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THE RABAT SUMMIT AND LESSONS OF THE STUMBLING PHASE

The July 1, 1995 deadline for completing the second interim phase of the Oslo Accord for the redeployment of Israeli occupation forces from Palestinian cities and towns is approaching. In addition to redeployment and the transfer of authority to the Palestinians, early elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is also on the agenda of the second interim phase. As the deadline draw near, the Palestinians are intensifying their diplomatic and political contacts on various levels. The tangible outcome of such moves was the bolstering of relations with the Arab countries, and highlighting the Palestinian cause on the regional and international fronts.

The Palestinian national unity has been further consolidated and reshaped following a period of internal differences and conflict. Now it can be said that the Palestinians are more qualified to follow-up all phases of the peace process. Simultaneously, the Palestinians are engaged in investigating all restraints and obstacles which impeded the smooth implementation of all peace agreements concluded with Israel. This particular issue was the main topic of discussion during the summit conference among King Al-Hasan of Morocco, President Arafat and Mr. Shimon Peres, Israeli Foreign Minister. President Arafat and Mr. Peres pledged in their joint statement to consider the lessons of their past experiences so that all stumbling blocks and prejudices affecting the peace process can be overcome. The following consideration must be taken into an account as the deadline for completing the second interim phase approaches:

First: It has been proven that respecting deadlines truly reflects the extent of Israel's seriousness to abide by the peace agreements and consequently its conviction to solve outstanding problems. Accordingly, Israel's commitment to the July 1 deadline is doubtful in view of Israel past experience in dissolving itself from fulfilling its pledges.

Second: Previous experiences in dealing with Israel have also shown that the Israeli Labor Party could not score any progress on the peace track as long as it advocated the principles of the Israeli right wing party, such as the construction and expansion of settlements and the expropriation of Palestinian lands. When the Labor party decides stop the construction of settlements and expropriation of Palestinian lands and respects all agreements and resolutions reached so far with the Palestinians, only then will peace have a chance to survive and flourish in the region.

Third: It is a precondition to stop selectively blending the interim and the final stage of negotiations, particularly with regard to the final status of Jerusalem. This requires strict abidance by the spirit of the peace agreements and an Israeli commitment to refrain from unilaterally taking any action which may affect a final solution to the question of Jerusalem.

*** Security arrangements for future elections in East Jerusalem must be worked out through a binding agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Such arrangements should take into consideration the assignment of the Palestinian security force and the duty of keeping public order and internal security matters in the West Bank and Gaza.**

***Keeping East Jerusalem within the International Observation Department in the same manner as in the other territories of the West Bank and Gaza.**

***Procedures and formalities taken in regard to East Jerusalem should not prejudice the final status of Jerusalem during final stage negotiations.**

In a statement to the Palestine Weekly Review, Dr. Saeb Erikat, Minister of Local Government at the PNA and head of the Palestinian delegation to the Cairo talks, summed up the outcome of the last round of talks with Israel. According to Dr. Erikat, the Israeli delegation has relinquished its previous demands for direct involvement in the work of the international observatory mission. The Israeli role is now restricted to purely technical matters, such as issuing entry visas for observers at Israeli airports and harbors and the clearance of relevant equipment needed by the observers while carrying out their duties during the election process.

In another development, Dr. Erikat also confirmed that Israel is relinquishing its previous conditions concerning the required qualifications of candidates. In the past, Israel was stipulating that such candidates should recognize publicly the state of Israel and announce approval to the Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement. Dr. Erikat further stated that the full text of the Palestinian draft which explicitly stressed the right of every Palestinian citizen over 18 years of age to take part in balloting regardless of religion, color, race or political affiliation. The Palestinian draft also entitles Palestinian individuals who are over 25 years of age the right to be nominated as candidates for the legislative council, and those over 35 years old to be nominated for President of Palestine.

Speaking about controversial issues still awaiting a final solution, Dr. Erikat confirmed that the Palestinian National Authority adamantly insists for the right of Jerusalem inhabitants to full nomination as candidates and the right of voting at a parallel footing with other Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as long as the holy city remains an inseparable part of the occupied territories.

The Palestinian Minister of Local Government did not rule out the possibility of seeking international arbitration on all pending issues unless Israel reverses its position.

Settlers of Alone More, east of Nablus, have also closed the main street in the city near 'Nabi Yusef' tomb in Balata town on 28 May 1995, paving the road before the Israeli military forces to declare the area a closed military zone. Palestinian citizens stated that the Israeli settlers are contemplating the construction of more settling spots in the heart of Nablus city, under the pretext of protecting the shrine of 'Nabi Yusef'.

Raiding "Government-Owned Houses"

Israel's Peace Now Movement disclosed on Sunday 28 May 1995, that it has received information confirming the close cooperation and coordination between the Israeli ministry of housing and Jewish settlers to raid the unoccupied houses at Karne Shomron settlement, built over expropriated land from the villages of Deir Istyya and Kofar Lakef. In his letter to the Israeli minister of housing, the director of Peace Now requested an immediate investigation to determine whether scores of settlers keep in their possession keys for the vacant apartments in the settlement. The letter held the ministry of housing responsible for the illegal entry of the houses since it did not contact the Israel police forces to evict the trespassers. Israeli families from Kfar Saba city have stormed empty houses that are owned by the Israeli ministry of housing without any resistance by the Israeli government. This negative response by the Rabin government confirms our claim that the same government is encouraging settlers to reside and settle in the West Bank.

The Settlers' Plan

A document prepared by the so-called "settlement council" in the West Bank and Gaza, revealed that the plan calls upon armed settlers to reoccupy all sites due to be dismantled by the Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank, within the context of redeployment of Israeli forces stipulated by the second phase of the interim peace accord. The document was disclosed by Slomo Yauski, head of operations sections at the settlement council on 26 May 1995. The document described in detail, the means of capturing each site that is due to be vacated by the Israeli occupation forces, and the formation of armed patrols in Palestinian city centers. The document included recommendations to avoid the army and using the technique of raiding the site following the withdrawal of the forces. Furthermore, it called for a meeting to be attended by the national and religious leaders in Israel to discuss the terminology of "redeployment" and to discuss the possibility of considering every armed Palestinian policeman as a terrorist and to shoot him on site!

It is obvious that the settlers' document implies a plan to abort the peace process and hinder the establishment of a independent Palestinian state. The document further affirms the fact that peaceful coexistence with settlers is unlikely. Their continued harassment, both emotionally and physically and their eagerness to commit atrocities and expropriate more Palestinian lands for settlement expansion is increasing daily.

- * The excavations taking place alongside the Western Wall beginning at the most southwestern corner of the mosque reaching northward to El Omariyeh School.
- * The tunnel dug underneath the mosque starting at the wailing wall and ending immediately underneath a water well inside the grounds of the Aqsa Mosque.
- * The tunnel leading from the Convent of the Sisters of Zion (better known as Ecce Homo Church) on the Via Dolorosa leading south towards the mosque.
- * The tunnel leading from the most southern part of Jerusalem wall to Suleiman's Stables underneath the Aqsa Mosque.

In addition, official Israeli policies conducted in Olmert's municipality desecrated the Islamic burial place in West Jerusalem "Ma'man Allah" (God's place of safety) or colloquially called Mamilla. The area of this burial place was 250,000 sqm, most of this land has been used as building plots, at the moment the Sheraton Plaza Hotel, Supersol supermarket, Beit Agron building, and the car park immediately adjacent to it are built on this Islamic Waqf owned land used by Muslims until 1948 as their burial place in Jerusalem . Even the dead are not safe here, scores of Muslim graves were desecrated, moved, destroyed and damaged, many are plastered with concrete to obliterate the Arabic inscriptions . The remainder of this cemetery is being used as open park, very few Muslim graves can be seen around this cemetery now.

Above ground, leading Israeli right wing elements and Jewish groups encouraged and supported directly by Israeli official policy in Jerusalem, are constantly trying to force their way into the Aqsa Mosque grounds to conduct Jewish group prayers on its grounds .

On the evening of the May 28th 1995, more than 100 Jews lead by Yehud Etzion, 'a conspirator to kill and maim Palestinian mayors in 1980', tried to force an entry from the western entrance into the mosque in the Old City . The Waqf guards, supported by those at prayer in the Al Aqsa Mosque, confronted this group and foiled their attempt to enter. In recent days, many more attempts by similar groups took place. The vigilant eyes of the guards and the Palestinian people of Arab East Jerusalem are determined to stop these groups from achieving their objective .

Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem with its streets and alleys, its mosques and churches, are determined not to submit to Israeli pressure. Jerusalem is not a united city, there are two separate, distinctly different peoples, Palestinians in East Jerusalem and Israelis in West Jerusalem. Palestinians will only co-exist with East Jerusalem being the capital of the Palestinian state. The price has already been paid by the Palestinians and that is West Jerusalem.

** Stresses the need for orienting the information media of the Islamic countries to what may consolidate Islamic solidarity in defending the political, economic, cultural, and information causes of the Islamic nation. The conference also confirms its obligations towards enhancing cooperation and coordination between member states in all spheres of information covering TV, Radio, and Press channels.*

** Promote and maintain cooperation between the Islamic countries in a move to increase the functions and performance of its information institutions to cope with technological developments in telecommunications, particularly at the age of satellites, spontaneous transmission and the domination of foreign information media. Such action will contribute largely to improve the performance of our information institutions in serving the goals of the economic and social development plans, and in spreading knowledge and technical know-how.*

** The orientation of the Islamic Information to what may ensure an effective confrontation to the hostile press campaign which is aimed at harming the true image of Islam abroad. This can be achieved through promoting the principles and values of Islam which calls for the fulfillment of peace and equality amongst all peoples. It also called for highlighting the Islamic contributions to human civilization in all the fields of science and knowledge in the past and the present.*

** Calls for collective participation with the international community in order to establish balanced information relations through the objective submission of international problems without discrimination, and via constructive dialogue and cooperation, respect of international legitimacy, and avoiding double-standard positions.*

** The conference renews its commitment to the principles of dialogue and cooperation and its adherence to the principles of international law, international legitimacy, UN resolutions as the only means for solving all pending problems and the realization of peace and tranquillity in the world.*

** Announces its condemnation of terror regardless of source, motive, purpose, and expresses its obligation towards eradicating terror.*

** Voices its full support for the peace process in the Middle East in order to establish a just, lasting and comprehensive peace to what may ensure the complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Palestinian lands, including Jerusalem, from the occupied Syrian territories to the lines which existed on 4 June 1967, and from the occupied Lebanese territories through the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 425 and in accordance with the principle of "Land for Peace".*

***The maintenance of 1500 external phone lines and the extension of 165 new phone lines .**

***The PNA is awaiting the transfer of the Postal Authority to their jurisdiction in the West Bank and preparation are underway for this transfer.**

***Palestine National Committee for Culture and Science:**

***A meeting was held with the General Director of UNESCO, a delegation from the National Committee and the Palestinian Authority Institutions, headed by Mr. Qarsholi, Secretary General of the National Committee and Yehya Yekhlef, Under-secretary of the Ministry of Culture, to discuss the executive plan signed by the President of Palestine in Tunis. The presented programs and projects estimated at 34 million USD, were approved during the meeting. After the meeting, the General Director of UNESCO visited Gaza and met with President Arafat.**

***The first UNESCO Club was inaugurated in the city of Hebron. The inauguration was attended by the Head of the Municipality, prominent writers and intellectuals. At the ceremony, Mr. Qarsholi welcomed the delegation and the audience and highlighted UNESCO's role in providing assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories.**

***The National Committee participated in a sit-in strike that took place in the Faculty of Science and Technology at the Abu Dis college.**

***The National Committee issued a magazine entitled, "Shakaek Al-N'uman". The subject matter in the magazine focuses on the protection of nature.**

***The National Committee for Education and Environment Awareness is currently preparing a competition in public information at faculties and universities, in coordination with the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation, where awards will be granted to the winners.**
