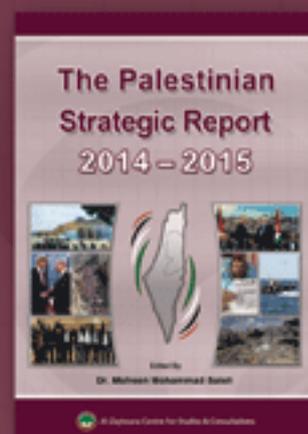


The Palestinian Strategic Report

2014 – 2015

Ch.2



The Aggression, Resistance, Israeli Stand Towards the Internal Palestinian Situation, and the Peace Process

2014 – 2015



The Aggression, Resistance, Israeli Stand Towards the Internal Palestinian Situation, and the Peace Process 2014–2015¹

Third: Aggression and Resistance

Israel pursued its aggression on the Palestinian people in 2014 and 2015; where the summer of 2014 witnessed a major Israeli aggression, dubbed Operation Protective Edge by Israel and Operation Eaten Straw (*al- 'Asf al-Ma 'kul*) by the Palestinians. It was followed by a lull under Egyptian auspices that continued throughout 2015, in spite of “limited” Israeli violations, which were offset by a sharp drop in Palestinian rocket fire from the GS toward Israeli towns and cities. Indeed, 121 rockets were launched from GS in 2014, in addition to those launched during the aggression on Gaza, i.e., 2,470 rockets, compared to 35 rockets during 2015, according to data by the ISA.² In 2014 and 2015, Israel also pursued the closure of Gaza’s border crossings and the tightening of the blockade.

In the WB, Israel obtained a similar truce that lasted until October 2015, when a popular Palestinian uprising erupted in protest against Israeli violations against the Palestinian people and holy places. It was characterized by individual operations in the context of the increased security coordination between the PA’s security forces and the Israeli army as in previous years. It also maintained its incursions and arrests in the WB. The Shabak registered 2,347 attacks in 2015 compared to 1,793 operations in 2014 in the WB, including East Jerusalem. It should be noted that most of the operations that were registered during the two years in the WB were throwing stones and Molotov cocktails.³

¹ This study is the approved English translation of the part discussing Aggression, Resistance, Israeli Stand Towards the Internal Palestinian Situation, and the Peace Process, which is the third section of chapter two of The Palestinian Strategic Report 2014–2015, edited by Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh. The Arabic version of this Report was released in 2016, and the draft of this section was written by Mr. Hani al-Masri.

² Israel Security Agency—ISA (Shabak), 2014 Annual Summary, <https://www.shabak.gov.il/SiteCollectionDocuments/2014%20Annual%20Summary%20Terrorism%20and%20CT%20Activity%20Data%20and%20Trends.pdf>; and, Shabak, <https://www.shabak.gov.il/English/EnTerrorData/Reports/Pages/default.aspx>

³ Ibid.

1. The Killed and Wounded

A total of 2,240 Palestinians were killed in 2014 (see table 15/2). The high number of people killed in 2014 was due to the Israeli war on GS, from 7/7/2014 to 26/8/2014. The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor has stated that 2,147 were killed during the aggression as well as more than ten thousand wounded, most of them children, women and the elderly.⁴ In contrast, 179 Palestinians were killed in 2015 by the Israeli occupation forces and settlers in both GS and WB, including Jerusalem.⁵

In 2014, 11,449 Palestinians were injured,⁶ compared to 1,618 Palestinians in 2015.⁷ In contrast, the Shabak stated that 89 Israelis were killed in 2014 and 29 in 2015 as a result of operations carried out by Palestinians. Moreover, 375 Israelis were injured in 2014, compared to 249 in 2015 (see table 15/2).⁸

⁴ Site of Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, 1/11/2014, http://euomid.org/uploads/reports/Killing_EN.pdf

Note: Al Mezan Center For Human Rights mentioned that during the war 2,175 were killed and 10,918 wounded, see site of Al Mezan Center For Human Rights, 27/8/2014, <http://mezan.org/post/19513> (in Arabic)

⁵ Site of National Gathering of Palestine Families, 3/1/2016, http://www.martyrsfamilies.pna.ps/ar_new/index.php?p=main&id=292 (in Arabic); and site of Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, 10/1/2016, <http://freedom.ps/single/476> (in Arabic)

Note: According to the Palestinian Information Center (PIC), the Palestinian Ministry of Health announced that 179 Palestinians were killed during 2015, and Quds Press International News Agency reported that 182 were killed. See PIC, 1/1/2016, <http://bit.ly/1TaN4ST>; and see Quds Press, 3/1/2016, <http://www.qudspress.com/index.php?page=show&id=14130>

⁶ Israeli Violations in 2015, Palestine News and Information Agency (Wafa), <http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=9224>; and Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, 1/11/2014, http://euomid.org/uploads/reports/Killing_EN.pdf

⁷ Israeli Violations in 2014, Wafa, <http://www.wafainfo.ps/atemplate.aspx?id=9553>

⁸ Shabak, 2014 Annual Summary; and Shabak, <https://www.shabak.gov.il/English/EnTerrorData/Reports/Pages/default.aspx>
Note: Shabak has mentioned that among those killed in 2014, a Palestinian from East Jerusalem and a foreigner. In 2015, among the killed were a Palestinian and a foreigner.

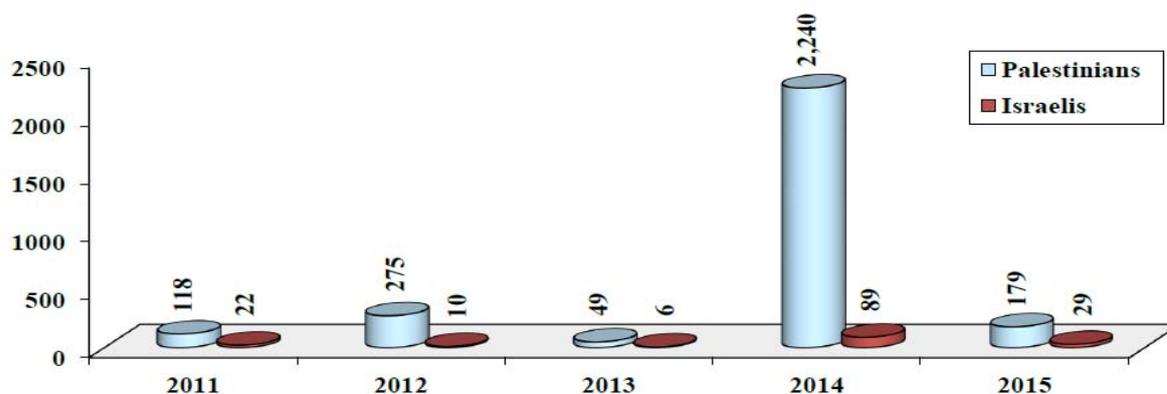


Table 15/2: The Killed and Wounded Among Palestinians and Israelis in the WB and the GS 2011–2015⁹

Year	Killed		Wounded	
	Palestinians	Israelis	Palestinians	Israelis
2011	118	22	*554	159
2012	275	10	1,966	309
2013	49	6	171	44
2014	2,240	89	11,449	375
2015	179	29	1,618	249

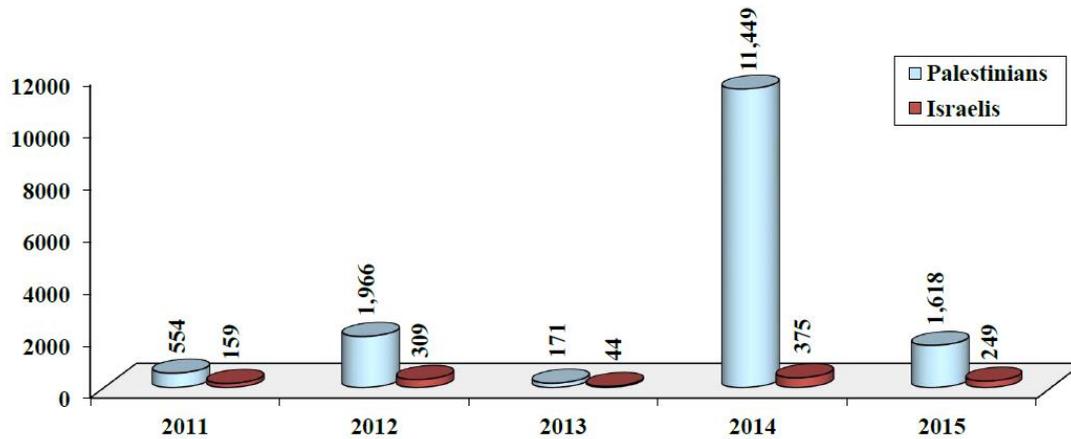
* Including international supporters.

Palestinians and Israelis Killed in the WB and GS 2011–2015



⁹ As for the Palestinians and Israelis who were killed and wounded during 2011–2013, see Mohammad Mohsen Saleh, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2012–2013* (Beirut: al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, 2015), p.109. Whereas for the Israelis who were killed and injured in 2014 and 2015, see Shabak, 2014 Annual Summary; and Shabak, <https://www.shabak.gov.il/English/EnTerrorData/Reports/Pages/default.aspx>. For the Palestinians killed and wounded in 2014–2015, see site of Ahrar Center for Prisoners Studies and Human Rights, 1/1/2015, <http://ahrar.ps/?p=13248>; site of Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), 12/5/2015, [http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=ar&ItemID=1390&mid=3915&wvversion=Staging\(in Arabic\)](http://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?tabID=512&lang=ar&ItemID=1390&mid=3915&wvversion=Staging(in Arabic)); National Gathering of Palestine Families, 3/1/2016, http://www.martyrsfamilies.pna.ps/ar_new/index.php?p=main&id=292; and Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, 10/1/2016, <http://freedom.ps/single/476> (in Arabic)

Palestinians and Israelis Wounded in the WB and GS 2011–2015



2. The Prisoners and Detainees

The suffering of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails continued in 2014 and 2015. By the end of 2015, there were 6,900 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, including 55 women and 450 children. There were 6,482 prisoners from the WB, of whom 500 were from Jerusalem, 328 from GS, and 90 Arab citizens of Israel. This was in addition to dozens of Arab detainees of different nationalities. More than 650 prisoners were classified as either administrative detainees or being detained pending trial, or what Israel calls “unlawful combatants” (see table 16/2).

At the end of 2014, there were around 6,200 prisoners in Israeli jails, including 22 women and 152 children. There were 5,729 prisoners from the WB, 371 from GS, 380 from Jerusalem, and 100 Arab citizens of Israel, in addition to dozens of Arab detainees of different nationalities. Moreover, 450 prisoners were classified as administrative detainees (see table 16/2).

Palestinian Prisoners Center for Studies monitored the arrest of 7,110 Palestinians by Israel in 2014,¹⁰ but the frequency of those arrests fluctuated throughout the year, averaging to 592 arrests per month and 19 cases a day. Therefore, the number of arrests in 2014 converges with the number of arrests during 2015, which amounted to 6,830 detainees.¹¹ During 2015, 2,200 minors and

¹⁰ Site of Palestinian Prisoners Center for Studies, 31/12/2014, <http://www.asrapal.net/index.php?action=detail&id=7111>

¹¹ Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, 10/1/2016, <http://freedom.ps/single/482> (in Arabic)



children were arrested, a 72% increase on 2014. In 2015, more than 120 Palestinians were arrested because of their activities on Facebook, in addition to the arrest of 225 women. Israel also arrested 234 Palestinians from GS, of whom 32 were merchants crossing the Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing who had legal permits.¹²

Palestinian Prisoners Center for Studies stated that 2014 witnessed an intense and fierce campaign of arrests after the disappearance of three settlers near Hebron in June; more than three thousand Palestinians were arrested in less than two months. Jerusalem saw the largest share of the arrests, which exceeded two thousand persons. As in past years, the arrests during 2014 and 2015 affected all segments of Palestinian society without exception, including children and women, academics, editors, the sick, the elderly, human rights activists, journalists, and MPs. They were carried out in a number of ways, including storming into homes or hospitals, abduction from the street and the workplace, the kidnapping of the sick and injured, or via the “Arabized undercover security units,” or at the crossings and checkpoints, not to mention that dozens of fishermen were arrested at sea in the GS.¹³

Table 16/2: Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Prisons 2011–2015¹⁴

Year	Total no. of detainees	WB*	GS	Serving life sentences	Women	Children
2011	4,417	3,856	459	525	6	132
2012	4,743	4,115	437	529	10	193
2013	5,023	4,408	389	476	17	154
2014	6,200	5,729	371	481	23	152
2015	6,900	6,482	328	502	55	450

* Approximate numbers according to the Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association—Addameer.

¹² Sama News Agency, 31/12/2015, <http://samanews.com/ar/index.php?act=post&id=257762>; and Palestine News Network (PNN), 4/1/2016, <http://bit.ly/23UEZKD> (in Arabic)

¹³ Palestinian Prisoners Center for Studies, 31/12/2014; and Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, 10/1/2016, <http://freedom.ps/single/488> (in Arabic)

¹⁴ See Palestinian Prisoners Statistics in Israeli Prisons of January in the period 2012–2016, site of Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association—Addameer, <http://www.addameer.org/ar/statistics/20160101> (in Arabic)

In the framework of the peace process between the PLO and Israel, which resumed in late July 2013, Israel committed to release 104 prisoners who were arrested prior to the 1993 Oslo Accords. Indeed, 78 prisoners were released in three batches on 14/8/2013, 30/10/2013, and 30/12/2013. However, Israel disrupted the release of the fourth batch, which was scheduled for 29/3/2014, as a bargaining chip to be used with the Palestinian side. This release had still not taken place at the time of writing this report. Most of the freed prisoners belonged to the Fatah movement; and they were sentenced to one life imprisonment at least for the murder of Israelis.¹⁵ The Solidarity Foundation for Human Rights—Tadamon stated that the occupation authorities informed the 21 released prisoners who reside in the WB that they were prohibited from traveling outside the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 for a period of ten years, in addition to being barred from traveling outside the borders of their governorate for a full year.¹⁶

The conditions experienced by prisoners saw no improvement in 2014 and 2015. Rather, Israel stepped up repressive measures against the prisoners, including medical neglect and torture, continuing to deprive prisoners from the right to receive individual family visits, based on “security prohibition” against them, or collective visits for the families of prisoners from GS. This was on top of malnutrition, a lack of blankets and clothing, and the confiscation of prisoners’ funds, which are all practices that constitute gross violations of international humanitarian law, and are often compared to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Their documentation in a scientific manner and discussion of these violations at all levels of society are essential.

In this context, the Palestinian Prisoners Center for Studies said that the year 2014 was one of the worst years for prisoners, as Israel re-abducted 71 prisoners who were released during the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange, including four female prisoners. Seven of them were released and the previous sentences were restored for 19 of them. Moreover, many arbitrary decisions were imposed on prisoners in 2014 that reduced their rights and narrowed down their chances of a decent standard of living, most notably the ratification by the Ministerial Committee of a law that authorized courts to prevent the head of state from issuing an amnesty for Palestinian prisoners or commuting their sentences. This was in addition to a decision to allow special units to use weapons during

¹⁵ See *al-Hayat* newspaper, London, 30/10/2013; and see *Haaretz* newspaper, 28/3/2014.

¹⁶ Site of Alresalah Press, 30/10/2013.



inspections and intrusions. Moreover, family visits were reduced to once every two months, and the monthly allowance prisoners receive through their parents was reduced to 400 shekels (about \$103).¹⁷

In 2015, the Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs reported that Israel committed 16 war crimes and seven crimes against humanity with the prisoners. The Commission stated that in 2015, the largest arbitrary and racist laws against prisoners were discussed and approved, as follows: the law for force-feeding of prisoners on hunger strike; the law to increase the number and duration of sentences against child stone throwers; the law tightening the minimum punishment for stone-throwers in Jerusalem; the law for the trial of children under the age of 14; the stop-and-frisk law that allows the authorities to conduct a body search in the absence of a reasonable suspicion; and the law exempting the intelligence services from documenting the investigation of this; the application of the Israeli criminal law in the 1948 occupied territories for the benefit of settlers; the draft law for the execution of prisoners; the draft law for the conviction of Palestinians without the existence of suspicion.¹⁸

Administrative Detention

There were more than 650 administrative detainees held by Israel without specific charges or trial at the end of 2015, compared to 450 and 155 at the end of 2014 and 2013, respectively. The associations for prisoners, which include the Palestinian Prisoner Club, the Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association—Addameer, Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, indicated that the increase in administrative detention cases came after the start of the Jerusalem *Intifadah* in October 2015. These institutions announced in a report that the Israeli authorities issued 161 administrative detention orders through February 2016, including 92 new orders, which brought the number of administrative detainees in Israeli jails to around 750 prisoners. According to the Palestinian Prisoner Club, this was the first time that there had been so many

¹⁷ Palestinian Prisoners Center for Studies, 31/12/2014.

The exchange rate of the dollar against the Israeli shekel on 31/12/2014 was based on the Bank of Israel data, which was 3.889.

¹⁸ Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, 6/1/2016, <http://freedom.ps/freedom/single/35>; and Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs, 17/1/2016, <http://freedom.ps/single/516> (in Arabic)

administrative detainees since 2009, adding that the Israeli authorities issued decisions of administrative detention against 84 Palestinians within ten days.¹⁹

Although administrative detention is prohibited under international law, and violates the most basic human rights, Israel has continued to issue administrative arrest warrants for various segments of Palestinian society, including PLC members, human rights activists, workers, students, lawyers, mothers, and traders. As a result of the Israeli resort to administrative detention and its repeated renewal, administrative detainees went on a hunger strike and fought a “battle of empty stomachs.” On 24/4/2014, administrative detainees collectively began a hunger strike dubbed “water and salt,” so as to end their administrative detention. Some prisoners also went on an individual hunger strike that ended with their release: Khodor Adnan (2011/2012 and 2015), Hanaa Shalabi (2012), Ayman Sharawneh (260 days 2012/2013), Samer al-‘Issawi (1/8/2012–23/4/2013),²⁰ Muhammad ‘Allan, who was released after a 65 day hunger strike during 2015, Muhammad al-Qiq, who ended his hunger strike on 26/2/2016 after 94 days, after the Israeli authorities pledged to end his administrative arrest on 21/5/2016 by virtue of a non-extendable decision.²¹

The hunger strike of administrative detainees represented an important step towards ending this unfair and arbitrary policy, as these detainees rejected all forms of vitamins, nutritional supplements, and medical examinations, and relied only on water to protest their administrative detention.²² This prompted Israel to approve the law for force-feeding prisoners who were on a hunger strike, applying it for the first time on administrative detainee Muhammad al-Qiq on 12/1/2016, through the introduction of fluids to his body against his will, in spite of the international ban on force-feeding hunger strikers.²³ The following table shows the number of administrative detainees in Israeli prisons at the end of each year during the 2010–2015 period:

¹⁹ *Al-Hayat*, 2/3/2016.

²⁰ Site of Aljazeera.net, 29/6/2014, <http://bit.ly/1ShuHLM>

²¹ *Al-Ayyam* newspaper, Ramallah, 27/2/2016.

²² Ra’fat Hamdouneh, Open-Ended Hunger Strike (Definition, Roots, Law, and Types), site of The Prisoner’s Center for Studies, 23/12/2015,

<http://alasra.ps/ar//index.php?act=post&id=27436> (in Arabic)

²³ PIC, 12/1/2016, <http://bit.ly/22BMgJj>



Table 17/2: Administrative Detainees in Israeli Prisons at the End of Each Year 2010–2015²⁴

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Administrative detainees	207	310	178	155	450	650

3. Israeli Blockade on the Palestinian People

The Israeli occupation forces continued their siege of the GS for the ninth consecutive year and tightened the siege's measures on the population, continuing to impose severe restrictions on the movement of commercial crossings and those relating to the movement of individuals. There was no structural change in the siege measures in 2014 and 2015, as the alleged alleviations declared by Israel did not affect the main restrictions on the freedom of movement of people and goods.²⁵

Severe restrictions continued on the movement of GS residents through Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing, the only outlet to reach the WB. This resulted in depriving 1.8 million people of their right to travel. The almost-complete closure of Rafah International Crossing Point since the beginning of 2015 by the Egyptian authorities also denied the GS population their right to travel from or to Strip. Moreover, in 2015 there was an almost complete closure of the Rafah crossing according to the Ministry of Interior in GS, which explained that the Egyptian authorities opened the crossing sporadically and only for a period of 21 days, for humanitarian cases.²⁶ Some 90 thousand citizens were in desperate need to travel through 2015, according to the Palestinian Border and Crossings Commission in the GS, 15 thousand of whom registered at the Interior Ministry, including 3,500 medical referrals.²⁷

²⁴ See Palestinian Prisoners Statistics in Israeli Prisons of January in the period 2011–2016, Addameer, <http://www.addameer.org/ar/statistics/20160101> (in Arabic)

²⁵ Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR), Gaza Strip: Actual Strangulation and Deceptive Facilitations, 11/3/2016, <http://pchrghaza.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Gaza-Strip-Actual-Strangulation.pdf>

²⁶ Site of Ministry of Interior, Palestinian National Authority, 29/11/2015, http://www.moi.gov.ps/Download/file_store/87a91f9b-f6a5-48fc-acdd-df4c1a351f68.pdf; and Aljazeera.net, 10/1/2016, <http://bit.ly/1p6s313>

²⁷ PCHR, Gaza Strip: Actual Strangulation and Deceptive Facilitations, 11/3/2016.

As for the movement of goods, during 2015, the Israeli authorities closed the only commercial crossing in GS for 143 days, 39.1% of total days of the year. This led to a shortage of many basic commodities and essential items, including some types of fuel, especially cooking gas, and all construction materials. Israeli authorities continued to ban the export of all GS products for the eighth consecutive year, excluding very limited quantities of Gaza exports, mostly agricultural commodities. GS exports amounted to two truckloads a day, compared to 150 truckloads per day prior to the siege.²⁸

Coordination continued between Egypt and Israel regarding the GS, and the director of the Political-Military and Policy Bureau at the Israeli Defense Ministry, Major General Amos Gilead, stated during the 2015 Herzliya Conference that there was Egyptian-Israeli coordination with regard to securing the border and “the fight against terrorism.” Gilead said that Egypt would help Israel in the fight against terrorism by demolishing tunnels used for hostile purposes, adding that Hamas was now isolated in GS thanks to Egypt.²⁹ The Egyptian regime destroyed about two thousand tunnels on the border with the GS from July 2013 until the end of 2015. According to Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* on 7/1/2016, Egypt asked Israel for clarifications on the progress of the talks being conducted with Turkey, in order to reach a reconciliation agreement between them. Israeli officials have said that the Egyptian government has expressed its reservation to grant Turkey a role in the GS, and asked to know whether Israel pledged to the Turks to ease the blockade on GS.³⁰

Thus, the facts on the ground indicate that no end is in sight to the blockade of GS, and contradict successive Israeli statements on easing the blockade. The facts confirm that the aim of Israeli authorities’ policies is the institutionalization of the siege imposed on the Strip, and the securing of international approval, which means success in circumventing the rules of international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.³¹

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Site of Elbadil, 19/6/2015, <http://bit.ly/1W6hok5>. For more details, see Senior Israeli Defense Official at 2015 Herzliya Conference: Deterrence Working but al Qaida Now on Border, site of Herzliya Conference, <http://www.herzliyaconference.org/eng/?CategoryID=544&ArticleID=2657&SearchParam=%22Amos+Gilead+%22>

³⁰ *Haaretz*, 7/1/2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/1.696080>

³¹ PCHR, Gaza Strip: Actual Strangulation and Deceptive Facilitations, 11/3/2016.



4. Aggression on GS 2014

GS was subjected to a broad Israeli aggression that lasted 51 days (7/7/2014–26/8/2014). The assault, which was dubbed Operation Protective Edge by Israel and Operation Eaten Straw (*al- 'Asf al-Ma'kul*) by the Palestinians, was the third war waged by Israel on the Strip in six years; after Operation Cast Lead/Battle of al-Furqan (27/12/2008–18/1/2009), and Operation Pillar of Defense/ Operation Shale Stones in November 2012. The Israeli targeted civilians in the GS, reflected in the mass killings of residents in their homes, a flagrant violation of international laws and human rights conventions.³²

The performance of the resistance during the 51 days of war showed its ability (most notably Hamas) to develop its missile systems, increasing their range to approximately 120 kilometers, reaching all the Israeli population centers in the 1948 occupied territories. Moreover, the resistance managed to infiltrate the Israeli side by land, sea and air, and offered new surprises such UAVs. The command in the GS maintained its control of Palestinian resistance forces, and was not disrupted. It was able to continue effectively running ministries, civil society institutions and resistance processes. The Israeli side had a case of “intelligence blindness” on the ground, which weakened the potential for Israel to hit its targets. Moreover, the resistance achieved a popular and broad consensus of support, despite the extremity of the violence and damage inflicted by the Israeli forces on civilian areas.

According to statistics by the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, 2,147 were killed, including 530 children and 302 women, 23 medical staff, and 16 journalists. Additionally 10,870 were injured, including 3,303 children and 2,101 women. The Israeli army attacked 5,263 targets in the Strip during the offensive,³³ with 60,664 rockets and missiles by land, sea and air, including government buildings, tunnels, and rocket launchers, houses, prominent activists, and weapons stores.³⁴ The aggression also led to the destruction of 17,123 homes, of which 2,465 houses were completely destroyed and 14,667 houses were

³² Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, 28/8/2014, <http://bit.ly/23N19L8>; and Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, 1/11/2014, http://euromid.org/uploads/reports/Killing_EN.pdf

³³ *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper, 27/8/2014, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4564678,00.html>

³⁴ Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor, 1/11/2014, http://euromid.org/uploads/reports/Killing_EN.pdf

partially destroyed, in addition to 39,500 damaged homes.³⁵ Minister of Public Works and Housing in the Palestinian government Moufid al-Hasayneh said that Israel largely destroyed about 20 thousand housing units, which became uninhabitable, in addition to partially hitting nearly 40 thousand other units with varying degrees of damage.³⁶ Furthermore, the Palestinian Ministry of Endowments in GS also announced the full destruction of 71 mosques with 200 partially destroyed, in addition to targeting more than 24 endowment properties, 12 cemeteries, 6 Zakat committees, a church, an Islamic school, a branch of the Islamic Da'wah College in northern GS, and the Directorate of Gaza Endowments.³⁷

The Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor estimated the total direct and indirect economic losses suffered by the economic sector in the GS at \$3.6 billion. However, the Deputy Minister of Economy Taysir 'Amr said on 28/8/2014 that the total losses suffered by the GS during the Israeli offensive were \$7.5–\$8 billion, including direct and indirect losses.³⁸

According to Shabak, Operation Protective Edge/ Operation Eaten Straw led to the deaths of 73 Israelis, including 67 soldiers, while the number of injured was 312. 4,692 rockets fell on Israel from the GS (2,968 rockets and 1,724 mortar shells),³⁹ targeting the surrounding southern settlements, as well as Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Haifa and al-Khudaira (*Hadera*).

With regard to direct Israeli economic losses from the war, the Bank of Israel announced in its annual report that the GDP losses as a result of the aggression were estimated at 3.5 billion shekels (\$894.9 million).⁴⁰ Moreover, Israeli sources estimated the direct and indirect economic damage by the war at 12 billion

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ *Al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 24/8/2014.

³⁷ See *al-Quds*, 27/8/2014, and according to the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), 73 mosques were completely destroyed and 205 partially. See *al-Hayat al-Jadida* newspaper, Ramallah, 29/8/2014; and according to the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor 62 were completely destroyed and 109 partially.

³⁸ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, London, 30/8/2014.

³⁹ See Shabak, 2014 Annual Summary.

⁴⁰ Site of Bank of Israel, 16/3/2015,

www.boi.org.il/en/NewsAndPublications/PressReleases/Documents/Excerpt%20from%20the%20BOI%202014%20Annual%20Report%20-%20The%20effect%20of%20military%20conflicts%20on%20economic%20activity.docx

The exchange rate of the dollar against the Israeli shekel on 16/3/2015 was based on the Bank of Israel data, which was 3.911.



shekels (about \$3.07 billion).⁴¹ Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon also announced on 2/9/2014 that the direct cost of war exceeded nine billion shekels (about \$2.5 billion).⁴² With regard to indirect losses, economic newspaper *TheMarker* indicated that the tourism sector incurred big losses amounting to about \$650 million during the aggression, adding that the indirect losses in the industrial sector exceeded \$360 million.⁴³ Moreover, the shekel also traded lower against the US dollar during the aggression, with its exchange rate at 3.614 on 10/9/2014, compared to 3.429 at the beginning of the aggression on 8/7/2014.⁴⁴

5. The Jerusalem *Intifadah* 2015

Regardless of how we label what happened in October 2015, whether it was an uprising, an *Intifadah*, or a movement, the Palestinian population showed that they could overcome the weakness of its leadership, and revolted to send the occupier the message that the *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the holy sites are a red line that cannot be crossed. There were several reasons that prompted the Palestinian youth to confront Israeli forces and try stop the imminent danger facing *al-Aqsa* Mosque and prevent its seizure or division, without any guidance from factional leaders. At the time of writing, having completed its third month, the Jerusalem *Intifadah* carries the potential of success and expansion, especially with the insistence of the Palestinian youth not to surrender to repeated Israeli violations.

The Jerusalem Center for the Studies of Israeli and Palestinian Affairs documented 210 Palestinian attacks against Israeli targets, which resulted in the killing of 24 Israelis and wounding 345 others. Palestinian operations included 73 shootings, 74 stabbings, 44 attempted stabbings, and 19 attacks by motorists.⁴⁵ The Palestinian Health Ministry also reported that 142 Palestinians were killed from the beginning of October 2015 until the end of 2015, including 27 children and 7 women, and 15,710 were wounded in the WB and the GS by bullets, suffocation, or burns.⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Assafir* newspaper, Beirut, 17/3/2015.

⁴² Site of The Times of Israel, 3/9/2014, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/gaza-war-cost-2-5-billion-yaalon-says/>

Note: The exchange rate of the dollar against the Israeli shekel during September 2014 was based on the Bank of Israel data, which was 3.578.

⁴³ Aljazeera.net, 28/8/2014.

⁴⁴ Bank of Israel, <http://www.boi.org.il/en/Markets/ExchangeRates/Pages/Default.aspx>

⁴⁵ Site of Jerusalem Center for the Studies of Israeli and Palestinian Affairs, 29/12/2015, <http://alqudscenter.net/?p=857>

⁴⁶ Site of Ministry of Health, Palestinian National Authority, 31/12/2015, <http://www.moh.ps/index/ArticleView/ArticleId/3108/Language/ar>

Fourth: The Israeli Position Towards the Domestic Palestinian Situation

In 2014 and 2015, Israel maintained its policy, more accurately described as a strategy, in dealing with the domestic Palestinian scene. It was the same strategy pursued over the previous years in the context of the continued Palestinian political and geographic division, faltering reconciliation efforts since 2007, and the absence of any serious Arab role in resolving the Palestinian issue.

As for the Palestinian reconciliation file, the Israeli leadership expressed resentment at, and strong opposition to, the signing of the Hamas and Fatah reconciliation agreement on 23/4/2014 at the home of the prime minister in Gaza, Isma'il Haniyyah, located in the Shati' Refugee Camp in Gaza City.⁴⁷ Israel threatened to take unilateral steps and impose economic sanctions against the PA, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rushed to cancel the negotiation meeting that was scheduled to be held between the PA and Israel delegations on 23/4/2014. Netanyahu said, "Abu Mazen (Abbas) could have chosen peace with Israel instead of peace with a murderous terror organization. Tonight, while talks are ongoing to extend peace talks, he chose Hamas... He who chooses Hamas does not want peace."⁴⁸

After the formation of the National Consensus Government headed by Rami Hamdallah on 2/6/2014,⁴⁹ the Israeli Security Cabinet decided not to conduct any negotiations with the new Palestinian government, and authorized Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to impose additional sanctions on the PA.⁵⁰

Israel maintained its policy in the GS, including economic strangulation and military pressure in dealing with Hamas, in an effort to thwart the model posed by the latter, and to curb its influence in Palestinian society. The Israeli army launched its military strike Operation Protective Edge/ Operation Eaten Straw on 7/7/2014, claiming it was targeting the capabilities and interests of Hamas, in response to the continued firing of rockets at Israeli towns.⁵¹ After the signing of the ceasefire agreement in the GS, which came into force on 26/8/2014, Israel tried to exploit it

⁴⁷ Alray, 23/4/2014. (in Arabic)

⁴⁸ *Al-Quds*, 23/4/2014; and *Alghad* newspaper, Amman, 25/4/2014. See also *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 23/4/2014, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4512606,00.html>

⁴⁹ Wafa, 2/6/2014.

⁵⁰ *Al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 3/6/2014. See also site of Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2/6/2014, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2014/Pages/Security-Cabinet-on-the-Hamas-PA-government-2-Jun-2014.aspx>

⁵¹ Aljazeera.net, 8/7/2014.



to its advantage through the “calm will be answered with calm” policy, neglecting easing the blockade and refusing to open the Rafah crossing and the rest of the crossings. Its aim was to retain the tools of economic pressure on Hamas in GS in order to chart a new political future for the Strip, and maintain the Israeli security interests.

Israel also kept the option of war against GS and the threat of its re-occupation open, waving it whenever it wanted, as a battalion commander in the Paratroopers Brigade threatened Hamas with retaliation for any operations against the Israeli army or Israeli settlements adjacent to GS. Israel’s Minister of Intelligence and Strategic Affairs Yuval Steinitz, said in a BBC interview, “All that I can say is that it [reoccupation of GS] was seriously considered and I can tell you one thing, if Hamas would insist on continuing the rocket fire into Israel for another few weeks or months, I assume that this would be the only alternative.”⁵² Moreover, Avigdor Lieberman said that it was impossible to prevent a new military operation in the GS during the next summer [summer of 2015].⁵³

However, a new trend began growing inside Israel regarding the easing of the blockade, and it intensified after the negotiations to restore relations between Turkey and Israel reached an advanced stage and lifting the GS siege was put on the table. Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* quoted the recommendations of security officials to the Minister of Defense, Moshe Ya’alon, on the need to change the security cordon policy imposed on the GS, and the need to open the crossings, as this would contribute to the restoration of security on the GS borders for a long time.⁵⁴ Some progress was made regarding this issue in late 2015, although Netanyahu’s statement, on 21/12/2015, rejected the Turkish condition of lifting the naval blockade on the GS,⁵⁵ which may come in the context of an attempt to strengthen Israel’s position in the negotiation.

In the midst of an escalating *Intifadah* and the increase of stabbing and shooting operations in the WB, the Israeli authorities have been keen to emphasize the importance of security coordination with the PA and its efficacy in preventing or reducing resistance operations carried out against the occupation and settlers in the

⁵² Site of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 27/8/2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28951094>; and BBC, 28/8/2014,

http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2014/08/140827_yuval_steinitz_interview (in Arabic)

⁵³ Site of Felesteen Online, 8/7/2015, <http://bit.ly/1p6vYuH>

⁵⁴ Al-Masdar, 8/8/2015, <http://bit.ly/23Ea5G3>

⁵⁵ Site of Arabs 48, 21/12/2015, <http://bit.ly/1qwxvLv>

WB. In this context, an Israeli military assessment assured that military coordination of the Israeli security forces with the PA's security forces remained a fundamental building block in bilateral relations and would prevent the aggravation of the confrontation with the Palestinians in the WB.⁵⁶

In order to urge the PA to take more action against the uprising and to put obstacles in the path of the government, Israel threatened to reoccupy Palestinian areas of the WB by launching Operation Defensive Shield 2.⁵⁷ Moreover, the Israeli army tightened the economic noose in the WB through the establishment of a number of checkpoints and blocked the flow of goods and commodities to the Palestinian domestic market as well as exports and imports through Jordan.⁵⁸

Israel's dealings with Palestinian affairs in the WB and the GS was contradictory. On one hand, it wanted a long-term truce with Hamas and encouraged the continuation of the Palestinian internal division, but it did not want to pay any price. On the other hand, it refused to make any progress with the PA concerning the peace process, but hoped to prevent its collapse, fearing the emergence of a new reality that would be more difficult to deal with.

In spite of rumors on talks between Israel and Hamas on a long-term truce after the 2014 GS war, it was completely denied by both sides. In this context, we must point out what some called "Blair's initiative", the involvement of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair. After the big fuss surrounding this initiative, it turned out to be a mediation without commissioning. According to the military correspondent for *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Alex Fishman, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that "dealing with it could seriously damage Israel, as it could push Mahmoud Abbas to resign, who sees the initiative as a betrayal on the Palestinian question." Netanyahu also said that "any indirect or direct negotiations with Hamas provide legitimacy for Europeans to recognize the organization."⁵⁹

Netanyahu's remarks underlined his rejection of conducting negotiations directly or indirectly with Hamas. On 5/10/2014, Netanyahu said, "I negotiate with an enemy who wants to stop being my enemy. That's how you make peace. An

⁵⁶ *Raialyoum* newspaper, London, 27/1/2016.

⁵⁷ Site of The Jewish Press.com, 4/10/2015, <http://www.jewishpress.com/news/breaking-news/likud-minister-well-launch-operation-defensive-shield-2-if-needed/2015/10/04/>

⁵⁸ Aljazeera.net, 21/10/2015, <http://bit.ly/1r26NeQ>

⁵⁹ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 4/9/2015, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4697530,00.html>



enemy who wants to destroy you remains committed to your obliteration is not, is not someone you can negotiate with.”⁶⁰

Netanyahu also said he would never recognize Hamas or negotiate with it, even indirectly.⁶¹ Walla! website quoted a non-official source in Netanyahu’s office saying that there are no real negotiations between Hamas and Israel, whether mediated by Turkey, Qatar, or Tony Blair, and such negotiations were unthinkable.⁶²

Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon also reiterated that Israel was not conducting any political negotiations with Hamas, adding that coordination with them about the reconstruction of the GS takes place through the UN or the PA.⁶³ Major General Yoav Mordechai, the coordinator of government operations in the occupied Palestinian territories, linked the GS reconstruction and lifting of the siege to the return of the PA effective control of the Strip.⁶⁴ Netanyahu also called on ‘Abbas and the PA to take over the management of GS instead of Hamas, asking for international pressure on ‘Abbas to cease his partnership with Hamas.⁶⁵

Fears grew in Israel in 2015 from potential chaos in the WB if ‘Abbas insisted on resigning. According to Alex Fishman, the Israeli intelligence services conducted discussions on scenarios for “the day after,” especially concerning who would succeed him, and expected that Abu Mazen would be succeeded by a three-party leadership: Saeb Erekat, Majed Faraj, and Salam Fayyad. Israel fears that in such a situation these three would not “keep things under control.”⁶⁶

Some in Israel believe that if Abu Mazen actually resigned from the presidency of the PA and the PLO, this would be a blow to the confidence of the Israelis over their estimated conditions in the Palestinian arena. The assessment in Israel is that ‘Abbas is working on an “exit strategy” from the mortgage he inherited from ‘Arafat, which includes serious commitments to the Palestinian people.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Site of Cable News Network (CNN), CNN, 5/10/2014,

<http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2014/10/05/pm-netanyahu-on-fareed-zakaria-gps/>

⁶¹ *Almustaqbal* newspaper, Beirut, 28/9/2014.

⁶² Alray, 17/8/2015, <http://bit.ly/23Eac4v> (in Arabic)

⁶³ The Arabic site of Israel Broadcasting Authority—IBA (Arabil), 29/6/2015,

<http://www.iba.org.il/arabil/arabic.aspx?entity=1102947&type=1&topic=0>

⁶⁴ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 27/2/2015, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4630919,00.html>

⁶⁵ *Alghad*, 9/6/2014.

⁶⁶ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 4/9/2015, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4697530,00.html>

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

The role of Israel regarding the succession of ‘Abbas has emerged, with a tendency to endorse Muhammad Dahlan rather than the rest of the presumed candidates through several indications and stances. Israeli newspaper *Maariv* reported that Netanyahu hopes that Dahlan will succeed ‘Abbas as the president of the Palestinian Authority, and that he sent his special envoy, attorney Isaac Molcho to meet Dahlan in Dubai; it is believed that Molcho and Dahlan have met many times. The newspaper added that it is estimated that Israel wants to maintain its relationship with Dahlan in anticipation of the moment when ‘Abbas decides to step down from his post as the PA president.⁶⁸

Israeli sources indicated that a meeting took place between Israeli Foreign Minister Lieberman and Dahlan at the end of 2014, in France. According to Walla! Website, Netanyahu sent a confidential message via Shabak chief Yoram Cohen to ‘Abbas, assuring him that the meeting between Lieberman and Dahlan had not taken place with his knowledge or consent. However, it is unlikely that this step was taken without prior coordination with Netanyahu.⁶⁹

In an interview with Israel’s Channel 2 on 16/1/2015, Lieberman said there could be a peaceful solution to the conflict in the region by the end of 2015, but that Israel needed to get rid of ‘Abbas, not by assassinating him, but through negotiations with the PA and other Arab countries in the region to achieve a comprehensive peace. When asked about his meeting with Dahlan in Paris, Lieberman said that he met many Arab dignitaries there, but he did not remember their names.⁷⁰

Citing high-level sources in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Israel’s Channel 10 revealed the presence of the Israeli Ambassador to Egypt, Haim Koren, at the wedding of Muhammad Dahlan’s son, which was held in August 2015 at the Fairmont Nile City Hotel in Cairo.⁷¹ *Haaretz* newspaper confirmed that in 2015 the UAE and Israel agreed to inaugurate an official representation of the occupation in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. It seems that Dahlan played an active role in this matter, tweeting: “I congratulate Mohammed bin Zayed for the opening of

⁶⁸ *Al-Hayat*, 6/2/2014.

⁶⁹ *Arabs* 48, 4/1/2015.

⁷⁰ *Arabs* 48, 16/1/2015.

⁷¹ *Felsteen Online*, 31/8/2015.



an Israeli representation in the UAE, as this establishes close relations that will contribute to the fight against terrorism, and support peace and stability.”⁷²

Fifth: The Peace Process

US Secretary of State John Kerry’s peace initiative, which lasted nine months and ended on 29/4/2014 requires analysis. The initiative was rejected by each party for different reasons, although the Israeli government bears the primary responsibility for the failure, as it insisted on including in the Framework Agreement a Palestinian recognition of Israel as a state for the “Jewish people,” and on the refusal to withdraw from occupied East Jerusalem.⁷³

Israel demanded the annexation of the large settlement blocs and their expansion to include the largest number of settlers and “random” settlements. It refused to draw their borders, in addition to demanding the stationing of troops from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for an interim period after the withdrawal of Israeli troops. It also insisted on the stationing of the Israeli army along borders, the Jordan Valley, and other strategic areas for a period of 10–20 years, refusing the return of a single refugee in application of the right of return.⁷⁴ Moreover, it did not agree on the return of even a modest number of refugees annually, even within the framework of the “Family Unification Laws” in effect in Israel.

Kerry failed, even though he agreed to bring up the Framework Agreement instead of discussing a peace treaty and a final agreement, as per the Israeli logic that favors transitional solutions so as to avoid the fundamental issues. He also agreed to submit an American document rather than a joint one, in order to allow the parties to make observations.

Kerry’s failure was because any peace settlement that includes the creation of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders is rejected by the mainstream in Israel. The current Israeli government and its predecessors are managing the conflict, not resolve it, until its imposed racist occupational settlement becomes a fait accompli, rendering the establishment of a Palestinian state much more difficult. Ultimately, the most that can be earned by Palestinians in this context would be limited

⁷² Haaretz, 27/11/2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.688235>; and site of islamtoday.net, 28/11/2015, <http://www.islamtoday.net/albasheer/artshow-12-218732.htm>

⁷³ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 17/1/2014.

⁷⁴ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 16/1/2014.

autonomy in inhabited and isolated ghettos. The Israeli logic was accepted, and what was discussed was conflict management rather than resolution.

Kerry stopped his initiative when he was convinced that the Israeli position was quite inflexible and could be changed without the kind of pressure that the US administration does not wish to exert. Also, the Palestinian side could not go further to show flexibility and compromise without losing its ability to convince its own people, from whom the political gap is expanding due to the failure of the approach, especially the option of bilateral negotiations under American auspices.

Kerry saw that the intransigence of the Netanyahu government amounted to a failure to respond even to the Palestinian demand for a settlement freeze and the release of the fourth batch of prisoners, who had been arrested before the Oslo Accords. This was despite the fact that this step was part of an agreement prior to the resumption of negotiations, which included their release in exchange for the abstention of Palestinians from joining international institutions throughout the agreed ceiling period of nine months for reaching an agreement. This means that it became impossible to pursue the negotiations, let alone reach an agreement.

The Netanyahu government considered that what was happening in the region was a historic opportunity to complete its remaining expansionist colonial goals. Israel gambled on the effects of the Saudi-Iran sectarian conflict for the formation of an alliance with Arab states against the Iranian axis. This would allow it to obtain regional political acceptance without the need to resolve the Palestinian issue through the establishment of a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders. It even promoted the possibility that the negotiations were not Israeli-Palestinian, but regional, and hence it seeks a regional solution at the expense of the Palestinians.

The above confirms the earlier analysis that negotiations are futile, and that they are pursued only to prevent the emergence of other options and maintain the status quo. In this context, the negotiations that took place after the signing of the Oslo Accords in general, and after the collapse and failure of Camp David II in 2000 in particular, and after Israel getting rid of Yasir 'Arafat and the reformulation of power, now aim to maintain power, and not to reach a solution to end the occupation and establish a State. In fact, after the adoption of The Roadmap for Peace in 2003, which was rejected by the Sharon government with its 14 reservations, the Palestinians are now unilaterally carrying out their commitments without reciprocity on the Israeli side.



To reach conflict resolution and the establishment of a sovereign state on the 1967 borders, the rules of the game would need to change significantly, and this would require a radically different approach from the Palestinians.

It is noted that the number of parties that are still calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state has declined, even under Israeli conditions that leave the proposed Palestine effectively a state in name only. In a statement on the eve of the Israeli elections, Netanyahu dropped his acceptance of a Palestinian state, which he had declared in his speech at the University of Bar-Ilan in 2009. He then recanted from this stance, emphasizing the impossibility of the establishment of a Palestinian state now and until further notice.⁷⁵ In Netanyahu's view, if it were to be established, it would have to be committed to Israel's security and political conditions that would turn it into anything but a state. After Netanyahu, the right, and the extreme right declared their stances, the Labor party, which was part of the "peace" and leftist camp, declared in a recent conference that the time is not right for the establishment of a Palestinian state. It suggested instead a unilateral separation plan that was unanimously approved. This plan complements the plan that Ariel Sharon initiated in GS and had planned to complete in the WB, had it not been for his clinical death.

There are parties, such as the Jewish Home, that suggest the exchange of populations and territory,⁷⁶ an idea previously put forward by Ehud Olmert to 'Abbas, and reiterated later by Benjamin Netanyahu, which calls for the annexation of Area C. There are other parties claiming the annexation of the entire WB and the imposition of racial discrimination against the Palestinians, until the opportunity to expel them becomes available. They want to solve the Palestinian issue away from Israel through a regional solution, or at the expense of Jordan.

In parallel, in 2015 the US announced, most notably through Robert Malley, head of the Middle East desk of the National Security Council, that the Obama administration would not launch a new initiative for the resumption of negotiations until the end of its term. The maximum it could do was launch initiatives to improve Palestinian living conditions, build confidence between them and the Israelis, and prevent the collapse of the PA. Mahmud 'Abbas threatened to resign, and reconsider the relationship with Israel, moving from being peace partners to

⁷⁵ *Alhadath* newspaper, Ramallah, 20/3/2015.

⁷⁶ *Alghad*, 29/11/2014.

consider it a relationship with the enemy and the occupation. He also threatened to halt security coordination and change economic relations, as well as making the threat of withdrawing the PLO's recognition of Israel in response to its lack of recognition of a Palestinian state, its denial of all agreements, its occupation and settlement expansion, and its stalling of the establishment of a Palestinian state.

These threats amount to maneuvers and tactics to pressure the Israelis, and there is no real intention to implement them, but there are growing indications of the inability of the Palestinian people to bear more of the US-Israeli pressures, most notably the Intifadah, and the erosion of the legitimacy and credibility of the PA and the President. This is in addition to the start of the battle of succession; all this emphasizes the importance of maintaining the momentum before things become politically impossible. Finally, German Chancellor Angela Merkel joined the voices saying that the current time was not the right time to establish a state.⁷⁷

Since President Mahmud 'Abbas was still betting on a resumption of negotiations, he did not carry out his threats to dissolve the Authority, which he said had become "without authority." He also did not halt the commitments in accordance with the decisions of the Central Council taken in March 2015,⁷⁸ which he asserted in his speech at the United Nations in 2015. 'Abbas worked hard for the success of any initiative aimed at the resumption of negotiations because he is a believer, as he says, that negotiations are the only way, despite colliding with the Israeli intransigence and extremism, which increases each day. No changes seem to be on the horizon because a lot of the evidence indicates that Israel is moving towards more extremism, and does not intend to voluntarily consent to any settlement that would achieve a minimum of Palestinian rights under international law.

After Kerry's failure, there were no negotiations, but rather a Palestinian accession to international institutions in batches, the first batch being after the Israeli government refused to release the fourth batch of prisoners on the agreed date (29/3/2014).⁷⁹ Palestine joined 15 institutions and treaties, notably the Fourth Geneva Convention,⁸⁰ preceded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The second batch included signing up for the

⁷⁷ Ma'an News Agency, 16/2/2016.

⁷⁸ Aljazeera.net, 5/3/2015.

⁷⁹ *Alghad*, 4/4/2014.

⁸⁰ Wafa, 1/4/2014.



Rome Statute and becoming the ICC's 123rd member. Whereas, the UN Security Council failed to adopt a resolution on Palestinian statehood, drafted by the Palestinians and backed by Arab countries, that was strongly opposed by the United States. It fell short of winning the nine "yes" votes necessary for adoption in the 15-member council, after Nigeria had been expected to support the resolution and changed its stance at the last minute. Washington was not, however, compelled to resort to its veto power to block the measure—a move that could have undermined US standing in the Arab world.⁸¹

Here, it should be noted that the Palestinian side was determined to submit the draft resolution to vote despite the fact that the nine votes were not guaranteed, and although a number of delegates from countries with provisional membership in the Security Council were to be replaced after a few days.

In addition to the above, it is preferable to have a high probability of the US veto being used against the draft Arab resolution than for this to happen after ensuring that the decision would have a large majority, as was happening earlier, where the Arab draft resolution mostly got more than 12 votes. It must also be pointed out that the Arab draft resolution was submitted to a vote without presenting it to the executive committee. This stirred a lot of criticism for circumvention of the primary institution, in addition to the need to consult on such issues with the various factions (within and outside the PLO), institutions, and experienced lawyers and diplomats, since it contains substantial concessions. Hence, it was withdrawn and amended without taking into account all the observations that were made.

It is worth mentioning that the same thing (submitting a draft resolution to the Security Council without ensuring the nine votes) took place in the United Nations 2011 session, when President Mahmud 'Abbas insisted on applying for full membership for the State of Palestine in spite of a broad Palestinian and Arab demand for an Observer State status before applying for full membership from a stronger position. The request for full membership in both times did not obtain the nine votes, and this defeat could have been avoided. Most importantly, a whole year was wasted (2011) under the pretext that "we are not afraid" of the US veto

⁸¹ *The National* newspaper, Abu Dhabi, 31/12/2014, <http://www.thenational.ae/world/middle-east/un-security-council-rejects-palestinian-statehood-resolution>

nor of confrontation with the US administration, while what happened both times was avoidance of confrontation in the name of confrontation.

After that, the Palestinian leadership took a series of steps, such as not approving the resumption of negotiations without having its requirements met, the signing of international agreements, and joining organizations, including the ICC.⁸² However, the request to join the ICC was much delayed under the pretext of studying it and obtaining the approval and signature of all factions. After joining it, there was a reluctance to submit claims and organize a significant political campaign to pressure the court to proceed with investigations and address charges on past, current, and ongoing crimes, such as settlement building.

We cannot minimize the importance of these steps, which would have had a much greater impact if they had been part of a new vision and strategy using integrated and interrelated tools aiming to make the occupation costly for Israel and its supporters. They would impose the Israeli withdrawal without negotiations or conditions, or would make Israel accept to participation in negotiations that can lead to a peace settlement and an Israeli withdrawal, with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the WB and GS. Whereas in fact, these were just tactical steps aimed at pressuring Israel to resume negotiations according to previous principles and rules, or after modifying them in part by providing a formal international network that would add to the Quartet on the Middle East and some Arab countries.

As proof of the above, the president reiterated that he was ready to resume negotiations if Israel released the fourth batch of prisoners and froze settlement activity, and then he rushed to support any French or non-French initiative for the resumption of negotiations. He did this without insisting on changing the rules and the terms of reference, and without withdrawing Palestinian concessions made in the previous negotiations and agreements. These concessions included the recognition of the right of Israel to exist, the agreement on the principle of “land swaps” and annexation of most of the “settlement blocs,” and having a “just solution” to the refugee issue, in addition to the demilitarization of a Palestinian state.

The tactical nature of the Palestinian steps was also present in the non-activation of the previous international resolutions, particularly those related to the right to

⁸² *Rose al-Yusuf* newspaper, Cairo, 18/6/2015.



resist occupation, the right of self-determination, and the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), in addition to joining international organizations or courts, in particular the ICC. It also appeared in the way the PA supported boycott and popular resistance, even peaceful resistance, which is primed for adoption, in addition to containing the *Intifadah*.

The French move emerges whenever the US role declines, where it attempts to fill the vacuum before it is filled by other parties (despite some positive points, such as the pledge to recognize the Palestinian state if the move fails).⁸³ However, France's chances depend to a large extent on the European position, especially on Britain's and Germany's bias towards Israel, and the French therefore still need a US green light. The foundations and potential of the French approach consistently drop below any standard that could prove effective.

The French position began by claiming a Security Council resolution to determine the principles, perspectives and objectives of any action or initiative to reach a peace settlement within a short time span. It then dropped the ceiling of the draft resolution in response to US advice, and adopted the claim to expand the international Quartet Committee and hold an international or regional conference akin to previous ones, especially Annapolis Summit, which had the mission of providing a platform and cover for the resumption of negotiations.

The provision of international permanent support, without the permanent umbrella of the international framework and without determining a reference to control negotiations, will reproduce the perjurer role played by the Quartet on the Middle East Committee, as it was a form of circumventing international legitimacy. The UN must be the framework that organizes and leads an international movement (to obtain part of the Palestinian rights) and is not just one of four parties, away from compliance with international law and UN resolutions, and without an active pressuring role. The most the UN can offer is advice, for if it goes beyond this role, it will be met with US anger and rejection.

A return to negotiations to achieve a two-state solution on which the peaceful settlement project was based—without an Israeli commitment to international law and the resolutions of the United Nations as a reference, and without an effective international framework imposed on the parties to reach a solution within a short time span—means providing a lifeline to the occupation. This would enable Israel

⁸³ *Al-Hayat*, 3/4/2015.

to continue its occupation and various crimes under an international cover, and could lead to pressure on the weak Palestinian party to accept solutions that deprive it of its basic national rights. The latter would be a party to a process that does not include a peaceful settlement but aims to maintain the status quo, which is constantly changing in favor of the Israeli side that is continuously creating facts on the ground, regardless of the nature of the government in Israel.

A Glance at the Near Future

The peace process is expected to move in one of three tracks. The first is based on maintaining the status quo more or less, without any dramatic changes. The possibilities of this scenario are decreasing, because the Palestinian situation is no longer viable, as evidenced by the *Intifadah* wave and the Israeli aggression, which mounts frantically in many forms, including continued attacks on *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and the efforts to complete the Judaization of Jerusalem, settlement expansion, the revival of the “greater Israel” plan, the removal of the green line, and the approval of more racist laws. This could force the PLO leadership and the PA to threaten Israel with popular resistance, boycott, and the activation of accession to the ICC, in addition to halting the obligations laid out in the Oslo Accords.

The second possible track is a new political process based on the French initiative, or something resembling it, so that an international conference will be prepared through indirect or direct preparatory meetings. This new process could be launched in the context of a conference about regional security, as planned by the French administration. In that conference, Palestinian efforts will try to lay foundations and reference for the peace process, in addition to defining a short time span to finish negotiations. It would be preceded by, or result in, a settlement freeze and the release of the fourth batch of prisoners, as well as the released prisoners who were arrested, and those detained in recent months.

As for Israel, it will attempt to empty the conference of any content or role, with the negotiations as its only reference, starting from the point at which the previous negotiations ended, so as to maintain previous Palestinian concessions and build upon them. It will also endeavor to normalize its relations with more Arab countries and improve regional negotiating opportunities, in the hope that this will lead to a regional solution in the future. What is agreed upon at this conference will be closer to the Israeli position, whether through the official version, or by having several interpretations, and the stronger party on the ground will be able to



give it the interpretation that suits it. This effectively renders such a conference a waste of time.

The likelihood of this scenario will increase in case the regional crises, especially in Syria, move toward some kind of solution, or truce, or temporary or permanent co-existence. This scenario is more likely to happen if Palestinian reconciliation is achieved through the formation of a national unity government, even if in the absence of the foundations for its sustainability and success.

A possible third track depends on the assumption that events will move towards an all-out confrontation between Palestinians and Israelis. In this case, there is no room for the return of bilateral negotiations in their old or modified form. The chance to end the division and accomplish unity is more likely in this scenario, because it would open the door to a review of previous agreements and concessions, and adopt a new approach focused on resistance and making the occupation costly for Israel, to the point of forcing it to withdraw, either unilaterally or through negotiations.

Such a scenario is unlikely at the moment but cannot be ruled out entirely. For there is an increasing Palestinian political and popular demand to adopt a new approach, in light of the failure of the previous options. However, it is not possible to get new popular support with obsolete leadership, structures and institutions. This is especially true if the factions do not implement a comprehensive change and renewal, or at least a reform to restore bygone legitimacy to the institutions, where the legal terms of the President and the PLC have ended, PLO institutions are suffering from paralysis, no PNC meetings, new forces and groups are not included, there is no review or accountability, and no PNC elections, not even in areas where elections can be conducted.

Summary

It seems that the internal re-positioning of Israeli parties caused by the Israeli elections in March 2015 did not add anything new to the overall track of Israeli society, which continued to move towards the far-right and religious extremism. Therefore, Israeli policies under the Netanyahu administration and the Likud Party have continued to adopt further settlement expansion, Judaization of the holy sites, blocking the aspirations of the Palestinian people to freedom and independence, and the foiling of a two-state solution.

In spite of the stability of the Israeli economy and its ability to provide high GDP and income per capita, despite the superiority of the Israeli military forces, and despite the state of Arab exhaustion as a result of revolutions, official repression, and foreign interventions, the Palestinian people has expressed great fortitude and resilience. Indeed, the Israeli aggression on the GS in the summer of 2014 was thwarted through the fierce armed Palestinian resistance. Palestinians in WB also came up with a new form of resistance through a generation of young people who face the occupation with knives among other things.

Thus, although the Palestinian people still suffer from the occupation, the Zionist project still carries its crises from year to year, in an environment that refuses to give in or normalize relations, and looks forward to freedom and independence.



التقرير الاستراتيجي الفلسطيني

2015-2014

الفصل الثاني

العدوان والمقاومة، والموقف الإسرائيلي
من الوضع الفلسطيني الداخلي،
ومسار التسوية السلمية

2015-2014

