

ILLUSIONS

in the Palestinian Politics



Prof. Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh



Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations

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Designed by:

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List of Abbreviations

DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DFLP-GC	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine–General Command
GS	Gaza Strip
MB	Muslim Brothers
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCC	Palestinian Central Council
PFL	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PIJ	Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestine National Council
UN	United Nations
UNSC	UN Security Council
US	United States of America
WB	West Bank

Introduction

There are widespread literatures and concepts in the Palestinian political, media, scientific and cultural realms that promote visions and perceptions whose implementation seems to be an illusion that has no experimental or systematic scientific reading bases.

To expose these illusions and their errors, the author published during the period 25/6–14/11/2021 a series of eight articles on the Arabi21 website, explaining what these illusions may cause; misconceptions, miscalculations, loss of direction, dilemmas in paths and outcomes, failure in decision-making, and waste of time, efforts and capabilities.

These illusions were concisely discussed, identifying their main ideas and critiquing their concepts, terms and paths. The aim is to reach the widest possible audience interested in the Palestine issue, with plain and simple language devoid of prolonged discussions. Although what's written is based on scientific, methodological and objective foundations, and on documented information, however, since this book is more of an essay-like book, there is no referencing. At the same time, however, this book includes summaries based on hundreds of studies and books, and on tens of years of research and preoccupation with the Palestine issue.

A number of honorable figures have contacted the author, suggesting to gather these articles in one booklet, to complete the whole picture of the illusions, and make them available to those who missed reading them and facilitate their circulation among interested readers. Before publishing, prior consent from Arabi21 was obtained.

This booklet is originally a series of articles that were not meant to be published in a book. Therefore, the author had to edit the texts, add some important and necessary information, rearrange the numbering of the illusions, so that they can be read in a systematic, logical sequence as much as possible. Another illusion—the ninth—was added to the original 15 illusions, it is the seventh one, hence, their total is sixteen illusions.

Mohsen Mohammed Saleh
February 2022



First Illusion

Relying on International Legitimacy to Get Rid of Occupation

The international legitimacy, in general, is often useful, yet what is meant here is that it cannot be relied upon to wrest Palestinian rights from Israel, and compel it to withdraw from occupied Palestine.

This is an illusion upon which the advocates of a peaceful settlement with Israel rely. They consider it as the most appropriate way to coerce the Israelis to withdraw from the 1967 occupied Palestine (West Bank (WB) and Gaza Strip (GS)), and to establish an independent Palestinian state there. The leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority (PA) (Fatah leadership) even made the recognition of this “legitimacy” a condition for Hamas, Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (PIJ) and the resistance forces to join the PLO, and recently made it a condition for the resumption of Palestinian reconciliation. It is as if this “legitimacy” and its decisions represent a magical solution to the crisis of the Palestinian national project when, in fact, chasing its mirage is one of the causes of the crisis of this project.

”International legitimacy” is the set of principles and laws that govern and direct international relations, especially through the United Nations (UN) and its bodies, or through international norms, treaties and agreements.

However, the above should not indicate that international action is not required; rather, work in the international environment and in the UN bodies and platforms is a duty and an obligation. Moreover, continuing to communicate with international systems and the peoples of the world, and advocating the Palestine issue worldwide, are necessities in political action that would besiege the Zionist project and prevent its support. Nevertheless, this remains a catalyst to the broader liberation project and a contributor to the accumulation of achievements. It is of limited impact (in comparison to the resistance) that cannot be considered a basis for changing balances of power or restoring rights.

The essence of this illusion and its danger lie in the fact that when it comes to Palestine and, after more than 70 years of experience, “international legitimacy”

does not have the ability, the will, or even the real desire to enforce its decisions and have Israel commit to them, especially when these decisions do not comply with the Zionist project or serve its orientation. Therefore, the continuation of betting on it is considered an illusion, a form of self-deception, and a deception of the Palestinian masses and all those concerned with the Palestine issue.

The current “international legitimacy” is a continuation of the system created after World War II (1939–1945) by the victorious countries seeking to legitimize the results of the war and the ensuing landscape. Thus, it showed the connection between “power” and “legitimacy,” and the quest of the powerful to have legal and moral bases. It is when the doctrine of “might is right” prevails!

This is clear when international resolutions cannot be enforced unless there is a decision by the UN Security Council (UNSC), specifically under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The UNSC itself is subject (from 1945 until now) to the veto of its five permanent members (US, Russia, Britain, France and China), and no decision can be issued should one of them opposes it. Knowing the extent of the strategic relationship between the Western great powers and the Zionist project, and the strength of the Jewish-Zionist-Israeli lobby there, makes us realize the extent of the illusion we pin our hope on.

History has shown that this “legitimacy” was in the interest of the major powers, and that it has failed to achieve the minimum level of justice, and realize the rights of those whose interests are in conflict with the interests of any of these countries, especially when it comes to the Arab and Muslim world, particularly Palestine. This applies to the issue of Kashmir, the Muslims of Burma (Myanmar), the Muslims of China (specifically the Uyghurs), the Muslims of the Caucasus (Chechnya...), Bosnia, the US occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, the selective sanctions on Libya, Sudan and Iran. It also applies to the approach of these major powers to the “Arab Spring” countries, when they covered up the suppression of peoples or stayed silent on regional and international interventions that supported dictatorships or choices contrary to the will of peoples.

History has shown that the US has blocked most (if not all) UNSC resolutions critical of Israel or demanding it to take measures for the benefit of the Palestinian people. It vetoed 44 UNSC resolutions regarding Palestine and other Israeli aggressions, out of total 82 resolutions it vetoed throughout the history of the UN, where the rest were related to other countries and issues. In addition, the

UN General Assembly issued about 550 resolutions in favor of Palestine, none whatsoever was implemented, including the resolution on the right of return of Palestinian refugees to the occupied territories, from which they were expelled in 1948, and which has been reaffirmed about 120 times in various forms over a period of more than 70 years.

Indeed, it is very surprising, and a major sin in national action, that an influential Palestinian party dominating the Palestinian “official” situation, requires the resistance factions to abide by the so-called “international legitimacy” as a prelude to reconciliation or to putting the Palestinian political house in order. By this, it would contribute to the attempts of subduing the Palestinian will, while dragging the resistance factions into the “quagmire” it has embroiled itself and its people, in addition it would be continuing to sell illusions to Palestinians.



Second Illusion

The Establishment of an Independent Palestinian State in WB and GS via a Peace Process “Two-State Solution”

It is the illusion on the basis of which the Oslo Accords were signed and the PA was established. It is the slogan adopted by the Arab regimes over the past 40 years, particularly since the initiative of the then Crown Prince Fahd ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz of Saudi Arabia 1982; then the initiative of Crown Prince ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz 2002 (aka the Saudi Initiative). This illusion has become the norm in international positions (the two-state solution). This illusion was built on the wrong premise that if the Palestinians recognized Israel and its “right” to exist on 77% of the historic land of Palestine, it will withdraw from the land occupied in 1967 (WB and GS), and allow the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, including East Jerusalem.

The fact is the peace process was designed and agreed upon in Oslo, without an Israeli firm commitment to the right of the Palestinian people to establish this independent state, without a clear deadline for the withdrawal from WB and GS, and without the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. It was agreed on without an Israeli recognition of the right of return of Palestinian refugees, or an Israeli commitment to withdraw from East Jerusalem, not even a commitment to stop settlement building and the Judaization programs in the territories occupied in 1967.

Actually, over the past 27 years, Israel has managed the peace process and used it as a cover for further Judaization and settlement expansion, especially in Jerusalem and the rest of WB. It has made the PA a functional entity that serves its purposes and suppresses resistance forces, and has used the peace process to legitimize itself on the Arab, Islamic and international levels and to implement its normalization plans in the region, so that it would be able to close the Palestinian dossier according to its standards and requirements.

It seems that the two-state solution and the establishment of a Palestinian state similar to the story of a man who bought a pizza, but was surprised by a “thug” who took it and began to eat it. The man tried to get it back but failed.

The neighborhood leaders, prominent figures and the big “thugs” intervened, however, those were in agreement with the thief, who serves their interests and works under their auspices. It was agreed that a “peaceful” negotiation would take place between the two parties to reach a solution, while one of the conditions of sitting at the negotiating table was that the thief continues eating the pizza, while the owner is prohibited from using any “violent” means to recover what is left of it. Moreover, the owner has to prove his “good will” by preventing any person or party on his side from forcing the thief to stop eating the pizza, otherwise, he has to bear with the consequences. When the thief finished eating the pizza, the owner expressed his dissatisfaction with the injustice done to him, although he had agreed, before negotiations, to give up three-quarters of the pizza slices the thief had eaten. The neighborhood and its dignitaries sympathized with the pizza owner, because he demanded his right, for his “good behavior” and for the generous concessions he made. As for the senior “thugs,” they were relieved that their colleague could steal and that they “legitimized” the theft. They secretly laughed at the owner’s stupidity and cowardice, and how he was easily manipulated; However, they consoled the man by praising his wisdom and keenness for “peace,” and for not being a “terrorist.”

From the beginning, there was no real, serious international desire, after the 1948 war, to establish a Palestinian state on what was left of Palestine. All Israeli “peaceful” initiatives do not adopt the idea of a fully sovereign Palestinian state in WB and GS; and most of them stem from the Yigal Allon plan in 1967, and do not exceed it, except in some adaptations commensurate with the developments. They are based on the assumption that the eastern borders of Israel are its borders with Jordan, including the eastern borders of WB, and a line that cuts the Dead Sea in the middle, in addition to the annexation of the western regions of the Jordan Valley and East Jerusalem, and the establishment of a self-governing body for the Palestinians.

For more than 50 years, the United States of America (US) has maintained its role as the main international player in the Palestinian dossier. Despite its “nominal” commitment to a two-state solution, the US, over the past years, has provided international cover for Israel to build facts on the ground, and continue with its settlement building and Judaization plans. As a result, the two-state solution was

practically “emptied” out of its content. Furthermore, the US has prevented any international pressure to force Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories in 1967, implement the two-state solution, stop its aggression against the land and people, or halt the settlement and Judaization plans and the assaults against holy sites. It was always ready to veto the Security Council to the slightest degree of condemnation of Israeli practices. This has practically provided Israel with an ideal environment to destroy the two-state solution.

The US has played the role of the senior “thug,” who gave the right and freedom to the thief to eat the “pizza.” It also monopolized the role of the “sponsor” of the peace process, and the mediator who wastes time until the Israelis implement their vision on the ground. As for the other big and small countries, they did not dare to cross the lines drawn by the US. Their agreement to the two-state solution was characterized by weakness and inability, or indifference and lack of seriousness, in finding any effective dynamics to impose this solution within the peace process. This is confirmed by the behavior of the Quartet, the BRICS countries (Russia, China, India, Brazil and South Africa) and others over the past years.

The mentality that runs Israel according to the Zionist ideology still does not believe in an independent Palestinian state, west of the Jordan River. The discourse of most Israeli parties do not go beyond the idea of establishing a demilitarized Palestinian entity under Israeli hegemony, where it would manage the people, while the Israelis live in a “clean colonialism” that dominates the land, what is above it and what is below it, and its entrances and exits.

This Zionist vision will not be changed by Palestinian, Arab, Islamic or international “good behavior,” rather, (as historic experience has shown) by armed resistance that would make Israel lose its pillars of security, economy and stability and force it to withdraw under the clatter of arms.

Third Illusion

The One State Solution

The illusion that we are talking about here is related to the so-called dismantling of the Zionist apartheid regime by way of political struggle. We are not talking here about the liberation of Palestine and the imposition of the will of the Palestinian people on their land, by having an independent state, or by being united with the Arab and Muslim *Ummah* (Muslim nation), for this is not an illusion, it is rather a right that will be taken back, in the short or the long term.

Talking about the “one state” option as an illusion in Palestinian politics, may be disturbing to many Palestinians, because it is being marketed as the best option after the fall of the “two-state solution” option, which we are also convinced that it has fallen, and we have previously discussed. Many Palestinians of the 1948 occupied territories may consider the “one state” option an acceptable one, while facing an Israeli racist state, and it is also acceptable to the international landscape, since it is close to the notion of dismantling an “apartheid” regime, similar to what has happened in South Africa, and since it is considered the last racist entity in the international landscape.

Such a call has a historical basis, for throughout the British occupation period, 1918–1948, the Palestinian struggle had focused on the idea of a single state, and in 1968, the Fatah movement brought up the idea again, when it called for a single democratic secular state in which Muslims, Christians and Jews are equal; and it was supported by other Palestinian factions.

The advocates of a “one state” differ on its definition, some of them define it as a bi-national state, in which Arabs and Jews agree to share power, without one party dominating the other; whereas most of them define it as a secular democratic state, treating every citizen as equal before the law, regardless of their religious or ethnic background.

Some advocates of the two-state solution (as did a number of leaders of the PA) have threatened to adopt the one-state solution, may be to put pressure on Israel and push it to pursue seriously the two-state solution.

To argue that during the British occupation (before 1948), there were calls for a one-state solution, it is methodologically and objectively misplaced. For the

Palestinian people were still in their land and not displaced yet. And according to UN regulations and after the end of the British Mandate, they had the right to exercise the right to self-determination. At that time, they still owned more than 94% of the land, and constituted more than 68% of the population. Whereas, now that Israel is established on about 77% of Palestinian land; after expelling and displacing about 83% (more than 800 thousand) of the Palestinians there, the Palestinian national project has turned into a liberation project. It is not a project of just having equal rights with the occupying colonialists, who have usurped the land and displaced its original inhabitants.

Second, arguing that the failure of the two-state solution is an excuse to adopt the one-state solution, after the Israelis completed the occupation of Palestine, does not actually highlight the attractiveness or practicality of the idea, rather, it shows the extent of arrogance, audacity, and how far the Israelis may go in imposing their concepts, which prevented reaching any of the “compromises.” The Palestinians and Arabs did not resort to the two-state solution until they exhausted all the means of a one-state solution, and were certain of the absolute Israeli rejection of it. For the one-state solution simply means ending and dismantling the Zionist project, and Israel’s approval means putting a “mercy bullet” into its head. If the two-state solution is acceptable in varying degrees to significant Israeli-Zionist segments; the one-state solution finds no room or serious consideration in any of the Israeli-Zionist circles. Therefore, if we assume, for the sake of argument, that the two-state solution is “possible,” the two-state solution to the Israeli settler community is “impossible”; and when the two-state solution is impossible, the one-state solution becomes even more impossible. Perhaps when the Israelis find themselves, under the pressure of the resistance action, forced to resort to difficult choices, they will prefer hundred times the two-state solution to the one-state solution. This way, their Zionist project would be preserved, they would keep control of most of the land and of the Jewish identity of their state, and they will maintain their international recognition. In general, if the supposed Israeli-Jewish partner is absent in the “one-state” solution, it would turn into an illusion, a mirage and wishful thinking.

Third, as for the talk about dismantling the relationship between the Jews and Zionism in Israel, it might seem logical at first, however, the experience of those

who spread this idea for the past hundred years, especially the leftist movements, has proven its failure... Rather, evidence has showed increasing religious, national and racist extremism among Israelis, especially in the past 20 years.

Experience has shown that this kind of disengagement does not materialize unless there are resistance operations and effective uprisings that make Israel lose two pillars of its occupation (the security and the economy), plunge it into a crisis of searching for alternatives and turn its survival into an unbearable costly process and burden. Now that Israel thrives in the midst of a weak, disintegrated, backward, and normalized Arab-Islamic environment, and the Israelis live with an annual income equal to that of Europeans... All attempts at persuasion and all the poems of satire, love and hope cannot affect Israel a bit.

Fourth, the enticement of the “one-state” solution to the international community, similar to what had happened in South Africa, doesn’t seem to be sufficient. The major Western powers that have been supporting and sponsoring Israel, consider it a front line in the midst of the Arab and Muslim world, which implements their strategic objectives of controlling the region, keeping it weak, backwards and fragmented, and making it a market for their products. Therefore, over the past decades and throughout the different US administrations and presidents, the US has always considered Israel the cornerstone of its Middle East policy. These powers realize that the “Jewish-Zionist” nature of Israel is a prerequisite for its survival, and they don’t consider it a racist regime, given the religious and cultural backgrounds of many decision makers, especially those with Protestant background. If these forces adopt the two-state solution, then their transition to adopt the one-state solution becomes more difficult, unless Israel becomes a heavy burden to them and its harm becomes greater than its benefits, and this is mainly related to the revival of the region, recovery of its points of strength and the escalation of resistance action in Palestine.

Furthermore, the two-state solution is still accepted by most countries, where 137 of them officially recognize the State of Palestine; in addition to many other countries that adopt this solution, but are waiting for the success of the peace process. If this is the case for the two-state solution that failed and was bypassed by Israel, which acts as a “state above the law” and does not care for international pressure, then what about the “one-state” solution, which will require a different kind of journey? Palestinians may find themselves “after a long journey” that they have been running after a mirage.

In any case, we have previously warned against falling into the illusion of “international legitimacy,” which cannot be counted on to regain the rights and liberate the land, especially in the Palestinian case.

Fifth, the advocates of one-state solution do not answer questions about the identity of the land and the people in Palestine after the establishment of this state. Will it return to its Arab Muslim character? Do all Jewish settlers, who came just because of their religion (as Jews), over more than a hundred years, from all parts of the world, have the right to retain the right to “Palestinian” citizenship?! Are those who came by force of arms, under the cover of occupation and against the will of the Palestinian people and the Arab and Muslim *Ummah*, entitled to take that citizenship? On what bases do the advocates of one state agree on giving this right to the occupying settlers?!

Some may argue that when a single state is formed and the Zionist project fails, many Israelis would want to return to their original countries, therefore, they would “tactically” agree to the idea of a single state... However, it is a sort of political “naivety,” if one would think that the Israelis are not fully aware of these consequences.

Sixth, the call for one state may reflect negatively on the resistance action against Israel, turning the conflict into a legal, political and rights battle, while avoiding the resistance action, its costs and prices. Whereas evidence on the grounds has shown that all forms of resistance, especially armed ones, are the one qualified for dismantling the relationship between the Jews and Zionism in Israel.

Seventh, the call for a one state solution may provide an unintended “legitimization” of the occupation of WB, which will be included in the one-state project. This “legitimization” would be also the result of the “realistic” dealing with the Israeli occupation. In the meantime, Israel continues its systematic and organized Judaization of the land and the people, leaving those advocates to waste their time and efforts, as their comrades—the two-state advocates—did in the past 50 years.

Eighth, and finally, some call for a single state so that the Israelis would not claim that the advocates of the liberation project want to “throw the Jews into the sea”; which is definitely a false claim. In short, the liberation project is a

civilized, humane and revival project, whose advocates are concerned with the return of rights to the lands' owners, the return of Palestine to its people, and achieving justice for every human being, regardless of his/ her religion, sect, nationality and race. However, they are not obliged to offer free promises and concessions in advance to those who destroyed Palestine, displaced its people, and plundered its wealth. Furthermore, they should not put themselves under the pressure of searching for solutions to the Zionist project and the consequences of its occupation, for which only Israel should bear such responsibility.

It is important to note here that the Zionists themselves do not justify to the world how they actually threw the Palestinian people during the 1948 war into the sea and scattered them all over the globe; and how they have committed crimes over the past 70 years, without having any conscience? Rather they have the impudence and audacity to refuse the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their land, even though the whole world stands with them in this right. If they respect the minimum standards of humanity, then they should stop raising the "scarecrow" of the future, and find a solution to some of what they have already committed against the people of Palestine, and accept the natural and self-evident right of return of Palestinian refugees.

The idea of one-state solution will remain tempting and logical for many; however, in the methodological and objective context, it remains a mere hypothesis, and a propaganda and marketing that cannot be built on; unless what is meant by the one-state solution is the liberation of Palestine, and the establishment of one state, according to the will of the Palestinian people and the Arab and Muslim *Ummah*.

Therefore, sooner or later, the Palestinians, Arabs, Muslims and all the free people across the globe will return to the cornerstone of the liberation project; the resistance.

Fourth Illusion

Combining the PA, with its Current Structure, and the Armed Resistance under Occupation

Israel will not allow the establishment of a Palestinian authority that espouses armed resistance or provides it with a cover, even if this resistance expresses the will of the Palestinian people and wins a landslide victory in legislative and presidential elections.

The Israeli aggressive occupation is fighting you over the land and its identity, the people and their identity. It has a systematic and gradual strategic program for controlling and changing. It is neither a charity, nor “a democracy that respects human rights,” especially when it comes to the land of Palestine and the Palestinian people. The Israeli occupation has adapted the functional structure of the PA to serve these goals. It certainly won’t let you mobilize, take advantage of institutional and material capabilities and adopt resistance action to get rid of it.

Therefore, when Hamas won the 2006 elections and formed its government, Israel launched military campaigns, carried out assassinations, and committed the massacre of the Shati’ Refugee Camp, either to subjugate it or to force it to respond militarily. Hamas responded in June 2006 militarily with Operation Dissipating Illusion (dubbed by Israel Operation Summer Rains), proving that it won’t join the peace process. In return, Israel launched massive military and arrest campaigns that paralyzed Hamas’s government in WB as well as the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). After what was experienced in the past 16 years, there is no prospect for a government that embraces armed resistance to lead the government in WB. As for why Hamas has succeeded in GS, it is due to the complete Israeli withdrawal from the Strip, besieging it only from the outside, with the resistance forces developing their capabilities to defend the Strip against Israeli aggression.

There is still one issue that can be discussed, the possibility of redefining and adapting the PA and its institutional structures in WB, in line with an environment of a people facing an occupation. These structures must be formed in a way that would solidify the Palestinian steadfastness under occupation, get rid of Israeli economic, political, social, educational and cultural hegemony/ dominance, and

eliminate security cooperation and coordination. The contact with Israel must only be linked to necessities and the demands of living requirements. At this point, this authority would focus on serving the Palestinian people, while being “officially” neutral to the resistance, in case it can’t adopt it or provide it with a cover. If the Israelis took direct control of any of the services, then they would bear its responsibilities as an occupying power, while the resistance would continue. That way, the Palestinians would turn any potential loss of any of their institutions into more costs and burdens on Israel. In the sense that institutional work under occupation is a kind of struggle (Educational, economic, cultural, health...), where any loss should quicken the pace of the struggle and reveal the ugly face of occupation.

As for Hamas and the resistance forces, if they want to enter the legislative elections as a compulsory crossing towards Palestinian legitimacy (Although this idea is excluded now, and it is closer to a hypothetical case, especially after ‘Abbas, on 29/4/2021, had disrupted the elections), they clearly cannot bet on a government run by the resistance and at the same time designed to serve the occupation. Therefore, redefining the authority and adapting it nationally is also a mandatory path. However, such a change for the Israelis would make the authority lose the justification for its existence, hence will use all possible tools to subdue it. That is, if we assume, for the sake of argument, that the resistance will control the authority directly in WB, or via those who represent their platform, it will necessarily turn it into a state of conflict with the occupation and its allies who control the land, the infrastructure, the Authority’s financial resources, the exports and the imports, the movement of individuals, transportation, and the institutions. Thus, either the authority adapts to the resistance program, or the resistance adapts (albeit to one degree or another) to the demands of the occupation; or the authority or a number of its institutions would collapse or get disrupted.

Fifth Illusion

Having an Independent Palestinian Decision-Making Under the Occupation

Perhaps the mere idea of discussing this notion was unlikely before the Oslo Accords, and the thought of convening a Palestine National Council (PNC) or a Palestinian Central Council (PCC) or the meeting of the Executive Committee under occupation was more like a stupid and rude joke. Throughout the 1967–1993 period, the PLO did not only hold its PNC meetings abroad, rather, it would exclude the Palestinians inside (WB, GS and the 1948 territories) from the quorum. In the late 1970s, the PLO included about 100 members from inside Palestine in the PNC membership. They were increased later to 180, and their names remained undisclosed fearing for their safety, and they were not counted in the quorum so that the occupation would not prevent a number of its members from attending and disrupt the PNC work.

The Fatah movement has always boasted and emphasized the independence of Palestinian decision-making; however, political practice after the Oslo Accords has disrupted the PLO and its institutions. When the PLO leadership (Fatah leadership) wanted to hold meetings of the representative institutions of the PLO, it held them under the occupation. Consequently, the occupation has become the one who gives permission (albeit implicitly) to hold the meetings of the PNC, PCC or the Executive Committee... Whenever it wants, it can thwart and disrupt these meetings, arrest and deport whomever it wants from the members, or prevent their entry or exit. Moreover, the Palestinians abroad were seriously marginalized (They are more than half of the Palestinian people). In addition, and in the absence of the Palestinian resistance factions, specifically Hamas and PIJ, whose one of their reasons was holding the meetings under occupation.

The Palestinian decision will be free and independent, only if the occupation has no effect on its inputs and outputs, and its meetings and the member participation. The occupation should not be the side that imposes its agenda on resistance movements that want to get rid of it. Therefore, meetings related to decision-making must be held outside the occupied territories, otherwise it is kind of quibbling and self-deception; or a surrender to the will of the occupation.

Sixth Illusion

Letting the National Project be Led by a Leadership That is Conceding the Homeland!!

This is one of the wonders of Palestinian history and the Palestinian experience.

This leadership that has “officially” relinquished more than three-quarters of Palestine in the Oslo Accords, and “legitimized” the move in “fabricated” PNC meetings in 1996 and 1998; has miserably managed the “battle” of establishing the Palestinian state over what was left of Palestine. It has agreed on being demilitarized, without an army, and by exchanging lands. Many of its leaders also talk, in their private meetings, about eventually giving up the right of return of the Palestinian refugees, since it is a basic Israeli requirement for the establishment of the state.

This leadership adhered neither to the Ten Point Program that allows it to establish the “combating” PA over any liberated part of Palestine; nor to the “interim program” or its requirements. It has proved that it can be pressured, and Israel has used the peace process as a cover to Judaize what remained of Palestine. This leadership did not consult the Palestinian people about its concessions, and has ignored the right of the Arab and Muslim nation—as well as the right of future generations—to the holy and blessed land of Palestine.

This leadership has failed to maintain the most prominent fundamentals of the Palestine issue, and (on top of that) has failed in the “interim program,” in addition, it has failed to manage the “negotiations” over what remains of Palestine and agreed to be a “service entity” that serves Israel. Therefore, it is not qualified to lead a national project aimed to liberate Palestine.

Seventh Illusion

Leading the National Project with a Leadership That Disrespects Institutional Work

The Palestinian revolution is facing a tyrannical settler colonial power backed by global forces. It also suffers a weak, backward, fragmented and antagonistic (Arab and Muslim) strategic environment. Therefore, the revolution is most in need of all potentials and capabilities, and it needs to organize its limited resources (compared to what its enemy has) in the best and most effective way. As for the Palestinian situation, we have been plagued by a leadership which failed to mobilize the Palestinian people, at home and abroad, to serve the liberation project.

This leadership insists on the dominance of one individual and one faction.

This leadership agreed on the Oslo Accords without the approval of the Palestinian people (while we affirm that the Palestine issue is sacred, and it is not limited to the Palestinians, but it is the issue and the responsibility of all Arabs and Muslims). It relinquished most of historic Palestine and suspended (or effectively canceled) the Palestinian National Charter, without regard to the Palestinian popular will, the will of the *Ummah*, or the fact that nobody is entitled to relinquish the land of Palestine or any part of it.

Under this leadership, the PLO was dwarfed and emptied of its struggle aspect. Its institutions deteriorated, were made inactive and even absent in the Palestinian community. The PLO became closer to a department of the PA, while the normal situation is that the PA is subordinate to the PLO. This leadership has placed the Organization in the “recovery room” to be used as “a seal of legitimacy” when needed, just to pass the decisions wanted by this dominant leadership.

For more than 30 years, a truly representative PNC for the PLO has not convened, nor have its PCC or Executive Committee been renewed in a way to reflect the effective forces on the ground. The doors are still closed to real participation of large active and influential forces, such as Hamas and the PIJ. The PLO leadership policies are opposed by major forces in the Organization itself, such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the PFLP–General Command (GC),

Vanguard for the Popular Liberation War (*Al-Sa'iqa*) and the Palestinian National Initiative (*Al-Mubadara*), especially regarding the Oslo Accords, security coordination with the occupation, disruption of elections, national reconciliation and the PLO reform.

Mahmud 'Abbas's decree, issued on 8/2/2022, deeming the PLO as organ of the "State of Palestine," was another severe blow to the Palestinian institutional action. Many experts and specialists considered this step a "legitimization" of the dwarfing the PLO. Indeed, 'Abbas made the Organization part of a state which does not actually exist and is still under Israeli occupation. 'Abbas, in fact, does not have this authority in the first place, and his move is considered a violation of constitutional and legal norms, it contradicts the higher interests of the Palestinian people and reflects the inclination to unilaterally address major sensitive issues on personal whims.

The same failure applies to the PA which, instead of developing from an autonomy to an independent state on the 1967 occupied territories, has turned into a functional and security entity, serving the occupation rather than the aspirations of the Palestinian people. At the same time, it has established an institution engulfed by corruption, which adopts a consumer economy and makes people's lives dependent on the occupation, instead of building a resistance economy that establishes for the disengagement from the occupation.

This leadership, not only did not organize the potentials of the Palestinian people, especially abroad, but also monopolized the representation of their communities, unions and public institutions, failing to activate them and preventing others from doing so!

This leadership, which has wasted people's capabilities and made the representative official institutions weak, has proven—for at least 30 years—its lack of vision and resistance will, as well as, its failure to implement a national program that accommodates the Palestinian people and their potentials. It seeks to remain dominant and monopolize decision-making, therefore, it keeps closing doors to any real reform of the PLO's infrastructure and the PA, while preventing any true representation of the active forces, whether in the PNC, PCC, the Executive Committee or the rest of the Organization's institutions. It also closes the doors on any real revisions of the Oslo Accords and the peace process, which was a sheer failure. It does all of that and might or might not realize the importance

of every second wasted without mobilizing and organizing our potentials, while the enemy carries on with its Judaization plans of our blessed and holy Palestine, contented with the leadership that has transformed the occupation into a “five-star” colonization!!

Strikingly, if you raise your voice in protest against this miserable situation, and demand reform or take any step in that regard, you will be surprised by the screaming, wailing, “demonization” and the defamation campaigns by the “guardians” of the PLO. They become energetic and active just to pursue you (rather than making reforms and developing institutions), and until they are rest assured of silencing you, then they would return to their slumber again!

Eighth Illusion

The “Manifestations” of the State Before the Success of the Revolution

Perhaps we can talk about the benefits of declaring the independence of Palestine or the establishment of the Palestine state, which can be used to prove the rights, fill the potential void, and achieve official Arab and international recognition. This is what the Palestinian leadership did in 1948, when it established the All-Palestine Government and declared independence, and was done also by the Palestinian leadership in 1988. However, such moves remain a support to the facts that must be established on the ground, otherwise, they will be lost, as happened in the 1948 and 1988 declarations.

As for the illusion that we warn against here is in the fact that the political leadership is haunted by the desire to achieve and convince the masses of its good performance. Therefore, it may resort to a combination of misleading measures and “self-deception,” by expanding the formalities associated with the presidency, government, ministries, embassies and foreign delegations. It may also drain the “revolution” funds, capabilities, energies and time on “bureaucratic” forms that will produce a class of beneficiaries, and give way to the corruption of militants, while it diverts from its revolutionary content.

The core of the project and the largest share of its expenses must be spent on the armed resistance, the *Intifadah* and on supporting the steadfastness of the Palestinian people on their land. The commitment to resistance and the readiness to sacrifice oneself and money, should be a prerequisite and an indispensable requirement for the leaders of the liberation project and everyone engaging in related political, tactical and media work, etc. This is what all the revolutionary forces that are serious about liberation projects have done and are doing. As for the current “manifestations,” including the embassies of the State of Palestine and the PLO, the PA and its institutions and the “welfare” projects under occupation... They are illusions that distract the national track from the core of the liberation project, drain the project’s resources, and even make it lose a lot of credibility and the respect of countries and peoples.

Revolutionary action is not commensurate with luxurious behavior as such behavior corrupts the members of the revolution. Also, the misuse of the revolution's funds or part of them for personal pleasures and luxury is a betrayal of trust. Luxury, by its nature, leads to relaxation, which weakens the will for *jihād* and sacrifice, and instead personal gains and self-interest become a priority.

In the authentic hadith, Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) said, “By *Allah*! It is not poverty that I fear for you, but what I fear for you is that the world will be presented for you just as it was presented for those before you, then you will compete for it, just as they competed for it, and it will destroy you, just as it destroyed them.” (Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ahmad).¹

The members of the revolution must realize that one of the main sources of people's respect and love is their credibility, humility and concern for public funds, rather than the hollow appearances of leadership. There are many sincere poor people and toilers who support Palestine, Jerusalem, the revolution and the freedom fighters, donating the little they have. They may even deprive themselves of some needs to support the revolution and resistance. Thus, the members of revolution must appreciate these people and always remember their moral responsibility towards them (after their responsibility towards *Allah* (SWT)), hence spending every penny wisely.

This applies—and more sensitively—to the lives, behavior, residence and hospitality of the leaders of Islamic resistance movements, as the eyes of the *Ummah* are upon them.

Also, wealth by itself is not a dent in one's credibility when it is *halal* (lawful) and not at the expense of the revolution, and as long as the rich dedicate themselves and their money to serve the cause of *Allah* and the liberation struggle. Indeed, there is great need for such people, who are careful not to lead an extravagant life and do not confuse between what is personal with what is public money. It is also important not to provoke people with conduct that may distort the image of the revolution.

¹ Jami' at-Tirmidhi, (37) Chapters on the description of the Day of Judgement, Ar-Riqaq, and Al-Wara', (28) Chapter: The Hadith: “By *Allah*! It is Not Poverty That I Fear for You,” site of Sunnah.com, <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:2462>

Ninth Illusion

The Reform of the Palestinian Political House Without a Transitional Leadership

After the last PLC elections in 2006, in which Hamas had won, experience has shown that the current leadership of the PLO and PA, as of the time of writing, is neither serious about reforming the Palestinian political house, nor about holding elections on transparent democratic bases for the legislative and executive institutions. As long as reform does not guarantee the continuation of its control and domination of the PLO and the PA, it will take place, and in case it offers reform, it would merely be a decorative and formal procedure, empty of content and a waste of time.

When this leadership disrupted the Palestinian elections on 29/4/2021, it fired the “bullet of mercy” at itself, confirmed the suspicions that had already existed about it, and was consistent with its history and mentality, which is prone to domination and tyranny. Consequently, the current leadership can no longer be entrusted with any serious reform or development process for the Palestinian political house. It has lost what was left of the trust of people and credibility. However, it is still insisting on representing the “old” Oslo Accords camp and its network of interests, corruption and failure, and failing over and over again.

It has become clear that no reform could be done by or under the supervision of the symbols and leaders who are fighting it and have valid interest in thwarting it. It has also become clear that since these figures represent a certain faction (Fatah), their moves are contingent upon its continued control and domination of Palestinian official institutions; and not necessarily related to the higher interests of the Palestinian people.

For more than 50 years, the same behavior has been pursued with the same mentality. This leadership even resorted to financially blackmailing powerful Palestinian factions, such as the PFLP and DFLP, by stopping the disbursement of their allocations from the Palestine National Fund.

In all the processes of reconciliation and putting the Palestinian internal house in order, this leadership was unserious when it participated in negotiations

(or led them) and signed the agreements. These were mere tactical steps to “manage” the negotiations and pass time, to ensure its continuity and to reproduce itself.

Therefore, if we want to talk about real Palestinian reform, peaceful transfer of power, and the objective conditions of rebuilding the PLO, developing its institutions and including all forces, factions and competencies of the Palestinian population; it is necessary to have a transitional leadership to manage them. This leadership may be the temporary leadership framework. It may be expanded to include real emerging forces and may have a small executive leadership emerging from it... What is important is that this leadership must enjoy the trust, credibility and the seriousness to complete this process.

Even if this proposal is a practical solution for the current PLO and PA leadership and a dignified way out, the author of these lines doubts that it would respond to it. Nevertheless, it will respond, if subjective and objective circumstances impose such change, such as the resignation or death of Abu Mazen and the disintegration of his leadership system, or if its Arab and international legitimacy declines or ends due to emerging political conditions and new facts imposed on the ground.

Tenth Illusion

The Term (Tarafay al-Inqisam) “Both Sides of the Divide”

It is a misleading term that has spread since 2007, when the Hamas-led government took control of GS, and the Fatah-led “Emergency” government took control of the PA territories in WB. This term is usually used by those who try to present themselves as being objective and at the same distance from both sides, where they hold both parties almost equal responsibility for the division. Therefore, the context in which it is used is misleading and subjective.

At first, a real division seems to have occurred, where geographically Hamas has controlled GS and Fatah has controlled WB, while institutionally, Hamas is supported by the PLC and the right of its majority to form a government, hold it accountable and grant it the vote of confidence or withholding it. As for Fatah, it relies on the presidency institution and on its ability to “legitimize” its measures through its domination of the PLO.

What deludes and misleads in this term is that it apparently means that the division is confined to the WB and GS, whereas the two parties actually do not share responsibility in the general Palestinian environment, nor in the Palestinian “official” institution. For the Fatah leadership, which is also the PA leadership, totally controls the PLO and its official legislative and executive institutions, and almost completely monopolizes embassies, Palestinian representation, decision-making and enforcement of policies and procedures. As for Hamas, its share is practically “zero” in the PLO, and it is not responsible for disrupting any decisions or actions in the organization. The PLO weakness, the collapse of its institutions, the deterioration of its performance, the prevention of its reform and change and the prohibition of partnership in it, are the sole responsibility of none else than the ‘Abbas—led Fatah.

The Fatah movement basically dominates and controls the Palestinian “legitimacy,” whether in the PLO or PA. Consequently, the disruption or enforcement of any legislative or executive reform is primarily decided by the Fatah leadership and not the others. Hence, neither Hamas nor the opposition forces can be held responsible for it.

As the recent experience of reforming the Palestinian political house has proved, Hamas has made all the concessions that Fatah demanded, despite the fact the some of them are intrinsic and fundamental, such as the synchronization clause in the 2011 Reconciliation Agreement or keeping silent about the PLC dissolution.... Furthermore, when elections were to be held, the ‘Abbas Fatah leadership was the one who disrupted it, bringing everyone back to the “schism” realm, continuing its PA monopoly and evading the Palestinian people’s vote. Therefore, revealing to everyone that there are those who are primarily responsible for the schism.

In short, it is unfair to use the term “both sides of the divide,” when these sides are “not alike”:

While the first side bases its legitimacy on artificial Arab and international crutches, the other side relies (and is willing to rely) on the will of the Palestinian people.

While the first side has ceded most of Palestine, is subject to the will of the occupation, leads a functional entity serving the occupation, pursues resistance fighters and suppresses freedoms, the other side has adhered to the whole of Palestine, fights the occupation and expresses the dignity of the Palestinian people and the Arab and Muslim *Ummah*.

While the first side closes the doors of the official constitutional institutions and hide their keys, the other side is deprived of its fair chance and natural rights.

While the first side has based its strategy on an expired illusionary failed peace process, the other side bases its strategy on the natural right of the Palestinian people to their entire land, on the National Charter of the PLO.

While the first side has been—for more than 30 years—constitutionally, politically and morally, fundamentally responsible for the setbacks and disasters that befell the Palestinian work, the other side continues to be patient with the suppression of Abbas’s authority, while paying a hefty price for resisting the occupation and facing the enemy.

In other words, we are not just witnessing “two wrong sides,” who need to set aside their personal interests, rather, they are sides with two different visions, approaches, courses of action and priorities. They differ in the mentality in which things are managed and in the way they rely on legitimacy. Therefore, using the

term “both sides of the divide” the way it is used by some sides is misleading and not scientifically and objectively accurate.

Ending schism is not only dependent on entering into one house, rather, it is in the manner of managing this house, according to a system that is respected by all (A system that expresses the higher interests of the Palestinian people, their aspirations and the aspirations of their *Ummah*)... Otherwise, “divorce” will be a quick and inevitable ending.



Eleventh Illusion

The Liberation of Palestine Without Armed Resistance

Perhaps we wouldn't have discussed this saying were it not for the adoption of the Palestinian leadership and the Arab and Muslim countries of the peace process, and the entry of the Oslo Accords into force in late 1993.

Part of the illusion is due to the fact that Palestine itself has been redefined by the Palestine Leadership and the "international community." It became confined to WB and GS, or the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967; i.e., 23% of historic Palestine. The "liberation" issue has become confined to it, while most of the land of Palestine or the 1948 occupied Palestinian territories, on which Israel was established, were ignored. Consequently, the exit of the Israeli occupation from WB and GS has become linked to the peace process and not to the armed struggle. There are also those who are betting on popular peaceful resistance, diplomatic action, international pressure, mobilization and raising awareness.

In general, the anti-colonial liberation projects have been mainly associated with armed resistance, or by turning the colonizer's survival into a state of continuous loss and depletion, especially its security and economy. Hence, costs become greater than potential gains, which is not usually done without armed resistance.

If we put the liberation of Palestine in its proper framework, i.e., its complete liberation from the river to the sea, then the liberation of the land will include also the 1948 occupied Palestinian territories.

The past 30 years have proven that "peaceful struggle" has not made Israel withdraw from the 1967 occupied Palestine; rather it has made it just reposition itself. It has withdrawn from GS, kept it under siege, and retained its dominance over WB, as a disputed territory. Furthermore, Israel has retained the full and direct management of about 61% of WB, doubled its settlement and Judaization presence, and allowed the presence of a functional PA that relieves it from managing the population and chasing the resistance. Therefore, this bitter experience has proven that forcing Israel to withdraw from WB and lift the GS siege requires armed resistance and a comprehensive *Intifadah*, so how about liberating all of Palestine?!

Secondly, the Zionist project is not just traditional colonialism, but rather an aggressive expansionist settler colonialism, based on religious and historical arguments, and supported by major powers with strategic interests in the region. Although these powers do realize the extent of injustice and suffering this project causes to the Palestinian people. Therefore, dealing with such an occupation cannot be only by having objective discussions and using persuasive methods, rather these rights must be “forcibly” regained, mainly by *jihad* and armed resistance. As for the political and diplomatic activities, as well as the publicity and mobilization campaigns, they are important activities that support the core of the work (i.e., armed resistance), but do not replace it. If the core is gone, the activities lose their usefulness.

Therefore, throughout its history, the liberation project has been associated with armed resistance, which has been the basis of the Palestinian revolution. The PLO National Charter has stipulated that armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine, and even when the charter was amended in the Ten Point Program of 1974, it has kept the part stating that armed struggle is a major way to liberate Palestine.



Twelfth Illusion

The Islamists' Delay in Participating in the Armed Resistance

Some accuse the Islamic movement of being absent for decades from armed Palestinian resistance, and that it came late after the launching of Hamas movement in 1987, and after the national and leftist forces had carried the burden for decades.

These people confuse and separate between the Islamic movement, the Muslim Brothers (MB) movement and Hamas. The former's armed resistance is the oldest and most deeply rooted in modern and contemporary Palestinian history. Hamas did not arise out of thin air; the MB armed resistance—from which Hamas arose and to which it belongs—dates back to at least the 1948 war, which makes it the oldest resistance organization in Palestine, even if it was interrupted for periods of time, as was the case with other movements.

The first Palestinian armed resistance movement with an Islamic character dates back to the beginning of 1919, at the start of the British occupation of Palestine. There were two secret societies, the first was *al-Kaff al-Aswad* (The Black Palm), which was established in January 1919 and changed its name to *al-Fida'iyyah* in May 1919. It had branches in Jaffa, Jerusalem, Gaza, Nablus, Tulkarm, Ramleh and Hebron and continued until 1923. Its leader was Haj Amin al-Hussaini, who studied at the School of *al-Da'wah wa al-Irshad*, run by the scholar Muhammad Rashid Rida. Al-Hussaini then became the mufti of Jerusalem in 1921, the Chairman of the Supreme Muslim Council in 1922, the covert director and sponsor of the uprisings, and the field leader of the revolution in 1936. The second secret society was *al-Ikha' wa al-'Afaf*, which was led particularly by the scholars of Jerusalem and was headed by Sheikh Sa'id al-Khatib. Among its leaders were Sheikh Muhammad Yusuf al-'Alami, Sheikh Hasan Abu al-Sa'ud and others.

There was also a pioneering Islamic movement organization, *al-Jihadiyyah* movement, which was established by Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Qassam in 1925. Although it began armed resistance during *al-Buraq* revolution in 1929, *al-Jihadiyyah's* official launching was in November 1935, after having recruited and secretly trained about a thousand members and supporters. It was the

movement that started the Palestinian Revolt on 15/4/1936, when its leader Sheikh Farhan al-Sa'di—who succeeded Sheikh al-Qassam after that latter was martyred—carried out a military operation. Then, on 26/9/1937, it reignited the Revolt, when one of its members assassinated the British District Commissioner for the Galilee Lewis Andrews. During the second phase of the great Palestinian Revolt, *al-Qassam* group led the areas of northern and central Palestine.

Al-Jihad al-Muqaddas organization which led the resistance efforts in Jerusalem and Hebron, was headed by 'Abdul Qadir al-Hussaini and was sponsored by Haj Amin. In it, nationalism was in harmony with the Islamic trend, thus reflecting the open moderate Islamic spirit of the resisting Palestinian national movement. Christian resistance fighters participated in it, and 'Abdul Qadir al-Hussaini and his companions heroically fought during the Palestinian Revolution and in the 1948 war.

As for the MB movement, which established its Palestinian organization in the 1940s, it actively participated in the 1948 war, particularly in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jaffa and southern Palestine. When the war ended, the MB did not lay down their arms, rather they reorganized themselves in a secret military organization in GS, particularly in the 1952–1954 period, under the auspices of the Egyptian MB movement and under the leadership and supervision of Kamel al-Sharif (We have previously published a study on this action). Among the leaders of this organization Muhammad Abu Sido, who was the liaison with the military leadership (Kamel al-Sharif) in al-'Arish. Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad) was the leader of northern GS; Khairy al-Agha led the middle area (Khan Yunis); while the south (Rafah), it was led by Muhammad Yusuf al-Najjar. The MB were helped by the Bedouins, who had combat experience, knew the region's geography and were willing to work and sacrifice. The most prominent of those were Fureih al-Musaddar, Hasan al-Efranji and 'Abdullah Abu Sitta. Therefore, the MB movement is considered one of the first to launch resistance military action after the 1948 war, along with some resistance groups that were sponsored by Mufti Haj Amin.

It was clear that the Fatah movement emerged from the Palestinian MB movement environment, particularly its military organization. In its early years, the membership and recruitment of Fatah focused on the members of the MB movement, but its approach was patriotic, especially after the 'Abdul Nasser

regime clashed with the MB movement and chased its members, for it wanted to continue resistance, away from hostility toward Islamists. Perhaps the readers have heard of the MB background of Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), ‘Abdul Fattah Hammud, Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyyad), Yusuf ‘Umairah, Kamal ‘Adwan, Mu‘ath ‘Abed, Hamad al-‘Aydi, Hani al-Hasan, Salim al-Za‘nun, Riyad al-Za‘nun, Muhammad Yusuf al-Najjar, Rafiq al-Natsheh, Sa‘id al-Muzayyan ... and many others.

The table found in the appendix of the book, *The Palestinian Muslim Brothers: The Palestinian Organization – Gaza Strip 1949–1967*, includes a list of 50 pioneers and founding members of the Fatah movement with a background of the MB movement. Of those, 14 were members of the Fatah Central Committee, and most of the 50 (at least 30) had at certain times prominent positions in the movement.² However, the Fatah movement pursued a nationalist secular direction, particularly after the separation between the MB movement and Fatah and the differentiation in their membership became clear.

The fierce pursuit of the MB movement, and the rise of leftist and nationalist movements, weakened the ability of the MB and other Islamic movements to organize resistance action. This situation has made the movement enter a latency and self-preservation phase, between mid-1950s and late 1960s. However, the MB movement returned to participate actively in the resistance action through the Shuyukh camps 1968–1970, in coordination with Fatah and under its cover, while maintaining internal administrative independence. About 300 men were trained and posted to seven resistance bases, among them were figures who later became known, such as Ahmad Nuafal, ‘Abdullah ‘Azzam, Ibrahim al-Mishwakhi and Theeb Anis. They executed major resistance operations like the Green Belt Operation on 31/8/1969 and the Deir Yasin Operation on the eve of 14/9/1969.

It seems that the Palestinian Islamic movement wanted to establish a strong organization and gain a deep-rooted popularity so that it can withstand and continue when engaging in military resistance action. The movement preferred to wait for a period of time, during which it was active in advocacy, educational, social and trade union activities. However, a number of the MB youth were not

² Mohsen Mohammad Saleh, *The Palestinian Muslim Brothers: The Palestinian Organization – Gaza Strip 1949–1967* (Beirut: Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2020), pp. 299–304.

satisfied with such a delay. As a result, Dr. Fathi Shiqaqi and a number of his colleagues founded the PIJ in 1980, and since then this movement has become one of the prominent Palestinian armed resistance forces.

As for the Islamic movement members of the 1948 territories, they established, in the 1970s, a resistance group called *Usrat al-Jihad*, supervised by Sheikh ‘Abdullah Nimr Darwish and led by Farid Abu Mukh with a number of colleagues. They executed several operations, however the Israeli occupation was able to hit the group and arrest lots of its members.

The first precursors of the establishment of the military wing appeared in 1980, when the leadership sent some of its cadres abroad for military training. Sheikh Ahmad Yasin established the military wing in GS, led in the beginning by ‘Abdul-Rahman Tamraz and then Salah Shehadeh. However, the military wing was exposed, which led to a crackdown against it in 1984. The Israeli authorities arrested Sheikh Ahmad Yasin and a number of his colleagues, then the next year he was released in a prisoner swap. The military wing was rebuilt and re-launched in 1986 under the name “Palestinian Mujahidun,” beginning operations before the 1987 *Intifadah*. In the summer of 1985, two years before the start of the *Intifadah*, the MB leadership decided to take advantage of any incident to launch its confrontation with the occupation. The leadership abroad granted the leadership inside Palestine the authority to choose the appropriate timing to launch the MB resistance action, and two MB were killed in clashes at the Birzeit University in 1986.

Thus, it can be concluded that the emergence of Hamas in 1987 is considered a continuation of a long process of Palestinian Islamic resistance, which has not stopped over the past hundred years.

Thirteenth Illusion

The Fatah Movement had Fired the First Bullet of the Palestinian Resistance

As we noted in the discussion of the previous illusion, the armed Palestinian resistance is genuine and deeply rooted in modern Palestinian history; and its members have confronted the British occupation and the Zionist project since the beginnings. Armed resistance organizations emerged, preceding the launch of the Fatah movement by more than 40 years, and their bullets were fired in the uprisings of Jerusalem 1920, Jaffa 1921, al-Buraq 1929 and al-Qassam 1935, the Arab Revolt in Palestine 1936–1939 and the 1948 Palestine War.

Fatah supporters may argue that what is meant by the first bullet is the revolution that followed the catastrophe of the 1948 war; but as we have indicated earlier, the resistance action did not stop after the *Nakbah*, and in the first half of the 1950s the MB armed resistance organization emerged and carried out a number of operations. It was led by Khalil al-Wazir and a number of his colleagues, who later established Fatah.

Even if the “first bullet” was intended for the resistance action during the 1960s, during that period there were Palestinian organizations that were preoccupied with the guerrilla action or were preparing for it. There was the Palestine branch of the Arab Nationalist Movement, which formed in May 1964 the National Front for the Liberation of Palestine that launched a guerrilla warfare, and had its first member killed on 2/11/1964, about two months before the launch of the military wing of Fatah. Also, in mid-1965, the Palestine Liberation Front launched its military action.

Historically speaking, and regrettably, Palestinian literature ignores the resistance action in the 1949–1956 period, during which many resistance operations were carried out by Palestinian individuals and small groups. Israeli reports have acknowledged tens of thousands of border breaches, where part of them were related to resistance action. These reports have also acknowledged the killing of about 540 Israelis in the same period; a large number of whom were killed by resistance fighters, or whom Israeli reports called “the infiltrators.”

The Fatah movement's literature is filled with the "fact" that it had fired the first bullet, to the extent that it seems to be an indisputable axiom, whereas we are concerned here with establishing historical facts. Fatah will not lose much by abandoning this claim, for what is more important is that when it fired its bullet, it continued without stopping, worked in difficult and harsh conditions, succeeded in expressing the concerns of the ordinary "non-ideological" Palestinians, led the national project, and maintained wide popularity, over dozens of years. It remained the backbone of armed resistance until the mid-1980s, and it actively participated in the Palestinian uprisings. It still has the highest number of prisoners in Israeli prisons.

It should be noted that a number of Fatah affiliates use this argument for political gains and in a way that eliminates or diminishes the role of others. They try to grant legitimacy to those who fired this bullet so that they would be able to speak on behalf of the Palestinians and represent them, or to silence their opponents, critics and competitors. This has been the case especially after Fatah's adoption of the peace process and after it has undertaken the PA leadership.



Fourteenth Illusion

The Liberation of Palestine From Inside

The Palestinian resistance at home, the steadfastness of the Palestinian people on their land, and their confrontation with the occupation by all means, are basic pillars in the Palestine liberation project. Furthermore, the liberation of any part of Palestine by the resistance is an important step towards establishing a resistance project on the liberated land and liberating all of Palestine. Such resistance and steadfastness constitute a defense wall against the Zionist project, the *Ummah's* first line of defense, and a powerful tool to “delegitimize” Israel, shake its security and strike its economy.

Perhaps one of the reasons for talking about liberating Palestine from within, is due to the state of despair of the weak, backward and divided Arab and Islamic environment; the frustrated Palestinians who waited decades after the *Nakbah* for the liberation coming from the Arab countries; the defeats of the Arab armies; and the move of Arab countries for a peaceful settlement and normalization with Israel; whereas the resistance forces in return, especially in GS, have achieved victories. This context emphasizes the crucial role of resistance, however when it comes to the complete liberation of Palestine, one must emphasize the vital role of the surrounding strategic environment.

The end of the Zionist project and the complete liberation of Palestine, including the 1948 occupied territories (Israel), rely on achieving strategic parity with Israel or superiority over it, when the power balance shifts from the Zionist project to the liberation project.

Israel's strategic calculations and higher interests may make it withdraw from some areas and reposition itself, as was the case of some parts of the 1967 occupied territories, which are considered “occupied” according to the “international legitimacy” and international law. However, the question of Israel's collapse and end as an entity is another matter.

Objectively speaking, Israel possesses superior military power that would let it defeat the Arab countries. It possesses weapons of mass destruction, including more than 200 nuclear bombs. Therefore, when it faces existential threat, its military performance will differ from its performance in traditional conflict management.

Israel is supported by the super powers, which provide it with political cover and military and economic support, for it advances their major interests, in particular those of the US, and before that Britain and others. They have been the patrons of Israel when it was founded, and now they support it and ensure its superiority in the region. Therefore, this is not a mere conflict with Israel, it is a broader one, facing the alliance of international interests and their links to Israel, and whose religious, cultural, ideological and economic backgrounds urge them to protect it. Consequently, dismantling this relationship and turning it into a losing bet are part of the broader conflict with Israel.

The “international legitimacy” recognizes Israel in the 1948 occupied territories, and supports Israeli withdrawal only from WB and GS. Therefore, it would oppose any attempts to completely end Israel, unless there is fundamental change in the international “mindset,” due to the emergence of new regional settings, where Israel would become a burden to the international community, and due to the effectiveness of the resistance media and propaganda.

It is true that one of the reasons for the withdrawal of the Israeli occupation in 2005 is the Palestinian resistance, however, this withdrawal was also part of an Israeli repositioning plan, by Ariel Sharon, aiming to impose a peace process based on a unilateral withdrawal. By this plan, Israel got rid of the burdens of occupying and managing highly populated areas (GS); retained vast swathes of land of low population density (WB), and remained relatively in control of the land it withdrew from, by maintaining the GS siege for the past 16 years, controlling its land, sea and air borders.

The liberation of Palestine is an integrated process that involves the Palestinian resistance project and the unifying revival project of the *Ummah*, neither one cancels the other out, nor does it replace it.

Fifteenth Illusion

The Liberation of Palestine Without a Unifying Revival Project

This issue is closely related to the previous one.

The Zionist project does not only target the Palestinians or the land of Palestine. Israel was established at the heart of the Arab and Muslim world, separating the Asian part from the African one. It is an aggressive and expansionist entity that does not see a future for itself in the region unless what surrounds it (the strategic environment) is weak, backward and divided. The Arab-Muslim environment is originally hostile to Israel, and this is why corrupt and tyrannical regimes that do not reflect the will of their people exist. They represent the minority who wants peace and normalization, and wants to please the global powers, especially the US, to guarantee their survival.

The core of the Palestine issue is linked to the revival project of the *Ummah*. For Israel's strength and continuity depend on the weakness and backwardness of the *Ummah*, while ending it depends on the strength, revival and unity of the *Ummah*, specifically in the surrounding strategic environment.

Therefore, if the goal is to liberate all of Palestine, then talking about strategic parity and reaching the "critical point" that enables the termination of Israel cannot be done unless there is a unifying revival project, particularly in the strategic environment surrounding Palestine. Such an environment is a support for the resistance inside Palestine, it has (far from the domination of the occupation) the tools to address the imbalance of power.

The crises in the region and the "Arab Spring" experience, which have showed that the peoples in the region are still aspiring for freedom and change, are all indicators that the region is passing through a labor phase. It is heading towards new waves of uprisings that aim to regain the will, pride and dignity of the peoples, who would regain their strength and unity, support the resistance inside Palestine, impose new regional and international power balance and consequently liberate all of Palestine.

Sixteenth Illusion

Liberating Palestine Apart from Islam

If the land of Palestine is an Islamic one, its people are Muslim, its civilizational and cultural affiliation is Islamic, its popular incubator is Muslim and its strategic environment is Muslim, then it is natural that the identity of the liberation project should be Islamic. Those who want to distance Islam from the liberation project fall into a great delusion, because they are like those who seek to separate the soul from the body or strip energy and engines from active forces.

Someone might say that the “Arab” aspect also applies to all the above. We say, that goes with our statement, as this aspect is associated with Islam in terms of “conquest” (*Futuh*), propagation, language, Arabization and civilization. The “Arab” conquistadors (*al-Fatihun*) were Muslim and carried the message of Islam, and other peoples and nationalities remained under its umbrella, while living in openness and civilizational interaction, accommodating all in one *Ummah* under the banner of the great Islam. Palestine’s Arab identity was and is still a natural part, in harmony with its broader Muslim identity.

The Nature of the Land

The land of Palestine is like no other land. It is a holy and blessed land. It is the land of prophets, *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and the Night Journey (*al-Isra’*). It is in the heart of the Muslim and Arab worlds. Throughout history, it is known for being the land of conflict between truth and falsehood, where every time at the end, the people of truth decide the battle in their favor, and this will continue until *Allah* inherits the earth and those on it. Therefore, it was not surprising that *Allah* (SWT), chose the victorious group that is triumphant upon truth to be positioned in “Bayt al-Maqdis and the precincts of Bayt al-Maqdis.” As this land is characterized as being a “jihad arena,” it is natural to host this group whose most prominent characteristics are being “triumphant upon the truth” and “not harmed by those who abandon or oppose it,” hence, requiring a firm course and an Islamic approach.

Setting the Fundamentals and Tracks

The land of Palestine was opened by ‘Umar bin al-Khattab (RA), has acquired its Muslim identity more than 1,400 years ago, and its people entered Islam in

multitudes, where their language was Arabized. Therefore, it was in the past an Islamic endowment land, still is and will remain so until the Resurrection Day. No one, whomever he is, may relinquish any part of it since it is not only for Palestinians or Arabs, but rather belongs to all Muslims. Muslims everywhere must offer their money and blood to liberate Palestine as its liberation has become the individual duty of every Muslim.

The Muslim identity of Palestine defines the fundamentals, as well as the tracks. It determines the extents and areas of national work as well as the margins of maneuvering and interim programs. There is no room for tampering with the full right to Palestine, from its river to its sea; and there is no room to recognize any legitimacy or right for the occupation over any part of it.

The Central Issue of the *Ummah*

When it comes to matters of liberation and conflict with the nation's enemies and colonialism, Palestine appears to be the central issue of the *Ummah*. This is so not only because of its religious and strategic position, but also because the Zionist project is an aggressive global project, supported by major Western imperialist powers that use Palestine as a base to weaken and tear the *Ummah* apart and prevent its revival. Consequently, Palestine, Jerusalem and *al-Aqsa* will unite the *Ummah* against its common central enemy, and act as leverage for the nation's revival and strength, because the liberation of Palestine cannot be accomplished without that. In contrast, Palestine exposes and shames those who let it down and abandon it.

Confining the issue of Palestine to the Arab nationalist framework, then to the Palestinian framework, then to a Palestinian faction and a dominant leadership in the PLO and PA was one of the most disastrous developments in modern and contemporary Palestinian history. Therefore, it is essential that the issue recovers its Islamic core, along with its national, Arab and human dimensions, in a harmonious and effective manner.

Parallel Lines of Action

Talking about the Islamic circle joining the conflict with the enemy, does not mean waiting for the establishment of the caliphate, or the achievement of Islamic unity, or giving up on the responsibility towards Palestine. Indeed, working for Palestine complements any action for the Islamic revival and unity. They may

go in parallel, and one may leverage the other, without one waiting for the other or holding it back. However, it is essential that the conflict restores its Islamic identity so that the *Ummah* feels responsible and carry out their duty, without any Muslim reproachfully reminding the Palestinians of his favor or making them feel insulted; on the other hand, without “national” barriers imposed by any Palestinian who wants to monopolize the action for Palestine and its fate; and without any Palestinian side dealing with the others according to its needs, or treating the others as guests or service groups. Ultimately, Palestinians are a vital part of the body that resists and liberates, and they are the people of *Ribat* (guarding the Islamic frontiers), bearing the heaviest responsibility and leading the front lines.

Islam is Best Able to Mobilize the Masses

Islam is the most capable of mobilizing the masses, orienting and urging them to sacrifice. The harmony of the Palestinians (as well as the Arabs and Muslims) with themselves, their creed, culture and heritage, is essential for instigating their enthusiasm and making them ready to sacrifice life and money. For when Muslims believe that victory is from *Allah*, who has guaranteed victory for His true servants; when they deem Palestine, with its sanctity, blessing and *al-Aqsa* Mosque, as part of their religious beliefs, considering them endowments for the *Ummah* and the Muslim generations that they are entrusted with; when they believe that their steadfastness and suffering would be rewarded and considered good deeds; when they consider their victory a glory for the *Ummah* and part of its dignity; and when they believe that martyrdom would make them attain the highest level of Paradise... Then, it will be realized that no ideology has the energy, vitality, power and influence that Islam has.

The Historical Experience

Therefore, the historical experience has proved that the liberation of Palestine is linked to Islam, from the age of *Futuh* to the Crusades and the confrontation of the Tatars and until our contemporary times.

The various ideologies that have dominated the Arab and Palestinian public discourse and politics in our modern history, whether leftist, nationalist or region-oriented, have failed to lead a real liberation project. We are still paying a bitter price for the official dominance of these ideologies.

Although the Islamic trend was fiercely fought in the region and deprived of the means of revival and empowerment, especially in the strategic surrounding area of Palestine, Islam remained the main motivator (or at least a major one) of revolutions, resistance action and the uprisings of the Palestinian people over the past hundred years. In this context came the Jerusalem Uprising in 1920; al-Buraq Uprising in 1929; al-Qassam Uprising in 1935; the Arab Revolt in Palestine 1936–1939; the Holy Jihad Organization; the 1948 Palestine war; the resistance in the first half of 1950s; the Shuyukh Camps 1968–1970... all the way to the PIJ and Hamas; the First *Intifadah* 1987–1993; *al-Aqsa Intifadah* 2000–2005; the Gaza wars and others. For more than two decades, the Palestinian Islamic resistance has represented the backbone of the armed resistance forces in Palestine.

No Contradiction with the National and Arab Dimensions

The Islamic vision of liberation does not contradict the Arab nationalist dimensions. Muslims are quite loyal to their homeland and they support patriotism that means love, longing and nostalgia for the land; dignity and liberation; and cooperation, solidarity and compassion of the society. Moreover, preserving the land and sacrificing life and money to liberate it from the enemies are part of the Muslims' faith and religion.

There is no conflict between the Arab and the Islamic aspects, as Arabs now are overwhelmingly Muslims (about 95%). What mostly unites Arabs is their religion and their language preserved in the *Qur'an* and in the Islamic heritage. Arab unity projects can be viewed positively as a step towards Islamic unity, as long as they express the will of the peoples, are open and not based on exclusionary fanaticism and mentalities, nor on the dictatorship of minorities or military coups. Therefore, the circles of action for Palestine, whether they are national, Arab, Islamic or humanitarian, are integrated ones, and their positive elements should be activated in the revival and liberation projects.

Revival Project Accommodating Minorities and Sects

The advocates of other ideologies, and those who reject the Islamic vision, often raise the issue of minorities claiming that raising the banner of Islam excludes them.

First, the Islamic solution is not sectarian, racist or isolationist. It does not mean injustice or marginalization of minorities, nor does it mean coercion in

religion. Rather, it is a civilized revival project characterized by openness and flexibility, while accommodating all segments and forces seeking to contribute to the liberation project and that will take their positions according to their sincerity and efficiency.

Second, as long as Islam is the basic religious and cultural common factor of the Palestinian people, the Arabs, and the *Ummah*, exceeding 1.8 billion; and as long as it is the greatest common denominator among all, then why is it excluded in favor of ideologies that do not bring together half, quarters or tenths of what Islam does?

Using the same analogy, why is it acceptable (according to the national perspective) to bypass the members of other ethnic groups in the Arab region, such as the Kurds, Amazigh, Africans and Turkmen, while they are all Muslims (and their tongue is Arabic), and their percentage is higher than that of members of other sects and minorities?

Third, why is the greatest driving and unifying force of liberation being dispensed with, in favor of ideologies which have failed to extract the *Ummah*'s huge energy and vitality over the past 70 years?

Even from a practical, pragmatic point of view, those who differ in ideology or religion are supposed to make room for Islam and Muslims, as long as if this option is better for the liberation project.

Fourth, the Christians of Palestine (since 'Umar's Assurance) and the Christians of the East have integrated into the Islamic civilization and participated in building it. They lived in an atmosphere of freedom and tolerance throughout Islamic history. They strongly participated in the conflict against the Zionist movement, while working without sensitivities under the leadership of the Mufti of Palestine, Haj Amin al-Hussaini, and joined the Holy Jihad Organization, led by 'Abdul Qadir al-Hussaini. They were and are still an essential part of the Palestinian national movement.

It is remarkable that Munir Shafiq, who hails from Christian background (before he converted to Islam), published an article entitled "Christian Arabs are Muslims who Go to Church"! This is not surprising, as their history and heritage belong to this Islamic civilized environment. The core idea was expressed in various ways by other Christians, such as the Palestinian leader Emile al-Ghuri,

who was Secretary-General of the Arab Higher Committee (which represented the Palestinian people before the establishment of the PLO), the Syrian leader Faris al-Khoury, and others. You also find a distinguished positive interaction with the resistance and the Islamic movement among outstanding Christian figures, such as Archbishop 'Atallah Hanna and Father Manuel Musallam. Besides, many Christians in Palestine elected Hamas because it is more sincere in expressing their aspirations and in confronting the occupation.

Fifth, fanatic movements and organizations in the Islamic arena cannot be evoked to demand the exclusion of the Islamic movement. For the overwhelming general trend in Palestine and the Muslim world is moderate, tolerant and open. Furthermore, other religions and ideologies, like the the Islamic case, have fanatics and extremists, and those exceptions and anomalies cannot be considered as the norm.

Fulfilling *Allah's* Promise of Victory

According to the Islamic vision, the liberation of Palestine is dependent on realizing the conditions of victory and empowerment, including the strong relation with *Allah*, and preparing the elements of strength as evident in the *Qur'anic* verse "Servants of Ours – those of great military might."³ Among other conditions are civilizational revival; the unitary project, especially in the strategic area surrounding Palestine; the honest and faithful leadership; the readiness for sacrifice and giving; the consolidation of the people of Palestine on their land and supporting their steadfastness; effective institutional structures; and the accommodation of everyone in the project of unity, return and liberation.

Within this vision comes the fulfillment of *Allah's* promise of victory and liberation as stated in the opening chapters of Surat al-Isra, and as in the authentic hadith of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS).

Finally, the members of the Islamic trend, especially those of Palestine, should not hesitate, falter, or be ashamed of presenting strongly their Islamic vision. They should apply this vision to the "Palestinian national project," while realizing that speaking about national partnership does not give them the excuse to not present

³ Surat al-Isra'(17:5), site of Quranic Arabic Corpus, <https://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=17&verse=5>

their thoughts based on their identity and mission. Also, their identity should not be lost when talking about national unity (preserving clichés and preoccupation with details). They must introduce their vision as a leverage for the Palestinian action and a way out of the crises experienced by other ideologies and courses. They must present a road map for their Islamic revival project concerning unity, return and liberation.

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Illusions in the Palestinian Politics

This Book

There are widespread literatures and concepts in the Palestinian political, media, scientific and cultural realms that promote visions and perceptions whose implementation seems to be an illusion that has no experimental or systematic scientific reading bases.

This book is intended to expose these illusions and their impact in terms of misconceptions, miscalculations, loss of direction, dilemmas in paths and outcomes, failure in decision-making, and waste of time, efforts and capabilities.

These illusions were concisely discussed, identifying their main ideas and critiquing their concepts, terms and paths. The aim is to reach the widest possible audience interested in the Palestine issue, with plain and simple language, devoid of prolonged discussions. Although what's written is based on scientific, methodological and objective foundations, and on documented information, however, since this book is more of an essay-like book, there is no referencing. At the same time, this book includes summaries based on hundreds of studies and books, and on tens of years of research and preoccupation with the Palestine issue.



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