultural resources and factories, disrupt trade movement, confiscate property, besiege people, and create a repellent environment that suppresses the capacities of the Palestinian economy.

Israel imposes restrictions on the Palestinian economy through its control of movement on crossings and border exits in addition to internal impediments between northern governorates, cities and villages through fixed and flying checkpoints that hinder the movement of goods and people, leading to losses for producers and burdens for consumers. Israel has maintained its GS blockade since

2007 with only partial operation of crossings and a limited list of allowed goods. In general, Israel is consistent and blatant about depriving the Palestinian economy of any potential for development while maintaining living conditions at minimum humanitarian level.

1. Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

The Palestinian economy witnessed 10.7% growth in 2011 compared to 9.3% in 2010. GDP increased from \$5,728 million in 2010 to \$6,339 million in 2011.

Tracking GDP over a longer period of time, from 1999 to 2011, an annual growth rate was achieved at 2.9%, which means the GDP tends to increase yet at a slight rate.

Table 9/7: GDP in the WB and GS 1999–2011 at Constant Prices*
(\$ million)²⁴

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***	2011***
GDP	4,559.5	4,322.3	4,554.1	4,878.3	5,241.3	5,728	6,339
Average annual growth or deterioration (%)	+8.6	-5.2	+5.4	+7.1	+7.4	+9.3	+10.7

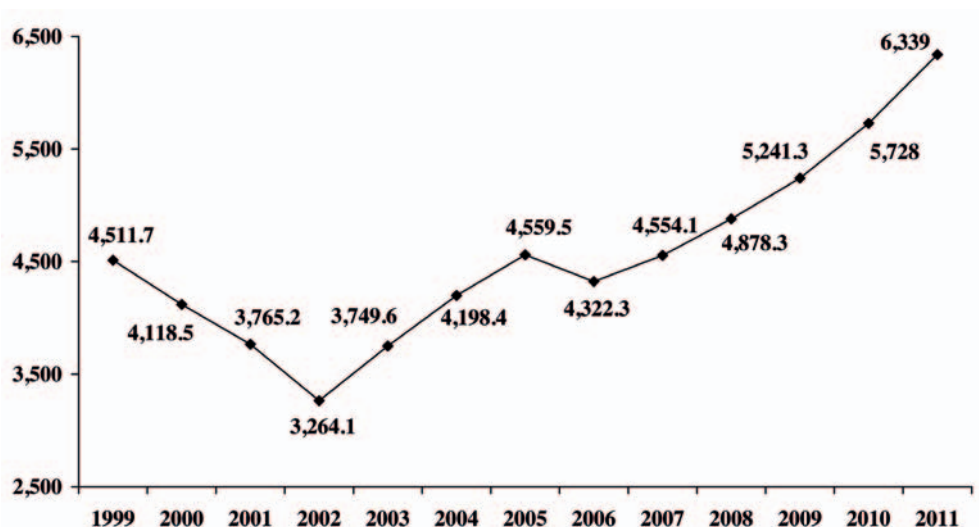
Note: The data excludes those parts of Jerusalem annexed by Israel in 1967, and this applies to all following tables in this chapter.

* Base year for the period 1999–2003 is 1997 and for the period 2004–2011 is 2004, and this applies to all following tables in this chapter.

** First revision.

*** Flash estimates.

GDP in the WB and GS 1999–2011 (\$ million)



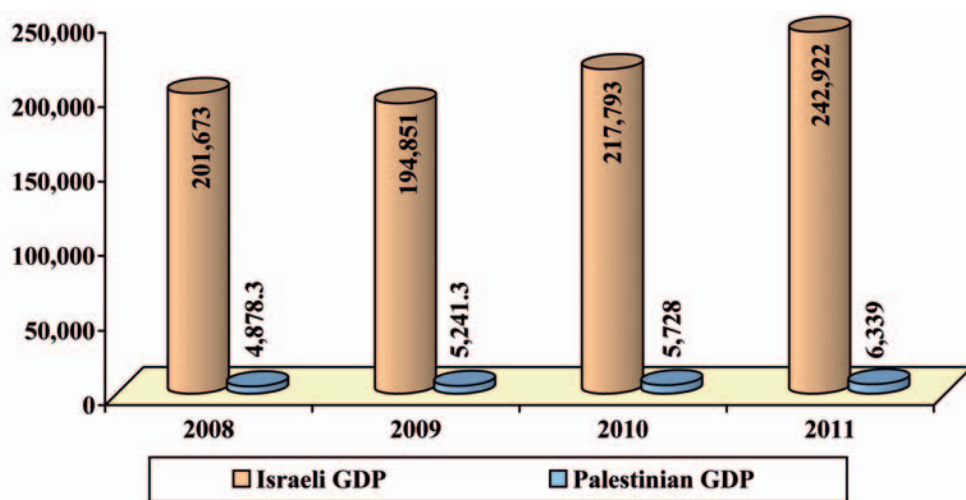
Israeli GDP amounted to \$217,793 million in 2010 and \$242,922 million in 2011. Thus, we notice that this GDP is 38 times higher than its Palestinian counterpart (3,832%). This discrepancy is a clear indication of the impact of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian economy, its exploitation of Palestinian natural resources and prevention of Palestinians fulfilling their potential freely and efficiently.

Table 10/7: Comparing the Israeli and Palestinian GDP 2008–2011
(\$ million)²⁵

Year	Israeli GDP	Palestinian GDP (WB & GS)*
2008	201,673	4,878.3
2009	194,851	5,241.3
2010	217,793	5,728
2011	242,922	6,339

* Data of 2008 and 2009 are first revision and data of 2010 and 2011 are flash estimates.

Comparing the Israeli and Palestinian GDP 2008–2011 (\$ million)



Furthermore, the GDP of the WB represented the greater part of the total Palestinian GDP in the WB and GS, amounting to 73.1% in 2011 compared to 26.9% in the GS. This means that GS's share of GDP is low especially when compared to total population in the WB and GS. At the end of 2011, 1.616 million people lived in GS, which is 38.2% of the population in the GS and WB.²⁶ 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 said growth was in part achieved through international aid provided to the PA. In fact, foreign aid amounted to \$1,401.7 million in 2009, and continued in 2010 with slight deterioration as it amounted to \$1,277.3 million. In 2011, it witnessed a noticeable decline estimated at 23% where it reached \$983.2 million (see tables 17/7 and 27/7).

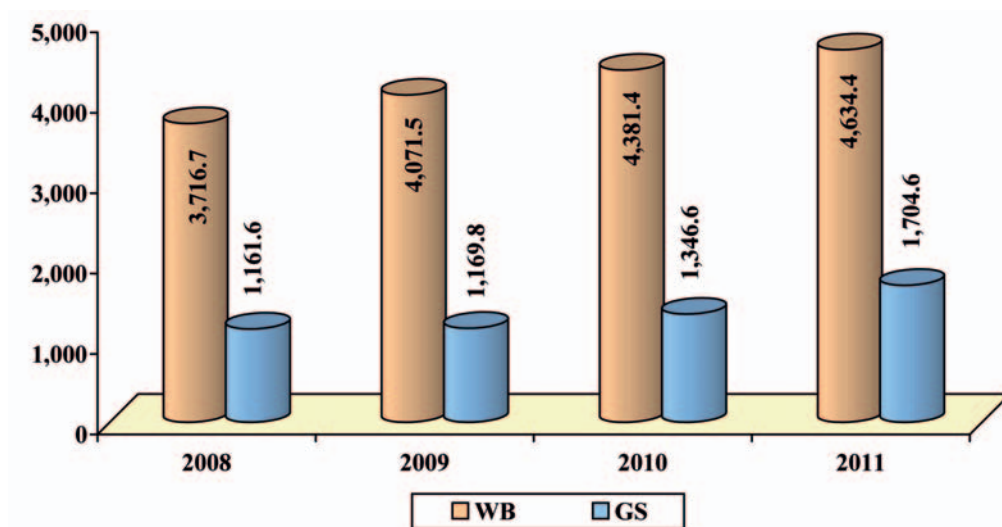
Table 11/7: GDP in the WB and GS 2008–2011 at Constant Prices (\$ million)²⁷

Year	WB		GS		WB & GS	
	GDP	%	GDP	%	GDP	%
2008*	3,716.7	76.2	1,161.6	23.8	4,878.3	100
2009*	4,071.5	77.7	1,169.8	22.3	5,241.3	100
2010**	4,381.4	76.5	1,346.6	23.5	5,728	100
2011**	4,634.4	73.1	1,704.6	26.9	6,339	100

* Data was revised based on revising National Accounts data 2008–2009.

** Flash estimates.

GDP in the WB and GS 2008–2011 (\$ million)

**Table 12/7: GDP Growth in the WB and GS 2008–2011 at Constant Prices (\$ million)²⁸**

Year		2008*	2009*	2010**	2011**
WB	GDP	3,716.7	4,071.5	4,381.4	4,634.4
	Average annual growth (%)	-	+9.5	+7.6	+5.8
GS	GDP	1,161.6	1,169.8	1,346.6	1,704.6
	Average annual growth (%)	-	+0.7	+15.1	+26.6

* Data was revised based on revising National Accounts data 2008–2009.

** Flash estimates.

2. GDP per Capita

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 real distribution of income among people and thus remains a general normative indicator. GDP per capita amounted to \$1,613.7 in 2011 compared to \$1,502.4 in 2010 with growth rate estimated at 7.4%.

Tracing the GDP size in the WB and GS during 1999–2011, we notice that the GDP per capita, which amounted to \$1,612 in 1999, assumed a declining and fluctuating track over the following years until 2011 when it maintained the value it reached in 1999 (see table 13/7).

Table 13/7: GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 1999–2011 at Constant Prices (\$) ²⁹

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Annual estimate	1,612	1,450.2	1,287.9	1,084.8	1,210.9	1,317	1,387.2

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010*	2011**
Annual estimate	1,275.4	1,303.2	1,356.3	1,415.7	1,502.4	1,613.7

* Preliminary estimates.

** Flash estimates.

GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 1999–2011 (\$)

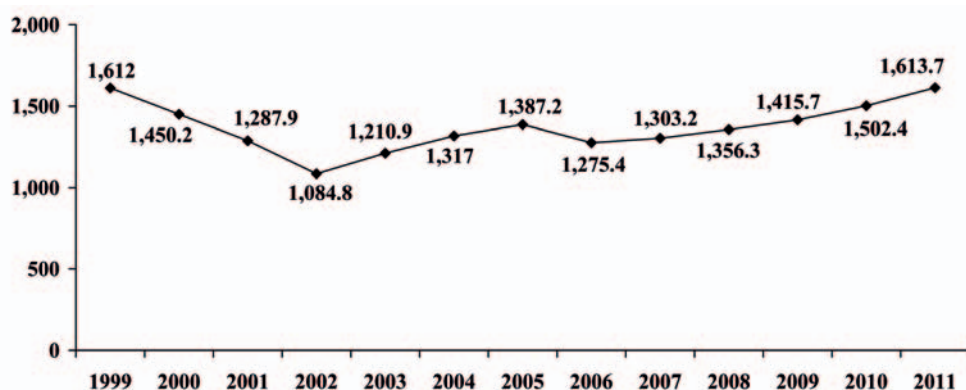


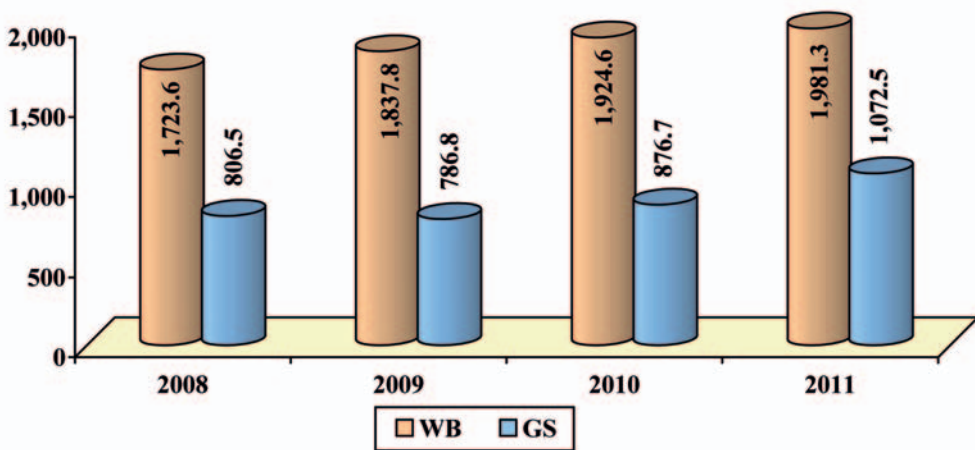
Table 14/7: GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 2008–2011
at Constant Prices (\$) ³⁰

Year	WB	GS	WB & GS
2008	1,723.6	806.5	1,356.3
2009	1,837.8	786.8	1,415.7
2010*	1,924.6	876.7	1,502.4
2011**	1,981.3	1,072.5	1,613.7

* Preliminary estimates.

** Flash estimates.

GDP per Capita in the WB and GS 2008–2011 (\$)



Israeli GDP per capita reached \$28,575 in 2010 and \$31,291 in 2011. This illustrates how the Israeli individual continues to enjoy a higher standard of living at the expense of the Palestinian people. In fact, the average Israeli per capita income in 2010 was 19 times higher than the Palestinian per capita income, increasing to 19.4 times higher in 2011. Bearing in mind the fact that the Palestinian individual does not lack the capacity or potential, we see the role of the Israeli occupation in undermining the chances of Palestinian development and improving the living conditions of the Palestinian individual.

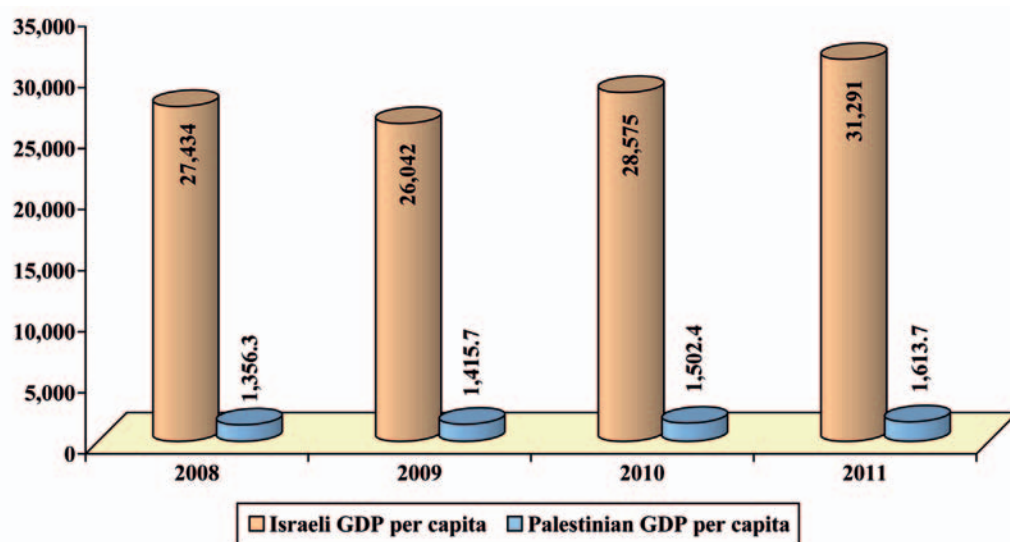
**Table 15/7: Comparing the Israeli and Palestinian GDP per Capita
2008–2011 (\$) ³¹**

Year	Israeli GDP per capita	Palestinian GDP per capita (WB & GS)
2008	27,434	1,356.3
2009	26,042	1,415.7
2010	28,575	1,502.4*
2011	31,291	1,613.7**

* Preliminary estimates.

** Flash estimates.

Comparing the Israeli and Palestinian GDP per Capita 2008–2011 (\$)



3. Public Debt

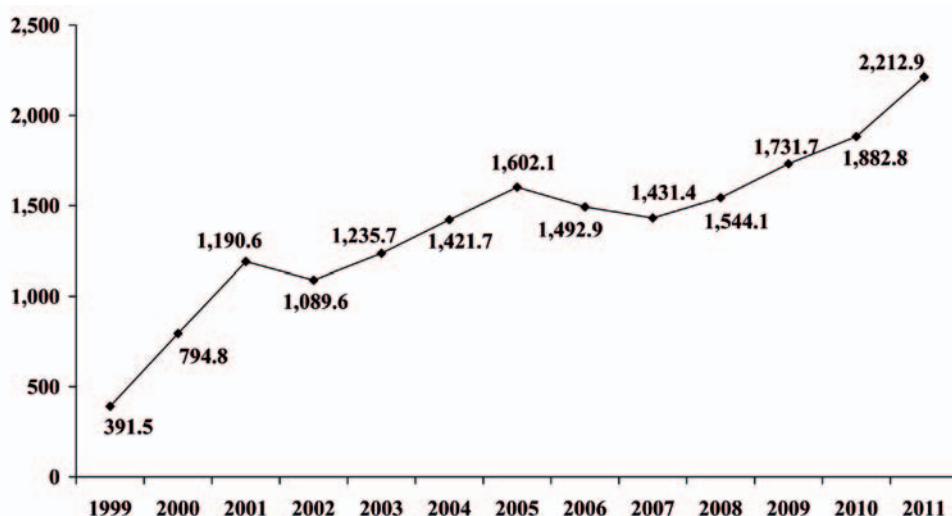
Public debt figures show that the debt is still on the rise where it increased from around \$1,883 million in 2010 to around \$2,213 million in 2011 at 17.5%. The following table shows the evolution of public debt over 1999–2011.

Table 16/7: Total Public Debt Evolution in the WB and GS
1999–2011 (\$ million)³²

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total public debt	391.5	794.8	1,190.6	1,089.6	1,235.7	1,421.7	1,602.1

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total public debt	1,492.9	1,431.4	1,544.1	1,731.7	1,882.8	2,212.9

Total Public Debt Evolution in the WB and GS 1999–2011 (\$ million)



4. The PA's General Budget (Ramallah)

The general budget of any country reflects the governmental role in economic activity through two main tools: public revenues and public expenditures, which together form the state's general budget. These two tools can be also used to meet the state's general fiscal policy. Total net revenues showed an inclination towards decline in 2009 at 13% compared to 2008. However, it increased by 22.7% in 2010 and by 14.5% in 2011. Total net revenues in 2011 amounted to \$2,177 million compared to \$1,900.9 million in 2010.

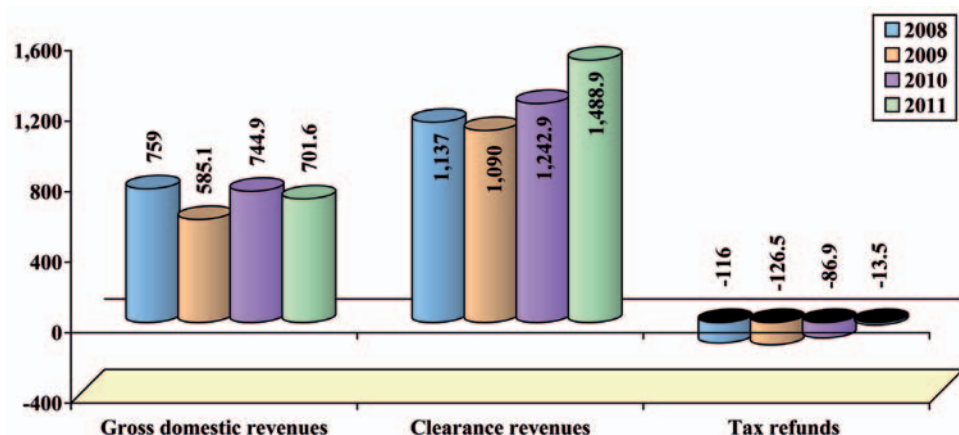
**Table 17/7: PA Revenues, External Budgetary Support and Development
Financing 2008–2011 (\$ million)³³**

Fiscal operation	2008	2009	2010*	2011*
Gross domestic revenues	759	585.1	744.9	701.6
- Tax	273	301.5	474.4	482.4
- Non Tax	486	283.6	270.5	219.2
Clearance revenues	1,137	1,090	1,242.9	1,488.9
Total revenues	1,896	1,675.1	1,987.8	2,190.5
Tax refunds (-)	-116	-126.5	-86.9	-13.5
Total net revenues	1,780	1,548.6	1,900.9	2,177
External budgetary support and development financing	1,978	1,401.7	1,277.3**	983.2
Total net revenues, external budgetary support and development financing (after deduction of tax refunds)	3,758	2,950.3	3,178.2	3,160.2

* The exchange rate of the dollar against the Israeli shekel was calculated based on figures of the Palestinian Ministry of Finance. This applies for tables 18/7, 19/7, 20/7, 26/7 and 27/7.

** This figure was updated on 15/2/2012 where the Ministry of Finance adopted \$1,273.3 million.

Evolution of the PA Revenues 2008–2011 (\$ million)

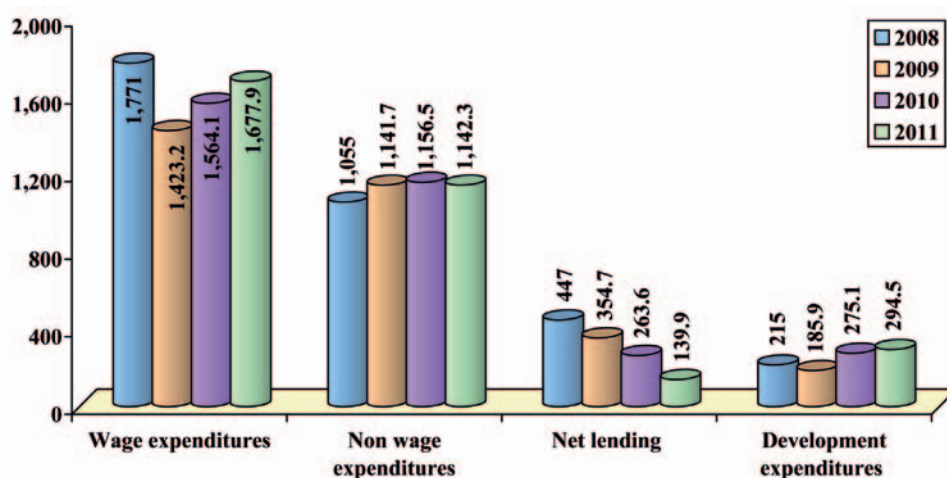


Tracing the forms of public revenues, regarding their structure or components, we find that they comprise two major parts: domestic revenues that include taxes and service fees, and clearance revenues that Israel collects and transfers to the PA. The latter revenues have comprised the larger part of public revenues in the period 2008–2011 at a percentage ranging between 63.9% and 70.4%. Total public expenditures, including development expenditures, amounted to \$3,254.6 million in 2011 compared to \$3,259.3 million in 2010.

Table 18/7: Evolution of PA Expenditures 2008–2011 (\$ million)³⁴

Fiscal operation	2008	2009	2010	2011
Wage expenditures	1,771	1,423.2	1,564.1	1,677.9
Non wage expenditures	1,055	1,141.7	1,156.5	1,142.3
Net lending	447	354.7	263.6	139.9
Total expenditures and net lending	3,273	2,919.5	2,984.2	2,960.1
Development expenditures	215	185.9	275.1	294.5
Total	3,488	3,105.4	3,259.3	3,254.6

Evolution of PA Expenditures 2008–2011 (\$ million)



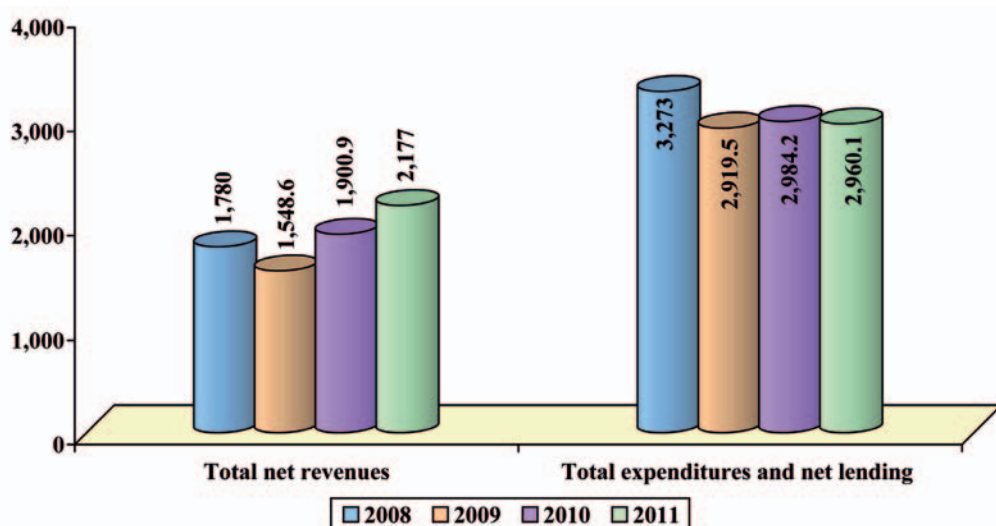
The above table shows that wage expenditures are the highest when compared to other expenditures, amounting to 49.1% of total expenditure and net lending including development expenditures over the period 2008–2011. Wage expenditures were estimated at around 36.3% of GDP in 2008, 27.2% in 2009, 27.3% in 2010 and 26.5% in 2011 (see tables 9/7 and 18/7).

PA public revenues and expenditures show that the 2009 budget deficit reached \$1,370.9 million compared to \$1,493 million in 2008. This means that budget deficit has decreased by \$122.1 million and at average annual rate amounting to 8.2%. In 2010, however, the deficit reached \$1,083.3 million, thus falling by 21% compared to 2009. In 2011, however, the budget deficit witnessed a noticeable decrease estimated at around \$300.2 million at 27.7% compared to 2010 as shown in the following table.

Table 19/7: Evolution of the PA Budget Deficits 2008–2011 (\$ million)

Fiscal operation	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total net revenues	1,780	1,548.6	1,900.9	2,177
Total expenditures and net lending	3,273	2,919.5	2,984.2	2,960.1
Balance	-1,493	-1,370.9	-1,083.3	-783.1

PA Revenues and Expenditures 2008–2011 (\$ million)



5. General Budget of the Caretaker Government in the GS

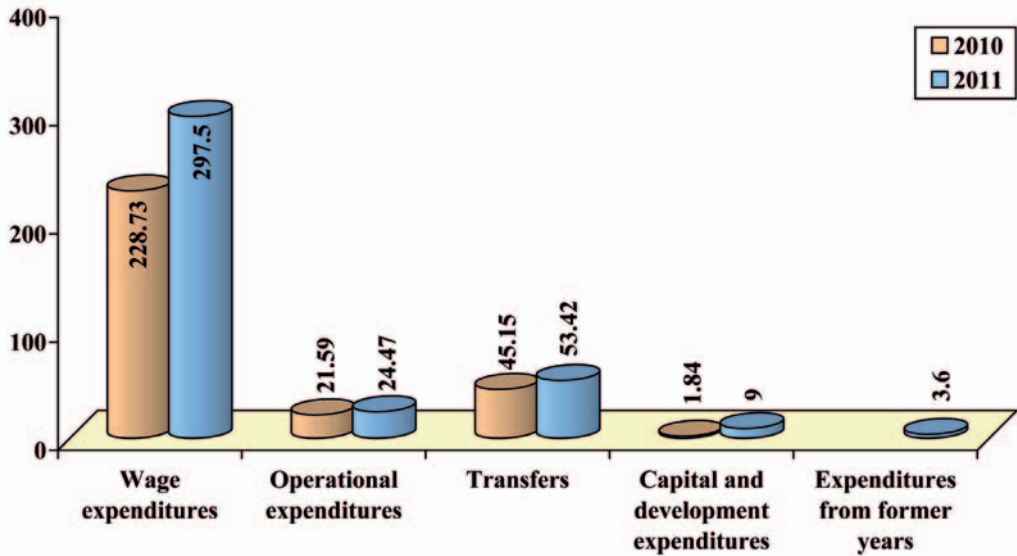
The total expenditures of the general budget of the GS caretaker government amounted to \$387.99 million in 2011 (including \$3.6 million left over from previous years) compared to \$297.31 million in 2010. 2011 public expenditures were used to cover wage expenditures (76.7%), operational expenditures (6.3%), transfers (13.8%), capital and development expenditures (2.3%), while expenditures from former years accounted for 0.9%.

Total domestic revenues amounted to \$187.5 million in 2011 compared to \$83.01 million in 2010, thus achieving an increase estimated at 125.9%. The government received external funding estimated at \$67 million in 2011 compared to \$149.19 million in 2010 with a 55.1% decrease. Thus, the deficit in the budget amounted to \$133.49 million in 2011 with a 105% increase compared to 2010.

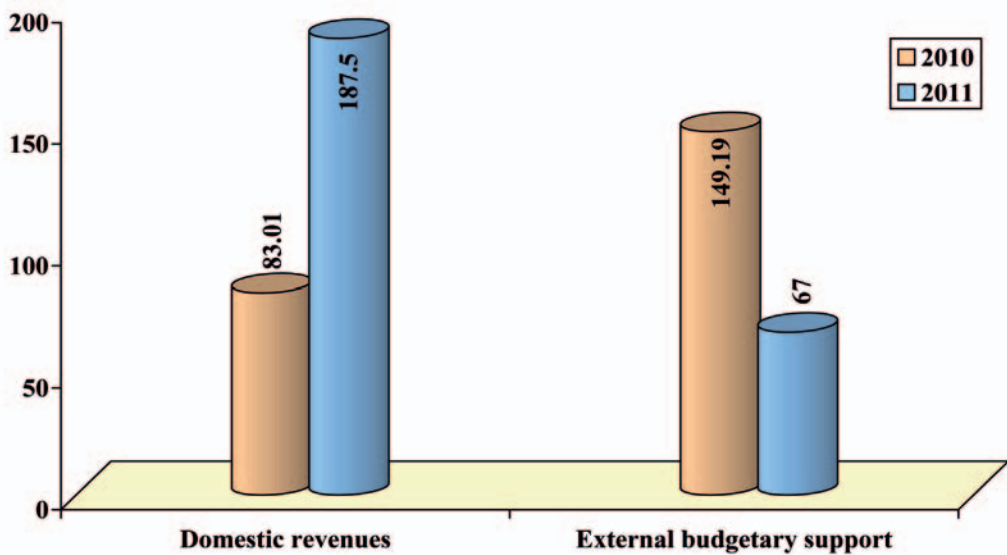
Table 20/7: Fiscal Operations of the Caretaker Government in GS
2010–2011 (\$ million)³⁵

Fiscal operation	2010	2011
Total revenues and external budgetary support	232.2	254.5
- Domestic revenues	83.01	187.5
- External budgetary support	149.19	67
Total expenditures	297.31	387.99
- Wage expenditures	228.73	297.5
- Operational expenditures	21.59	24.47
- Transfers	45.15	53.42
- Capital and development expenditures	1.84	9
- Expenditures from former years	-	3.6
Actual deficit	-65.11	-133.49

The Expenditures of the Caretaker Government in GS 2010–2011 (\$ million)



The Revenues of the Caretaker Government in GS 2010–2011 (\$ million)



The above figures show the extent of the difficulty faced by the caretaker government because of the Israeli blockade that dictates that the lives of Gazans are managed according to the minimum available capacities.



6. Work and Unemployment

The labor force participation rate in the WB and GS amounted to 44.4% at the end of 2011 (47.3% in the WB and 39.5% in the GS), compared to 41.5% at the end of 2010 (44.5% in the WB and 36.3% in GS). Table 21/7 shows the number of people contributing in and outside the labor force in the WB and GS according to International Labour Organization (ILO) standards.

The full employment in the WB and GS increased to 71.3% at the end of 2011 (75.5% in the WB and 62.4% in GS) compared to 69.7% at the end of 2010 (74% in the WB and 60.2% in GS). According to ILO standards, unemployment in the WB and GS decreased from 23.4% in 2010 to 21% in 2011. In the WB, unemployment was almost maintained at the same level (16.9% in 2010 and 16.6% in 2011) whereas it decreased in GS from 37.4% to 30.3% during the same period (see table 22/7).

According to the relaxed definition of unemployment, which is calculated by adding to unemployed people according to the ILO standards those people outside the labor force because they were frustrated in seeking work; the unemployment rate decreased in the WB and GS from 29.9% in 2010 to 24.8% in 2011.³⁶

Table 21/7: Distribution of Palestinians Aged 15 Years and over in the WB and GS by Labor Force Status and Region (ILO Standards) 2008–2011³⁷

Year	Region	In labor force*	Outside labor force**	Total
2008	WB	604,000	808,000	1,412,000
	GS	292,100	460,600	752,700
	WB & GS	896,100	1,268,600	2,164,700
2009	WB	656,900	832,100	1,489,000
	GS	306,600	525,100	831,700
	WB & GS	963,500	1,357,200	2,320,700
2010	WB	686,500	856,800	1,543,300
	GS	314,700	551,700	866,400
	WB & GS	1,001,200	1,408,500	2,409,700
2011	WB	754,900	842,800	1,597,700
	GS	356,300	546,200	902,500
	WB & GS	1,111,200	1,389,000	2,500,200

* The economically active population (Labor Force) consists of all persons 15 years and over who are either employed or unemployed.

** The population not economically active comprises all persons 15 years and over, who were neither employed nor unemployed.

Table 22/7: Distribution of Palestinians Aged 15 Years and over in the WB and GS by Labor Force Components and Region (ILO Standards) 2008–2011³⁸

Year	Region	Full employment*	Underemployment**	Unemployment	Total
2008	WB	447,600	36,800	119,600	604,000
	GS	140,800	20,500	130,800	292,100
	WB & GS	588,400	57,300	250,400	896,100
2009	WB	491,200	46,700	119,000	656,900
	GS	169,600	16,700	120,300	306,600
	WB & GS	660,800	63,400	239,300	963,500
2010	WB	507,800	62,500	116,200	686,500
	GS	189,600	7,300	117,800	314,700
	WB & GS	697,400	69,800	234,000	1,001,200
2011	WB	570,300	59,600	125,000	754,900
	GS	222,300	26,100	107,900	356,300
	WB & GS	792,600	85,700	232,900	1,111,200

* Those normally working 35 hours or more per week.

** Those whose working hours are less than normal average.

7. Industrial Activity

Industrial activity in the WB and GS deteriorated during the years 2008–2010. Yet it increased in 2011 thus achieving 12.1% growth compared to 2010. Industrial activity has in fact contributed, with around 12.5% of GDP in 2011 compared to 12.3% in 2010.

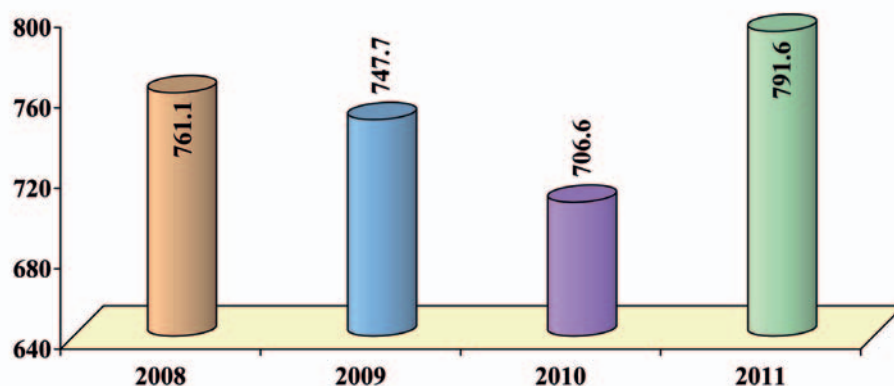
Table 23/7: Evolution of Industrial GDP and Its Percentage of Total GDP in the WB and GS 2008–2011 at Constant Prices (\$ million)³⁹

Year	2008*	2009*	2010**	2011**
Mining and quarrying, manufacturing, electricity and water supply	761.1	747.7	706.6	791.6
% of total GDP	15.6	14.3	12.3	12.5

* Data was revised based on revising National Accounts data 2008–2009.

** Flash estimates.

Evolution of Industrial GDP in the WB and GS 2008–2011 (\$ million)



8. Agricultural Activity

Agricultural activity is highly important in Palestine as a major source of essential food crops and employment opportunities. However, its share of the GDP over the recent years has been limited, only contributing 6.3% in 2010 and 2011 compared to 5.6% in 2009 and 5.9% in 2008.

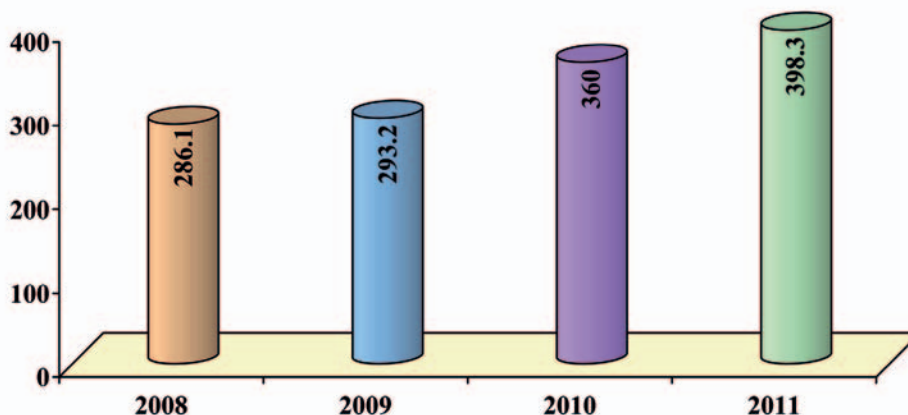
Table 24/7: Evolution of Agricultural GDP and Its Percentage of Total GDP in the WB and GS 2008–2011 at Constant Prices (\$ million)⁴⁰

Year	2008*	2009*	2010**	2011**
Agriculture and fishing	286.1	293.2	360	398.3
% of total GDP	5.9	5.6	6.3	6.3

* Data was revised based on revising National Accounts data 2008–2009.

** Flash estimates.

Evolution of Agricultural GDP in the WB and GS 2008–2011 (\$ million)



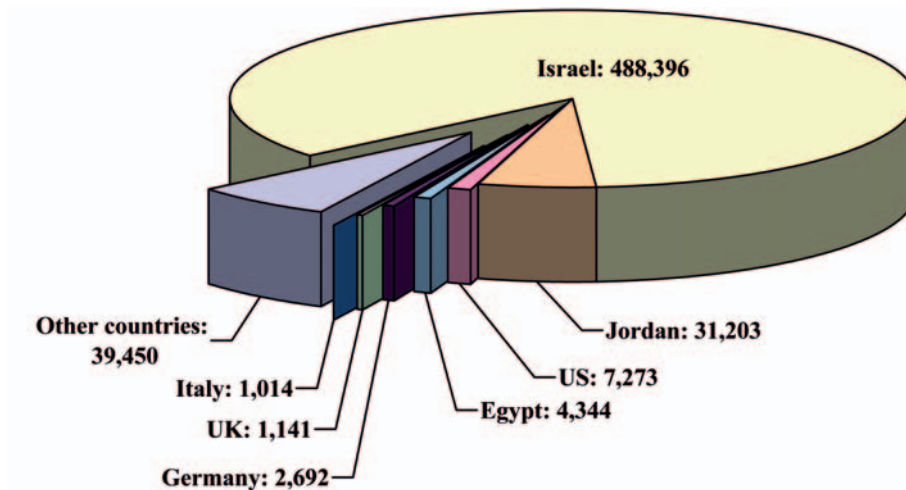
9. Trade

Israel controlled around 74.1% of the PA's trade volume in 2010. According to figures published by the PCBS, Palestinian imports from Israel amounted to \$2,873.3 million, 72.6% of total imports. Palestinian exports to Israel, however, reached \$488.4 million, 84.9% of total exports. The following table shows the trade volume of the WB and GS with selected countries during 2009–2010.

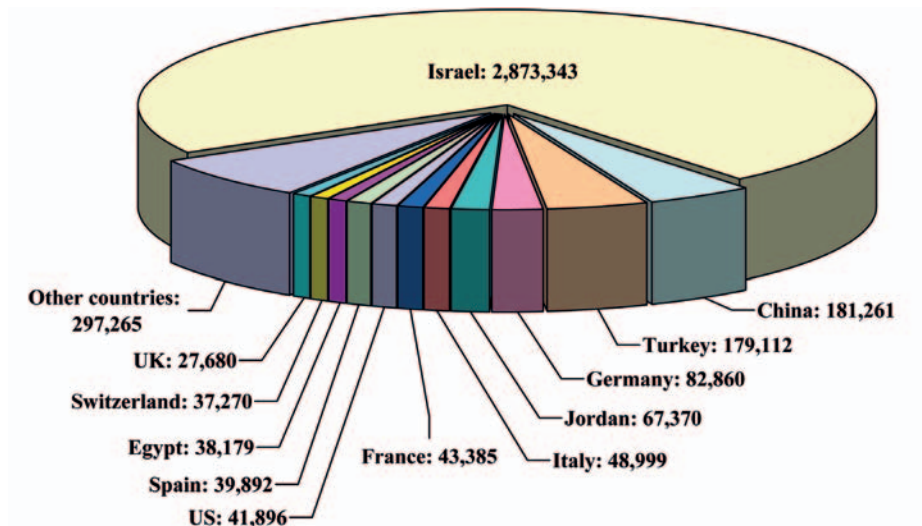
Table 25/7: Volume of Palestinian Trade, Exports and Imports in Goods in the WB and GS to/ from Selected Countries 2009–2010 (\$ thousand)⁴¹

Country	Trade volume		Palestinian exports to:		Palestinian imports from:	
	2010	2009	2010	2009	2010	2009
Israel	3,361,738	3,104,623	488,396	453,494	2,873,343	2,651,129
China	181,281	157,828	20	12	181,261	157,816
Turkey	179,601	113,862	489	53	179,112	113,809
Jordan	98,573	76,977	31,203	28,855	67,370	48,122
Germany	85,552	97,380	2,692	94	82,860	97,286
Italy	50,014	42,584	1,014	2,224	48,999	40,360
US	49,169	46,473	7,273	6,132	41,896	40,341
France	43,920	39,084	535	358	43,385	38,726
Egypt	42,523	38,214	4,344	2,891	38,179	35,323
Spain	39,910	33,488	18	0	39,892	33,488
Switzerland	37,638	23,227	369	173	37,270	23,054
UK	28,822	21,882	1,141	710	27,680	21,172
Other countries	335,284	232,518	38,019	23,359	297,265	300,159
Total	4,534,025	4,119,140	575,513	518,355	3,958,512	3,600,785

Palestinian Exports in Goods in the WB and GS to Selected Countries 2010 (\$ thousand)



Palestinian Imports in Goods in the WB and GS from Selected Countries 2010 (\$ thousand)



Worth mentioning is that CBS has provided different figures regarding trade volume with the PA for 2010. According to these figures, Palestinian imports from Israel amounted to \$3,093 million, which is \$220 million more than the Palestinian official figure while Palestinian exports to Israel amounted to \$491 million, \$2.6 million more than the Palestinian official figure.⁴²

10. PA's External Financing

There are various forms of foreign aid intended to serve the Palestinian economy, support humanitarian cases and reinforce the position of the PA. Most notable among these are donor funds, international organizations' activities, grants provided via convoys and solidarity activists in addition to grants provided to civil society institutions. Donors' funds are regulated within a mechanism by which they are accumulated then transferred to the PA. The following table reflects the development of foreign aid during the period 2008–2011.

Table 26/7: Evolution of the PA External Budgetary Support and Development Financing 2008–2011 (\$ million)⁴³

Fiscal operation	2008	2009	2010	2011
External budgetary support	1,763	1,354.9	1,146.8	814.3
Development financing	215	46.8	130.5	168.9
Total	1,978	1,401.7	1,277.3	983.2

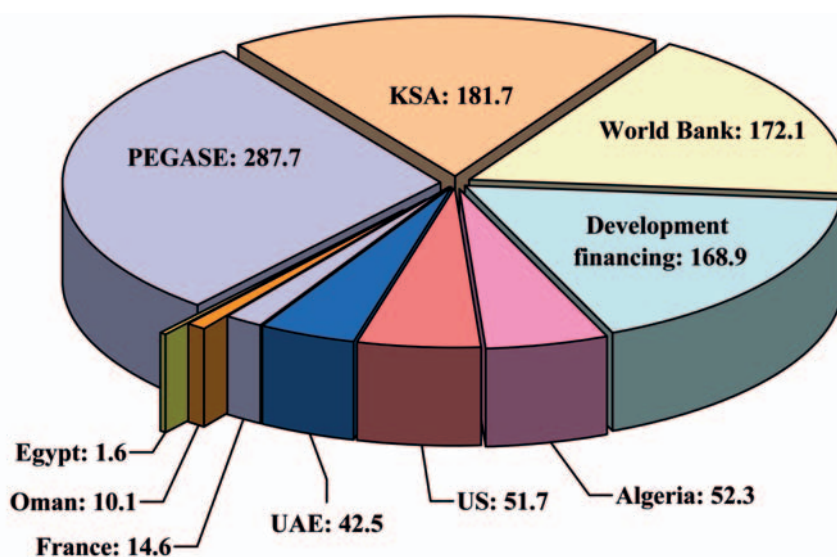
The above table shows that external financing amounted to \$1,978 million in 2008, decreasing to \$1,402 million in 2009, with a decline of \$576 million and negative growth rate of 29.1%. Then again, it decreased in 2010 to reach \$1,277 million and with a negative growth rate of 8.9%. Foreign aid continued to decline in 2011 reaching around \$983 million with negative growth of 23%, after it was planned that the PA would receive \$1,467 million in 2011.⁴⁴

In 2011, the Palestino-Europeén de Gestion et d'Aide Socio-Economique (PEGASE), which translates as the Palestinian-European Mechanism for Management of Socio-Economic Aid, ranked first in terms of external financing with \$287.7 million. The KSA ranked second with \$181.7 million, then The World Bank with \$172.1 million. It is noticeable that the international community's financing for the PA declined in 2011 by 42.4% compared to 2010 while financing by Arab countries increased by 24.9%. Development financing witnessed a growth estimated at 30.1% compared to 2010.

Table 27/7: Sources of External Financing for the PA 2010–2011 (\$ million)⁴⁵

Donor	2010	2011
Arab donors	230.8	288.2
KSA	143.7	181.7
Algeria	26.3	52.3
UAE	42.9	42.5
Oman	-	10.1
Egypt	8.1	1.6
Qatar	9.8	-
International donors	912.7	526.1
PEGASE	374.6	287.7
The World Bank	279.5	172.1
US	222.9	51.7
France	15.9	14.6
India	9.9	-
Russia	9.9	-
Development financing*	129.8	168.9
Total	1,273.3	983.2

* Development financing includes old grants for line ministries, co-financing for the projects of Ministry of Education, grants to build the capacities of different Palestinian institutions and others.

Sources of External Financing for the PA 2011 (\$ million)

Third: Educational Indicators in the WB and GS

The suffering and restraints imposed by the Israeli occupation have not prevented the Palestinian people from using education as a tool of steadfastness and an expression of national identity in a positive and creative way. This section provides a number of Palestinian education indicators in the WB and GS.

1. The General Educational Situation

Palestinians in the WB and GS represent one of the most educationally advanced groups in the Arab world, with an illiteracy rate of 4.7% and a literacy rate that reached 95.3% in 2011. The latter is the second highest in the Arab world after Qatar.⁴⁶ The educational attendance of people 6 years and over of both sexes, amounted to 97.7% in 2010. In the WB and GS, there are 471 cultural centers, 350 of which are in the WB and 121 in GS according to 2010 statistics. The same statistics reveal that there are 6 museums in the WB and GS, 15 theatres, 65 public libraries and 45 local radio and television stations. Figures for 2011 show that in 95% of Palestinian households, at least one member possessed a mobile phone, 93.9% owned TV satellite dishes, and 50.9% had computers while 30.4% had access to the internet.⁴⁷

It is important to remember here that the Palestinians are people living under occupation and suffering the destruction of their infrastructure and the inability to develop their capacities, except within the conditions set by the occupation authorities. Based on this context, the above figures highlight the keenness of the Palestinian people to learn and achieve including through media and cultural exchange. The figures also reveal Palestinian success in the educational battle of wills within such a destructive, frustrating environment.

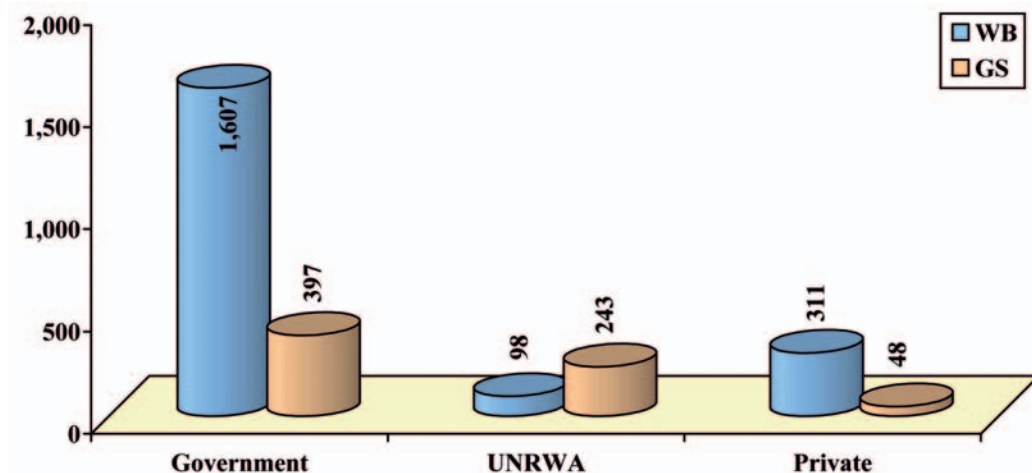
2. Basic and Secondary Education

There were 2,704 Palestinian schools covering basic (elementary and intermediate) and secondary education in the academic year 2011/2012. These included 2,016 schools or 74.6% in the WB and 688 schools or 25.4% in the GS. It is noted that most government schools are in the WB which is home to 1,607 schools comprising 80.2% of government schools compared to 397 schools in the GS comprising 19.8%. The deficiency in schools in the GS is relatively compensated for by the presence of UNRWA-run schools that amount to 243 schools compared to 98 similar schools in the WB.

Table 28/7: Basic and Secondary Schools in the WB and GS by Supervising Authority 2007/2008–2011/2012⁴⁸

Year	Region	Government	UNRWA	Private	Total
2007/2008	WB	1,460	95	254	1,809
	GS	373	214	34	621
	WB & GS	1,833	309	288	2,430
2008/2009	WB	1,485	94	269	1,848
	GS	386	221	33	640
	WB & GS	1,871	315	302	2,488
2009/2010	WB	1,534	97	286	1,917
	GS	387	228	45	660
	WB & GS	1,921	325	331	2,577
2010/2011	WB	1,573	98	304	1,975
	GS	399	238	40	677
	WB & GS	1,972	336	344	2,652
2011/2012	WB	1,607	98	311	2,016
	GS	397	243	48	688
	WB & GS	2,004	341	359	2,704

Basic and Secondary Schools in the WB and GS by Supervising Authority 2011/2012



Taking into consideration the fact that there are 2.615 million people in the WB, compared to 1.616 million in the GS (61.8% in the WB and 38.2% in GS), the number of schools in the WB is higher than the number of schools in GS when compared to their populations. This is probably because the population in the WB is distributed over a larger area of land and among more cities and villages, and thus needs more schools. The higher number of UNRWA schools in the GS reflects the high level of poverty suffered by most of the population in the Strip (see tables 1/7 and 28/7).

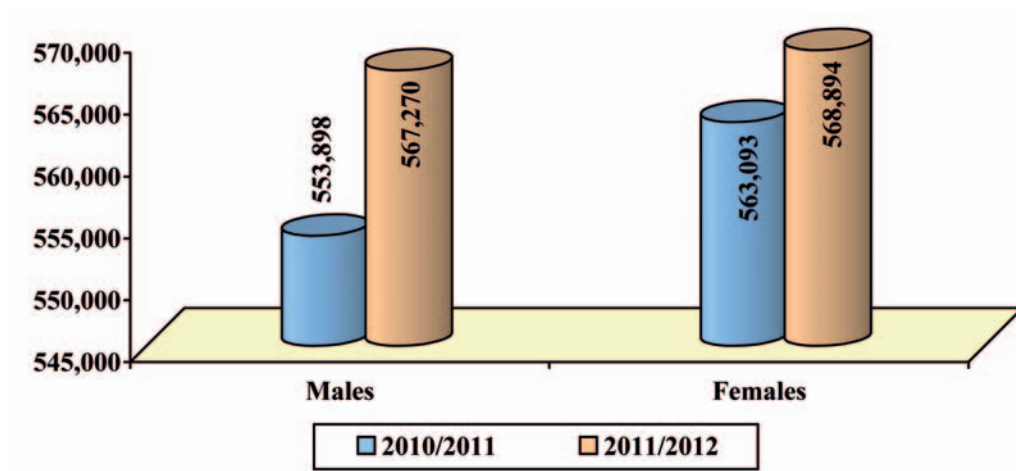
There were around 1.136 million students in basic and secondary schools in the academic year 2011/2012, including 567 thousand males and 569 thousand females, with a 1.7% increase when compared to 2010/2011. The number of teachers in these schools amounted to 61,423 in 2011/2012 compared to 58,901 in 2010/2011. Teachers included 25,994 males and 35,429 females in 2011/2012 compared to 25,203 males and 33,698 females in 2010/2011. There were an almost equal number of male and female student sections amounting to around 15 thousand sections for each in 2011/2012 whereas mixed sections for the same academic year reached 7,200.

Table 29/7: Number of Schools, Students, Teachers and Sections in the WB and GS by Sex 2010/2011–2011/2012⁴⁹

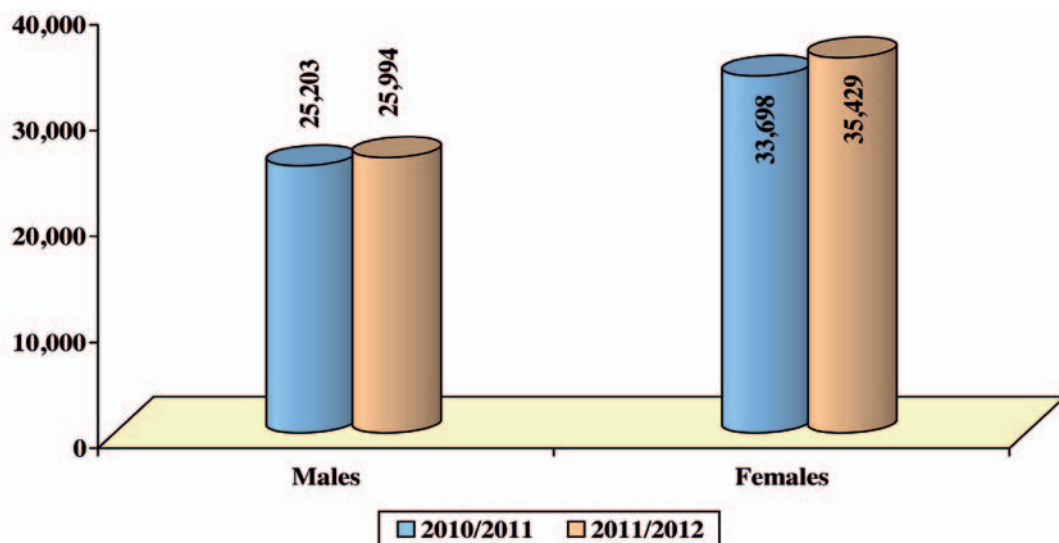
Sex	Schools		Students		Teachers*		Sections	
	2010/2011	2011/2012	2010/2011	2011/2012	2010/2011	2011/2012	2010/2011	2011/2012
Males	966	980	553,898	567,270	25,203	25,994	14,627	14,926
Females	899	920	563,093	568,894	33,698	35,429	14,648	14,908
Mixed	787	804					7,045	7,200
Total	2,652	2,704	1,116,991	1,136,164	58,901	61,423	36,320	37,034

* Teachers: All teaching & non-teaching staff in school except employees & janitors.

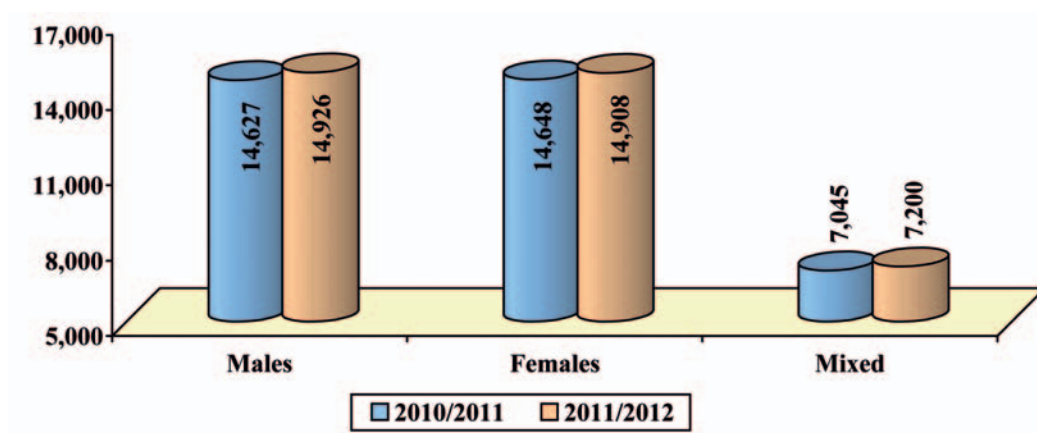
Number of Students in the WB and GS by Sex 2010/2011–2011/2012



Number of Teachers in the WB and GS by Sex 2010/2011–2011/2012



Number of Sections in the WB and GS by Sex 2010/2011–2011/2012



According to 2011/2012 reports, the 2,004 government schools comprised 74.1% of total schools in the WB and GS. The 770 thousand students enrolled in these schools comprised 67.7% of total students in the WB and GS. There were 43 thousand teachers in government schools, comprising 69.9% of total teachers in the WB and GS. The number of sections reached 25,322 thus comprising 68.4% of total sections in the WB and GS. These indicators show that education by the government comprises more than two thirds of the educational process in basic and secondary schools. If we take into account the UNRWA-run schools, we notice that most students depend on low-costing education provided by these schools compared to limited number of students seeking private education (see tables 29/7 and 30/7).

Table 30/7: Number of Schools, Students, Teachers and Sections in Government Schools in the WB and GS 2007/2008–2011/2012⁵⁰

Year	Schools	Students	Teachers*	Sections
2007/2008	1,833	766,730	38,134	23,492
2008/2009	1,871	771,864	21,860**	-
2009/2010	1,921	766,190	22,952**	-
2010/2011	1,972	766,234	42,339	25,223
2011/2012	2,004	769,694	42,928	25,322

* Teachers: All teaching & non-teaching staff in school except employees & janitors.

** Data includes only the WB.

3. University Education

There are many Palestinian universities providing traditional education in the WB and GS. The Islamic University of Gaza is considered the largest among these universities with 26,182 students enrolled in 2010/2011. It is followed by An-Najah National University in Nablus with 20,214 students, then Al Aqsa University in Gaza with 17,991 students. There were 122,482 students in the same academic year in all Palestinian universities with 62,641 students in the WB and 59,841 students in the GS. This means that students in GS comprise around 48.9% of total Palestinian students.

Besides, female students receiving traditional university education outnumbered their male counterparts (70,440 compared to 52,042 in 2010/2011). Thus, female students comprised 57.5% of total students compared to 42.5% for their male peers. This phenomenon is no more deemed strange in the Arab world and while there is no room to study it here, it shows in some of its aspects the success of the Palestinian woman in assuming her position side by side with her male peers. It also shows that Palestinian female students have better chances to finish their university education while male students generally have to leave school and join the job market to help their families with the struggle to afford the costs of living.

Table 31/7: Number of Students in Traditional Universities in the WB and GS by Sex 2010/2011⁵¹

University	Enrolled students		
	Males	Females	Total
Al Azhar/ Gaza	7,345	7,228	14,573
Islamic/ Gaza	10,195	15,987	26,182
Al Aqsa/ Gaza	5,559	12,432	17,991
Hebron	1,841	4,700	6,541
Palestine Polytechnic/ Bethlehem	1,815	1,425	3,240
Bethlehem	793	2,226	3,019
Al Quds	6,086	5,722	11,808
Birzeit	3,645	5,563	9,208
An-Najah National	8,976	11,238	20,214
The Arab American	3,047	2,315	5,362
Palestine Technical / Tulkarem- Khadoury	1,784	1,465	3,249
Palestine/ Gaza	956	139	1,095
Total	52,042	70,440	122,482

Worthy of mention is that male faculty members outnumbered their female counterparts; 5,244 (81.4%) in 2010/2011 compared to 1,198 females (18.6%). This means that it is still too early to see the high average of female students achieved among faculty members, noting that the number of faculty members includes all professors in universities and colleges other than community colleges. Still, there is a discrepancy between the number of females who graduate from university and those who work after graduation, which explains the higher number of males in the job market.⁵²

Alquds Open University provided open education for 63,911 students in the WB and GS in 2010/2011 including 24,863 males and 39,048 females. This university has 17 centers in the WB and 5 in the GS.⁵³

Table 32/7: Number of Students Seeking Open Education in the WB and GS by Sex 2010/2011⁵⁴

University	Enrolled students		
	Males	Females	Total
Alquds Open University	24,863	39,048	63,911

4. University and Community Colleges

There are 35 university and community colleges in the WB and GS providing education for 27,580 students based on 2010/2011 figures. Among these are 14 college universities attended by around 15 thousand students who can receive a bachelor's degree upon completion of their studies. In addition, there are 21 community colleges including 12,600 students and providing intermediate diploma.

Table 33/7: Number of Students in University and Community Colleges in the WB and GS by Sex 2010/2011⁵⁵

Colleges	Number	Enrolled students		
		Males	Females	Total
University	14	7,596	7,400	14,996
Community	21	7,474	5,110	12,584
Total	35	15,070	12,510	27,580

Conclusion

The Palestinian people are young, with high population growth rate compared to other populations around the world. However, more than half of these people still live outside historic Palestine and the number of Palestinian refugees (at home and abroad) is slightly more than two-thirds of the Palestinian people, thus representing one of the biggest tragedies in modern and contemporary history. The Palestinian people, who are growing more resilient on their rights, land and fundamental principles, will outnumber Jews in historic Palestine within a few years. This will be a message to the Zionist project, exposing its ongoing failure to impose its dreams while the Palestinian people are still steadfast in their land. Nonetheless, this should not make us forget the achievements of the Zionist project and the challenges faced by the Palestinian people and by the Arab and Muslim nations.

Despite the relative improvement in Palestinian economic performance, it still suffers the oppressive policies of an Israeli occupation that controls its exports and imports through blockade, closure of borders and trade outlets, roadblocks, the Separation Wall and all the other myriad means to suffocate the Palestinian economy. Thus, human and physical Palestinian potential is not appropriately employed, leading to a huge economic imbalance between the Israeli and Palestinian sides. Thus, the GDP in Israel is 38 folds that of the Palestinian side, while the Israeli GDP per capita exceeds the Palestinian GDP per capita by 19 fold.

Educational indicators emphasize the Palestinian people's aspiration for learning despite their suffering under the occupation. These indicators show that the Palestinian people are ahead of most Arab countries in literacy as well as having a culture of interest in higher education.

The Palestinian people have huge capacities and energies that Israel has always sought to suppress and marginalize. They are also victims of the internal Palestinian schism. Accordingly, the unity of the Palestinian people under one umbrella and one national program which defines the priorities of the nation, remains a vital need.

Endnotes

- ¹ PCBS estimated the number of Palestinians at the end of 2009 at 10.873 million. According to natural growth population rates (2.4%), the number of Palestinians was supposed to amount to 11.134 million at the end of 2010. However, it seems that the PCBS has re-estimated the number of Palestinians at the end of 2010 at around 10.972 million. Accordingly, the PCBS assumed that Palestinians worldwide have increased by 2.3% to reach 11.224 million at the end of 2011. See PCBS, *al-Filastiniyyun fi Nihayat 'Am 2009* (Palestinians at the End of Year 2009) (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2009), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book1625.pdf; and PCBS, *al-Filastiniyyun fi Nihayat 'Am 2010* (Palestinians at the End of Year 2010) (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2010), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book1725.pdf
- ² See PCBS, *al-Filastiniyyun fi Nihayat 'Am 2011* (Palestinians at the End of Year 2011) (Ramallah: PCBS, December 2011), http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_PCBS/Downloads/book1815.pdf
- ³ See *Ibid.*
- ⁴ See *Ibid.*
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
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This Report

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12 is the seventh in a series of annual resourceful academic studies. It 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 near future. This Report has become a basic reference on Palestinian studies, it is a must read for all those concerned.

An outstanding team of 12 academics and experts contributed to this Report in seven chapters. They covered the internal Palestinian situation, the Israeli scene and the Israeli-Palestinian relations, the Arab, Muslim and international stances towards the Palestinian issue. This Report focuses also on the issue of Jerusalem and the holy sites, and the suffering of man and land under the Israeli occupation. Besides, the demographic, economic and education indicators are also studied and analyzed.

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2011/12



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