

Public Debate

Relations between the Two Parts of the Homeland... The Impact on Achieving the National Goals

Ramallah - Tuesday, September 11, 2007

Good Afternoon, my name is Aref Hijawi, we welcome you in this seminar held by Jerusalem Media and Communication Center "JMCC" in which we host key speakers and the audience also includes people of Public Opinion. Now the key speakers include figures from political opinions and affiliations with differing standpoints and if we don't have differences, then we will not have a healthy discussion, from the right side we have:

1. **PLC member Mr. Hatem Kafisheh**, from Change and Reform Bloc.
2. **Mr. Faisal Hourani**, Palestinian Author
3. **Mr. Abdul Rahim Mallouh**, Vice Secretary General of the PFLP and member of the Executive Committee of the PLO.
2. **Mr. Abdullah Abdullah**, PLC member and Head of the PLC Political Committee from Fateh

We welcome you all in this room and your participation also is important, I prepared at home some questions I will start with them one by one.

Let's start with Mr. Hatem Kafisheh.

Q. – Will Hamas be the first to climb down the tree or mountain, Sheikh Kafisheh what you say about this?

Hatem Kafisheh – In the name of God, peace be upon the Prophet. Those who rushed to come down from the mountain violated the orders of prophet; we will remain committed to the higher interests of the Palestinian People, if the higher interests of the Palestinian People is to climb down the mountain we will be the first to go down that mountain and if steadfastness until martyrdom at this mountain serves the interests we will stay there.

Aref Hijawai - What do you mean when you say "we"?

Hatem Kafisheh – when you asked me, we, we are the people of Islamic movement in Palestine in particular people from Hamas as a PLC member from Change and Reform Bloc are all in the same trench we will remain committed to the higher interest of the Palestinian people.

Q. - What happened in Gaza Strip and West Bank is really deep it's not some fight between two persons, this will leave its impact on the future, how do you diagnose what is happening and what happened in the past?

Faisal Hourani – What really happened and what is happening right now is part of the collapse that started in the past and it continues now. The current situation reminds me of a story in reading section in the elementary school; it talks about two monkeys who found

piece of cheese then they thought of arbitration by a third monkey to divide it between them so this third monkey divided it unequally and then he ate a small piece from the bigger part and then a piece from the smaller part to make them equal until he ate both pieces. We have to remember two things: first, the enemy is Israel and the Israeli occupation. We know that Israel will not refrain from committing any crime or use any method to support the current situation, and we all have to ease the current disaster because we cannot really under the current situation get out of it but at least we have to work to reduce its impact.

Aref Hijawi – How can we do that?

Faisal Hourani – of course there are many things that we can do. First, the complaints against the conduct of each other are seen by more than one party, the latest wave of internal fighting is more than what is normally accepted. It has crossed the red lines but the roots of such acts and conduct existed before. Now to avoid this, to overcome this is through each party working to become convinced that they cannot really cancel each other, and they cannot eliminate each other neither by violence nor by thought. There is secular the thought and these have social bases and there is the religious thought and they have also social bases, you cannot really cancel or eliminate a faction or a thought that comes from a certain faction, so the main parties should do whatever is necessary to avoid saying “no” to dialogue and then we can start talking about any solution, I don't have time to go into details right now.

Q. - Do you support the PFLP on having dialogue?

Abdul Rahim Mallouh - I don't think there is any solution to that Palestinian current reality or any situation similar to the Palestinian situation unless there is dialogue, now how it can start, the question to start the dialogue is another issue. This is the point that needs to be discussed and solved. I think what happened was a disaster specially that it is happening under occupation, either because there was a misunderstanding of the current reality or because the people rushed to reach certain results or to seek certain positions or locations at the expense of the general cause and at the expense of confronting the occupation. The Palestinian people have no solution but dialogue.

Aref Hijawi - Is the PFLP doing its part to start the dialogue?

Abdul Rahim Mallouh - I think the PFLP in light of its role and size exerted this effort but maybe I have more detailed opinion on this. The Palestinian leftist forces did not do their part regarding the current situation and I say if these forces unite their political framework and program, their impact on the political formula would have been better and maybe they would have prevented us from reaching this situation. Of course the two parties are responsible for what happened, especially Hamas, when they used the military option, but I don't think the other forces have the abilities to do more than what they did.

Q. Mr. Abdullah from PLC Fateh three sides want dialogue here and Fateh does not want dialogue?

Mr. Abdullah Abdullah – Let me explain, it is not true that Fateh does not want dialogue, but at the same time I say the problem is not whether to have a dialogue or not. since May 2006 until Mecca agreement, it was through dialogue, dialogue only is not enough unless we have true and good intentions and convictions that one party cannot cancel the other

party and that everyone should work together to confront the challenges, especially the conditions of the occupation and the challenges facing the Palestinian National Movements. So the problem is not the dialogue but what comes after the dialogue.

Aref Hijawi - So you want results before you start dialogue?

Mr. Abdullah Abdullah – No I did not mean this, I said dialogue started and happened, but the dialogue that happened to agree on the National Reconciliation Document and the dialogue in Mecca agreement it was serious dialogue, they reached results but that dialogue and those results didn't prevent the disaster that affected us in our land, in our unity, in our people, in our future, so the problem is not in the dialogue, we all say that we have to start dialogue but where would it reach, of course what happened can be solved by dialogue, but can killing and pulling down the Palestinian flag be part of dialogue? I don't think so.

Aref Hijawi - Under the current situation in Palestine, in West Bank and Gaza Strip, it is logical to say that some people are benefiting, maybe Hamas benefits from this of course they won the elections the recent elections and they are having the chance to rule also, maybe Fateh also is benefiting because what happened after this, after the events in Gaza Strip, now Fateh has a chance to rule and continue controlling the financial resources of the Palestinian Authority, this is one idea, I think that the people here, in the audience have lots of ideas.

Dr. Mamdouh AKer – I don't agree with the phrasing of your question because it contradicts with what you said at the beginning because the result of what happened is disaster and we cannot really look to those beneficiaries now and you said the occupation is the beneficiary

Aref Hijawi – I did not say disaster or occupation. Maybe my colleagues said this.

Dr. Mamdouh AKer – I would like to ask this in a different way. It is not useful now to blame the parties here regardless, but the ramifications of what happened have negative impact on the future. Mr. Faisal started with parable example, and I have another one, there was a bear who saw a flea on the head of his friend bear, and he used a stone and threw it on the flea and killed his friend because it was on the head. Maybe there was good intention or good reason for Hamas to use the military option, but its ramifications and implications are disastrous, shouldn't you review what you did, and this is also a question to the other side because really the people who are jealous for their cause should review their positions, regardless of what happened in Gaza and this is a question to Mr. Abdullah from Fateh regardless of what happened and its negative impact, I think insisting on Hamas apology and retreating from the current situation don't you think it is worth to say let it be ok, let us give up some conditions, the most important thing is dialogue, there is a need for dialogue, now what comes after the dialogue its clear, each party must recognize what the mistakes were, I believe that Hamas must start with first step or take the initiative.

Participant – Good afternoon, my question to my friend Hatem, is Hamas unified behind what happened in Gaza Strip? it was a big step, public opinion polls shows that Hamas is loosing in the polls, do you think Hamas is unified or do you have two Hamas positions, one Hamas position in the West Bank and another in Gaza Strip.

Khaled Al Amireh from Al Ahram Weekly – My question is similar to Dr. Mamdouh Al Aker in the case of internal war and civil war and splits, the question who is right and who is wrong is irrelevant here; it is a question to Mr. Hatem and Mr. Abdullah Abdullah.

Participant - We always say that our Palestinian people are ahead of their leadership and the Palestinian people changed and wanted reform but did not find anyone in the leadership to make the reform, do you think that this current situation will continue until the Palestinian people try to import a leadership to reform the current situation? And another question if you allow me, the past periods were slogans about reform and change from all parliamentarian blocs while now we can see corruption is used to explain corruption or try to fix mistakes through using corruption itself.

Omar Assaf – A short comment, it seems that the fear is that the child is orphan no one is caring about him.

Omar Assaf – Now my question is like this when we talk about details, still we are talking about general things, my question is what are the concrete specific steps needed from Fateh and Hamas to start dialogue? This is the first question, the second question, suppose Fateh or Hamas want to start dialogue is the decision an independent Palestinian National decision or there are regional forces preventing such a dialogue?

Aref Hijawi - Hamas decision is it from Khaled Masha'l or from Hanieh or from Iran?

Hatem Kafisheh - More than 60% of the PLC members were elected by the Palestinian people with a very high ratio, the decision comes always from the Palestinian street and I agree with Mr. Abu El Rub who said that the Palestinians are really ahead of their leadership always. The decision is a Palestinian decision, even if sometimes we understand the international contradictions in the region, accusing certain parties of having certain affiliations or polarization and here I quote the decisions or positions when we were deported at the end of 1992 to south Lebanon when they made conditions on the support that was to be offered to us there and I say unfortunately food and drink is linked to the political position at that time and we refused this then and history recorded this and I can understand the accusations against Hamas movement here and there on refusing history, the decision is pure Palestinian decision everyone knows the history of the movement even before it started at the end of eighties even with its relation with the international Muslims brotherhood.

I agree with Dr. Al Aker about the ramifications of what happened on Gaza Strip and West Bank are really disastrous. I really don't want to talk about justification or agree or disagree with this the whole issue and the whole use of military option but we have to say this: we have to be united on the decision of our movement there are internal differences of course and this is normal and healthy and there are various viewpoints in our movement, now the occupation wants a weak entity in Gaza Strip led by Hamas and they want an even weaker entity to be led by Fateh in the West Bank, but we say it very clearly: we want a strong entity for all the Palestinian people in Gaza Strip and the West Bank and we can do this, when I say this I am not using this as a slogan I say we can with all Palestinian forces including Fateh and Hamas we can meet at this big slogan, I think in the struggle experience we are partners in blood and partners in decision I think we can do this and unite in the future but of course there were ramifications and these were exploited not only by the Arab and foreign parties, Israel and the United States also exploited them. But also certain Palestinian parties also exploited this. I heard some politicians here say on TV

maybe what happened can be useful, some of the leaders here said this that maybe what happened was useful as if Hamas was a nightmare on the Palestinian people and now they get rid of it in Gaza Strip, this I heard from certain politicians here and sometimes we hear this from the Israeli security cabinet when they say the same about Gaza Strip.

Mr. Faisal Hourani – I hold a pen and I am no member of a faction and I don't carry a rifle or anything; let us go deeper into the issue a little bit, there are two points in this crisis:

First: the current conflict over the authority is over an authority that does not exist really but the benefits coming from this conflict come from outside either to this side or the other side that's why we enter into the mechanism of conflicts to allure support from outside.

Second: which is very important I believe that we have a cause and every inch in the world affects our cause and has a saying in the cause, for example what happens in Korea will affect our Palestinian cause, so here really we cannot exclude ourselves from the world, from their values, from their laws, from the mechanism of the interactions. Now the roots of the problem are that we are facing people who reject the PLO. Now on the other hand and during the conflict, and I believe that true the vicious conflict over the authority there is a position which cannot be really contradicted because it is based on religious ideology and it cannot be refuted this is why we reach a situation where we have a rejection, if we reject the PLO of course it means certain things but it has ramifications on our relations with the world. when we look at the Islamic movement and its positions; I don't know how can we get rid of this, how do you have dialogue if you don't really each common dominators, if the Islamic movement in Palestine refuses the whole era itself, they refuse Israel, refusing Israel is refusing the era, the international legitimacy and the international values and what is really surprising and really regretful is that they refuse the international legitimacy and still they demand from the international community they demand support, support to their program. How can we diffuse this issue, all people pass through these phases and at the end they end with certain concessions according to the conditions in each country, of course political dealing, social dealing is a matter that is on the ground related to laws of the ground. Now the continuous tension prevents dialogue on these issues, I believe they agree on something on Mecca, but it was vague. I support the dialogue and I don't think there is any other alternative but we should go to the core of the issue and not start accusing each other on who started the conflict or the fighting. The core of the issues means that we should on a joint political program according to the era and not continue to talk about religious legitimacy or international legitimacy.

Aref Hijawi - Maybe the various factions in the PLO don't agree on a political program to the point of recognizing Israel, What do you think Mr. Abdul Rahim Malouh?

Abdul Rahim Malouh - First I say that the PLO has a program, and this program has been accepted and approved for years, right of return, determination of independent state and it was realized on accepting international legitimacy solutions based on international conferences and implementing these resolutions, so the PLO at least the factions took this position. Our brothers in Hamas recently in Prisoners Document agreed on state on the 1967 borders regarding the recognition of the state of Israel, but they accepted a Palestinian state within 1967 based on a long term truce and they know that they are accepting the state of Israel, of course everyone knows this. Also the legitimacy of UN resolutions I know that the brothers in Hamas and Mr. Kafisheh in Marj El Zuhour they

came back according to UN resolution 799 and of course through the efforts of the PLO and that's how they were returned and of course it was implemented and they returned from Marj El Zuhour. So I understand those who accept international resolution a UN resolution for return of a group of four hundred people and it is important, and they also have to accept the resolution 194 for the return of the refugees. I would like also to point out to another point or two small points:

What is the criteria to judge a political action by a certain political faction or certain leadership, this is point, this action that Hamas did or the faction did, can we say that, can we judge that this improved the situation or the cause or helped the situation of the cause, we have to judge it through this, can we see that democracy has been reinforced or has it retreated, of course this is the criteria to judge this. And the criteria here is higher interests and the national interests of the Palestinian people this is the criteria, this is the basis to judge what happened.

What happened in terms of internal fighting in Gaza Strip: did it serve the Palestinian interests under occupation? Hamas used the military option in Gaza Strip, did it serve regardless of the justification, did it serve the Palestinian people, don't use certain justifications, of course you came to reform things, don't use certain justifications because this is an excuse only. This is the first point.

The second point, I believe that when we come to a certain phase we always say lets forget the past, the Palestinian people are killed, the Palestinian cause is affected is harmed and the new groups come and say lets move to the future and lets forget the past. No, the wise leadership should learn lessons from the past so they will not commit these certain mistakes in the future.

Therefore I warn of such trend or methodology to forget the past and talk about the future, I hope that we will benefit from this, the mistakes of the past.

Aref Hijawi: Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, head of the PLC political committee, let's go back to the question, provoking question, How Fateh benefited from the current events, is Fateh is benefiting from this?

Abdullah Abdullah: This is not very accurate, Fateh is not ruling, I don't want to keep the climate saying that it's a conflict between Fateh and Hamas, now the events that happened last Friday in Gaza Strip prove this is not accurate, before answering this question let me point out three points really here:

First: the dialogue is not really rejected totally absolutely no, we have to understand that the dialogue is not a goal by itself, its not the solution for the problems, the dialogue has always been a method to reach agreements, to reach conciliation, the PLO has always used dialogue throughout its phases whenever political developments happened and the latest was the agreement by the Palestinians on the Declaration of Independence in 1988. If the dialogue is not our method then there is no need, there is no value for such a dialogue.

The second point: there is a very important question, what are the concrete steps that should make the observer feel that there is progress or intention to make the dialogue lead us to a way out of the current crises. I believe that the concrete steps, and the proof on this is to see whether there is seriousness on these steps and we can find from the following: all civil institutions in the society, all Palestinian factions whether the factions under the PLO or outside the PLO they are all standing on one side and Hamas is standing on

another side, this is a sign that we should not avoid or prevent to look at, this should give us a way to look to the compass, this is a way to see it as an attempt to exclude the other and use the recent statement of Bush "If you are not with me then you are against me", this does not work here of course.

The factions of the PLO did not adopt the position of Hamas and that's why they were attacked, criticized by Hamas, and of course they were insulted by the Executive Force.

The Third point: let's compare here between the trends, first statement of the PLO factions on Friday evening was the final alarm, this is what we want the unity of the Palestinian position to protect the national project, but also to protect the democratic trends, practices, measures to make sure to respect the others, accept the others, we have to respect these things and this was a positive indicator that there is an intention to give the others a chance to retreat, but on the other hand what we see

Aref Hijawi – Now You talk about the other side, the other side is Israel or Hamas here?

Abdullah Abdullah - No, let's not confuse things. Hamas is part of our social fabric, social network, in all national movements there were forces against revolution, here we are talking about Palestinian social fabric, we are talking about one side and another side, there is one side where all Palestinian factions inside the PLO and on the other side there is Hamas standing alone, this is a strong indicator that Hamas should review, recalculate its positions it should not continue to force people not to express themselves, this a method for Hamas to review and go back to study its positions. We say Hamas won by majority; some people say 64 percent other say 70 percent, no we have to go back to the figures, did Hamas votes reach those figures? Were they elected to strike the national program the way they are doing now, we need from Hamas leadership to review its positions and decide on the path it wants, if they find they can follow and retreat and work with the others, then this well help everyone but if they insist in Hamas that this is the sole way and this is a government given mandate from God then there is no discussion, I am sorry to say that here if this happens we will continue with the crisis for years to come.

Aref Hijawi – Mr. Hatem I will give you the floor soon, but let me pose question, there are of course some benefits but Palestine is loosing on this split, when you talk with the world of course, when the other adversary, the international meeting might happen in two months, and maybe there are gains and maybe we can avoid some losses from such a meeting but this depends on our unity and how we represent our country abroad? What do you think? (This question to the audience)

Abdul Jawad Saleh – It has been one hour and you are talking about the results, but what about the causes of what happened, the real cause is that Fateh Movement does not want to recognize the results of the elections, this is the fact that everyone is ignoring and after this Fateh took positions to incite against the change that happened, now I believe that there is no solution but through going back to the Basic Law to the Palestinian Constitution to keep the previous government the legitimate government.

Aref Hijawi – the bullet went off; you want to bring back the old government?

Abdul Jawad Saleh - Yes believe me, another civil war will happen; you will not solve problem unless you go back to the law, unless you go back to the constitution, this was violated, the constitution was violated, some people could no accept the transfer of

authority, the crimes that were committed happen in any civilized society and usually investigation convenes and people are brought to trial.

Now on the dialogue, in the PLO, we have a Legislative Council, PLC a Parliament, the Parliament is the national unity so going back to the PNC or talking about forcing Hamas or Fateh on a certain position, the PLC can decide on what path we should go, at the end of the four years this will effect Hamas in the elections and their ballot box it will loose or it will gain, this is the criteria, this is the democracy and this is the solution.

Ramzi Taweel – My question is directed to Mr. Hatem Kafeisheh, which is a series of questions, do you support the coup or not? Do you support legitimacy of the West Bank which is recognized by the world? Do you recognize the sanctity of the Palestinian flag?

Participant - My first question to Mr. Hatem, do you think the political Islam in Palestine is an important model for the political Islam in other Arab areas? Second question, to what extent can Hamas achieve any of the goals that it talks about in the past years in light of the coup it started?

Question to Mr. Abdullah, of course I understand the dialogue and its conditions, but I ask but don't you think there is a form less than what is being set in terms of conditions to make a breakthrough in the current deadlock, especially that we are talking about a disaster, about a split in the homeland, specially we are talking about harming the Palestinian cause in front of all of this; isn't there a way or something that can lead to one way or another to breakthrough?

Last question to Mr. Faisal, don't you think the democratic, social project in Palestine is being harmed as a result of this conflict in a dangerous way more than what people can see on the surface?

Munjid Abu Jesh – I believe there is no room to talk about the same tools in solving the current crises, whenever you talk we talk about the crises, Fateh and Hamas they don't want to hold dialogue they want to share, to divide the things they have, there is a need for a popular movement, lobbying movement who believe in the national project and this question is to Mr. Abdul Rahim Malouh now, can the Palestinian leftist forces such a popular movement to get rid of monopoly enforced by Hamas and Fateh?

Saed Zaharan – My question to Mr. Abdullah, the Israelis talked about a treasure of files and documents found in the security forces headquarters in Gaza Strip?

The second question – of course we are against the killing and the beating that happened in Gaza but can't the PLO factions condemn the act of the security services in Hebron University; can they dare to issue statement to condemn such actions, if you want to condemned you should condemn all part and all actions by all parties.

Naser Abdul Karim – Two very quick questions, Dr. Abdullah, I understand that after each crises and disaster that happened in Gaza Strip, specially that several disasters happened after Hamas won the elections and took over usually a reason to review, I am talking as a citizen and I am asking this to Mr. Abdul Rahim Malouh also do you really see change of the work of the presidency and Fateh and the PLO institutions; are they at the level of what happened, did you review what happened, as I citizen I did not see, what I see is superficial changes but in the core, the things are the same, the administrative, the political performance is the same it never changed.

Do you think forces of the left should have a distinguished role in this crises, did they bargain on their positions, don't please misunderstand my question when they supported Fateh and the presidency was it a bargain for the sake of the Palestinian people to exert

pressure on building the institutions and negotiations and to respect the legitimacy of the Palestinian people and options or was it one of the deals that took place.

Participant - Excuse me we know the factions positions; I want to ask Mr. Faisal Hourani, do you think there is a chance for reform on the part of the factions?

Ziad Dayyeh – I am really regretful to hear some certain incidents that happened in Gaza or the West Bank. We don't want to talk about them again because this will not solve the crisis.

Aref Hijawi – Mr. Abdullah can talk about ten incidents Mr. Hatem too it will continue; now the question is what comes next?

Ziad Dayyeh – I support Mr. Abdul Rahim Malouh that we should not forget the past but we should not also make what happened in the past be part of the solution, of course dialogue is the sole option, we can have a fact finding commission whether Palestinian or Arab to investigate then they can try people but what happen should not be an obstacle in the path. Mr. Abdullah said justifications there is no intentions, I think if positions regarding dialogue depends on intentions then we cannot know what happens because no one really knows what is in the hearts and the intentions of the people, so this is a problem.

Walid Assaf – PLC member – First question to Mr. Kafisheh I ask him: do you really, does Hamas really believe in work with others political factions, and if they really do with the other side, how are things moving in Gaza in area of partnership specially after what happened, specially after breaking into the offices of PLO Executive Committee and arresting some leaders, is there still a chance for this partnership project to be realized?

The second point is: which party is required to take the first step, the part who executed the coup, I think Hamas should take the first step towards at least to make a breakthrough that can lead to dialogue, but what is happening in Gaza specially the control over all institutions and excluding all people and all institutions and specially the courts even the occupation did not control the judiciary system, Can Hamas eliminate all other forces, can we still talk about partnership between Hamas and the PLO.

The last comment, Hamas movement said that its problem was with certain wing inside Fateh but what we saw when they pulled down the Palestinian flag and they broke into the house of late president Arafat and all other acts.

Aref Hijawi - It's not a question here, it is a political statement

Walid Assaf – PLC member – What I am saying after all of these steps is it only a conflict between Hamas and a certain wing inside Fateh or a conflict between Hamas and all other factions, including Islamic Jihad also?

Mudar Kassis – Maybe we are facing a situation where there is no dialogue because the two parties in the dialogue are captives of their actions, Fateh presented itself as what led to its defeat and Hamas presented its action that lead to the separation of Gaza Strip from the West Bank regardless their intentions, and the two sides both are standing behind positions, I don't know what's the point of having a dialogue now, specially we are facing a unique situation, having the United States is facing its strongest crises since the sixties they are loosing in Iraq, Afghanistan, they failed in Lebanon, they are looking for a way out, they lost internally, economically they have problems.

The Israeli government also is the weakest government since the establishment of the state of Israel, and the Palestinian side is incapable of presenting a Palestinian program to face the enemy Israel and the United States because we are facing what happened. My question is as follows if we can engage the dialogue and if we succeed in reaching reform, is there a political program that can come after, such a dialogue or the issues is to have a dialogue only to divide the posts?

Another question, do you think Hamas or Fateh can accept elections to decide on matters and take the decision to the street instead of having dialogue?

Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi – I believe that the timing of the seminar because 11 September the whole climate the regional and at the international level, but because the title of the seminar is the relation between the two sectors so this is our focus. The current split that we have as a status quo, this created two political systems on real ground and that we have to deal with them. I remember in 1994 I held seminar in Gaza Strip and we have all the symbols of political figures there were talking about economic separation, are we talking now about political separation, political Islam, I can say about Muslim brotherhood in Egypt with all its history, Hezbollah and its successes, Iran with its full weight no one posed itself as an example of political Islam and ruling was posed in Gaza Strip so there is a clear position we have a political Islam that wants to rule in Gaza Strip.

Now the second dimension do we have two different political systems or do we need to look at a comprehensive system, to have a unity in the homeland is impossible, is it possible with two political systems, do we have two different systems or are we seeking some kind of confederation, confederation between two systems or the unity of the homeland, now every party is trying to take its share of the homeland or the piece of cake and both are holding the plates trying to take their share but the Palestinian people don't care; they want to eat, they are hungry, they want to eat whether its Kosher or not, whether its Halal or not, we have to take care of the Palestinian people. Now are we heading towards political Islam that is interacting on this land and we are facing a Palestinian model and in the light of the failure of the Palestinian secular system after Oslo.

Lama Hourani – First I would like to respond to that: Fateh did not accept the results of the elections, ok let's ask did Hamas accept PLC elections, and we have many intellectuals we compares between the two parties in the same way. Mr. Hatem talked about the history of movement in Palestine, history of Muslims brotherhood since it started and how they struggled against the occupation, the history before the first Intifada and the symbols of the coup who attacked and tried to kill national leaders during that period and now they are talking about resistance and even after they assumed authority in Gaza Strip we don't see real resistance the way they boasted. Can we compare this with what we saw from Fateh with its rule which we used to talk a lot about it during Oslo and we said that they don't accept partnership and we saw it, despite the differences in 1988 the PFLP expressed reservations regarding the declaration of Independence but they remained in the PLO. We are all talking about Palestinian legitimacy in homeland but we also talk about west Bank and Gaza Strip but we are forgetting five millions outside, we know that Khaled Mashal is staying in Syria, when we talked about 5 million Palestinians, and when we say that Hamas represents Palestinian people, Hamas represents the Palestinian people only in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Mr. Hatem – Many questions I want to answer many as I can, but I want to answer the security issues of Mr. Taweel and Assaf. you want to accuse anyone of siding with one party of the other like Bush vision either you are with me or against me; the issue is not

like this, the issue is what kind of military option, any military option is rejected and the dialogue must be accepted, we are against military option I am calling today I was in prison and the position of the prisoners was announced we are not with military option when settling political differences but with regards to other questions I say to you that hundreds of Hamas people were arrested because of the Palestinian flag and some were killed and then after decades of struggle you are accusing us of not accepting the Palestinian flag. When you asked me about legitimacy, yes I am with the legitimacy but the legitimacy is not to elect someone or not to elect him or to be a PLC member or not or to have Abu Mazen as president, the legitimacy is the rule and the law this is the legitimacy that I understood, the rule should apply to everyone but either you are with legitimacy or not I am with legitimacy. I am part of the legitimacy I was elected by 51,000 people for the PLC, I have to be part of the legitimacy but when you violate the law with presidential decrees from everyone what we see in terms of violation of human rights whether in the streets of the West Bank or Gaza these acts are condemned by everyone, killing is killing, attacking journalist is attacking journalist; these are human rights violations there is no one citizen better than another, I said few minutes ago that occupation wants a weak entity in Gaza Strip led by Hamas and even a weaker entity in the West Bank to be led by Fateh.

Aref Hijawi - I want to have a break for a few moments to cool down a little bit and then I will get back to you.

Abdullah Abdullah – Those who said Fateh did not recognize the elections this is wrong because the first government was formed by Hamas and then a national unity government was formed headed by Hamas and the result of the elections were recognized and many people were appointed.

The second point relates to the basic law and the constitution prohibits using force in making any changes so what happened in Gaza Strip is a coup is a way rejecting the system the political system.

I like the idea that we need to find a formula, we the Palestinian people in the homeland whether here or in the Diaspora we are all in the same boat if we allow a group to find a loophole in our system we will all drown and collapse; we have to use efforts to protect ourselves but the formula that we are looking for is not abstract for us, I repeat again its not true we are against dialogue, I will repeat it for the third time, we want the dialogue to be a means to reach points that we can abide by and respect and abide by, and not to have dialogue today and then do whatever we want the next day and then say this is the democracy, no, democracy is not only going to the ballot box and to express our opinions this part of the democracy, the democracy is the way we act, the way we think, the way we do our work everyday, of course when you reflect democracy how you act in the society, we have to find formulas to bridge the gap, yes, I accept, but what are the formulas, they say we have clouds then it will rain, we know that it will not rain if there are no clouds. How can we talk about formulas when we see escalations, there was first escalation against a wing in Fateh, now its against Fateh, now its against PLO factions and now its against the civil society organizations in Gaza Strip. Does it serve the efforts to look for formulas? I don't think so. This is a question that everyone should ask and all parties are responsible, if you want to find a way to reconcile, they should retreat from their mistakes without retreating from the mistakes how can we guarantee that they might repeat the same mistakes, and of course the believer is not a only a person who goes to the mosque no it's in the heart, it's in the soul.

Aref Hijawi - **Mr. Abdullah the PLC when you were in it as head of the PLC political committee does it have a role in the current crises?**

Abdullah Abdullah - Let me say the role of the political committee in the PLC and the presidency of the PLC were the first parties that talked about the national unity and the dialogue since last May, but let me ask could the PLC convene in one official session after March? let me say why, not because Fateh and Hamas are in conflict, no, because there was a condition from the PLC presidency not to hold any session unless the Presidency accepts certain agenda, and refusing any amendments to any agenda so the attack on the PLC is continuous, the PLC in its current formula refuses to open its second term according to the Basic Law.

Aref Hijawi – How many PLC members are detainees?

Abdullah Abdullah - There are 44 detainees PLC members

Aref Hijawi – Don't you think this is a reason.

Abdullah Abdullah – No, this is another issue, this is not the topic here. There is the proxy system it can work out, our PLC from the first day, Fateh position was based on national decision to give the safety network to Hamas because we rejected the schemes of the occupation who tried to obstruct our project, 44 absent members but still there is a quorum in the confidence for the national unity government we were able to gather the quorum. Why we don't do the same in other sessions? We have tasks to do in the PLC, we have a monitoring role; and not one minister from the previous government did attend of course this is poor performance at the PLC by the PLC presidency which want to cancel the PLC. On the issue of Hebron what happened and the arrests in the West Bank, first this is a Palestinian affair and not a factional affair, Palestine is higher than everyone, there is no way to condemn human rights violations in Gaza and ignore what happened in terms of human rights violations in the West Bank, but let us be objective, purely objective, how? the attack that happened in Hebron against the journalist not because he is journalist but because the journalist and this came in a written report, the journalist cursed the policeman and spat in his face and tried to attack him and despite this we say the security person should serve the people, and a committee was formed and the policeman would be punished if he is found guilty.

Abdul Rahim Mallouh - I would like to talk about a core point. the differences and splits in the Palestinian arena are political differences; we should not hide it or try to conceal it with legal reasons or constitutional reasons, no, this is political, this is an agreement between the two forces, each force tries to influence the street and the institution; unfortunately, the two basic forces did not really look seriously on their partnership even when they went to Mecca, they were surrounded by the Ka'ba and they prayed there and then they came here and carried the weapons. Let us be frank. We reached the National Reconciliation Document and the Cairo Agreement Document and Mecca Agreement Document. Then they continued with the same method. This is why I say if there is no mentality and readiness by the two basic forces on the Palestinian arena to have partnership, then all the talk that we are having will be irrelevant. At the beginning of this year I read an article by an Israeli journalist saying that we are facing not two states for two peoples but three countries for two peoples and we have to prepare ourselves for the next phase; this was before Mecca Agreement and two months before Mecca Agreement and I read that in prison. We have to make ourselves ready for this new factor because some people said we are reading facts in advance, unfortunately this happens we are facing that reality

which was mentioned by an Israeli journalist. I don't think it's good to have two states for the Palestinian people; I don't think this is good for any people.

The other point, I think I agree with Dr. Naser Abdul Kareem that the Palestinian people do not respect any Palestinian leadership, the respect and symbols are diminishing and let me add this; we should not say that people are ahead of their leadership; this is a contradiction because the leadership should lead their people, so when the people are ahead of their leadership then it means that the leadership is imposing itself on its people and this is a disaster, this is not something good; it can lead to crises.

On the issue of the presidency institution, I want to say this very clearly that the presidential institution has been weakened and the split has weakened it and the current political condition weakened the Palestinian presidency and the PLO is also weakened and some people are trying to exploit this weak status in the political conflict. The PLO is the umbrella of all the Palestinian people, the differences and the weak performance should not be exploited. Now for the other factions if they made bargains, I don't know if these forces, I can't talk on behalf of all the factions of the PLO, I can talk about my faction; we did not sell our political position when we supported this party or that other party. And I would like to tell my colleague here; in 1988 we were under pressure on the political differences in 1983 and 1984 when there was an attempt to split the PLO and that time we said that the political entity is a sacred thing especially when we are in a national liberation movement and the Palestinian blood should remain a red line, so all other lines can be crossed but forces of the left have a role, but if Dr. Naser wants to say some factions have other considerations to support a certain party this is something else.

I still hope that these factions would realize their role at this phase because their role is of a national interest for Fateh and for Hamas, the factions have a role.

Aref Hijawi - Is the PFLP doing enough?

Abdul Rahim Malouh – No, the factions are not doing enough regarding the crises; we can see the disaster happening on our arena, but I don't think anyone is doing enough, we are still far from doing enough to reach dialogue to get us out of the crises, I hope that by the end of the day, you would give some time for discussing the way out.

Aref Hijawi - Some of our colleagues here wanted Faisal Hourani to talk about a way out because he is not siding with any party and because he is looking from outside the parties and framework.

Faisal Hourani – The Palestinian national social democratic program is in danger and it is being harmed. The Palestinian national movement that came after 1948 was part of the Arab national Liberation movement and international movement and then the collapse started because of the several consecutive strikes against the Palestinian people which hit them in their unity. I believe all factions are incapable of reforming themselves, when you have such splits, when you have split all over, when you have 80 percent of the people live on the assistance of the UNRWA and relief and when all institutions are destroyed, then it is really difficult to talk about the reform, it is possible to talk about measures to ease the impact of the disaster. My opinion and I hope it would be understood as an academic opinion, Hamas came to the PLC, came in the framework of the collapse which started since Oslo and this continued until Hamas came to authority, Hamas did not act in a sound wise way to exploit the popular mandate that was given to it. And of course there is corruption and corruption is happening everywhere in all aspects. This is an important point when we want to analyze the Palestinian political situation, otherwise we could go in circles and circles without reaching anywhere. Hamas cannot invest the

mandate it was given and are we coming to the phase of political Islam rule, what I said before when there is a general collapse in the situation in role of the secular people, what happens? Who replaces them? Of course it is logical. Who replaces them? We get the conservative people or right wing people.

In the occupied territories and not only in the occupied territories, it's in the region; democracy is retreating in the world and because our share of democracy is very minimal, then its affecting us too much, I believe that it's not possible for a party or movement to build its political position on ideology that cannot accept criticism to achieve pluralism and what you see on TV is a proof on this, and I hope I would not be very pessimistic this is the beginning and still the worst is coming. If the Islamic movement wants to rule in the Arab world, of course, it is linked to the American hegemony in the world, we know through information that there is dialogue for sometime, regular sometimes between international leadership of Muslim brotherhood and the United States, what concerns us on this there is a point here, the Palestinian Muslim brotherhood whether its Hamas or other groups they are not represented in the international leadership of Muslims brotherhood and they were not recognized yet, they were recognized of course but there is no command in Palestine for the Muslims brotherhood.

In the West Bank of course it belongs to the Muslim brotherhood in Jordan and Gaza Strip to Egypt, now the dialogue between the United States and International leadership of Muslim brotherhood its forms is subject to the US hegemony, domination and in the US administration there are several viewpoints, should we adopt the moderate political Islam to replace the national liberation movements and the progressive movements or maybe we should not adopt it, is it enough to confront extremists; this is debatable still in the circles of the US administration.

I believe that the International Leadership of the Muslims brotherhood is also expecting the results of the debate, an experience happened in Egypt as a result of understanding it was an incomplete understanding and they said in the US administration let us allow the moderate political Islam have big blocs in the parliament, in Egypt, for example the political leadership is against Muslim brotherhood, they opposed it, when the understanding happened and the leadership accepted but was based on precautions and the leadership prove to the Americans that opening elections in that way would lead to dangers and that's why they dealt with the other three phases of elections in Egypt in a different way to eliminate the Muslims brotherhood.

The second point which might reduce the disaster is related to the PLO. No one criticized the PLO more than I did but it remains the title and the home. when they talk about Hamas participation in the PLO even before Oslo and after and the debate with Hamas they talked about details they said we need 40 members also but the basic issue is that the Muslim brotherhood and Hamas is part of it they don't have permanent alliances. The history of Muslims brotherhood shows that they don't have permanent strategies because they are in relation with heaven they can hold joint activities but they don't have permanent alliances. If they accept the PLO, then they are holding permanent alliances based in the PLO. Despite all the differences, the democratic Palestinian dialogue between the factions ended with programs since 1988 nothing happened in terms of this but the political initiative the Declaration of Independence this was accepted by the Palestinian National Council (PNC) in 1988. I believe Hams' reluctance in entering the PLO is basically based on refusing permanent alliances.

Within the framework which I am talking about, certain forces were recruited and certain regimes and certain funds and certain TV stations were recruited for this work, in this occasion, Al Jazeera Satellite Channel from my point of view was also recruited for this work.

The Palestinian secular people and democratic people all over the world are facing the US domination and they confiscate the western democracy in this light of this hegemony. The secular people are not in danger but they are under strikes. When we talk about details we want measures to reduce the disasters. let us wait for international developments that might change the image.

Participant – question to Mr. Abdullah and a comment to Mr. Hatem isn't it the right time for Fateh conference to have new generation in Fateh, the second point Hamas and Fateh at least to move one step forward to stop media war between Palestine TV and Aqsa TV to prepare the climate for dialogue.

Mohammed Abed Rabbu - question to PLC member Hatem Kafisheh can we expect you to become a member PLO Executive Committee member in the near future and sit next to Yasser Abed Rabbu?

Juman Qneiss – question to Mr. Faisal Hourani I want to ask about the future between Fateh and Hams. is it in the hands both Fateh and Hamas? And don't you think the Palestinian mass-media are less developed than we thought?

Faisal Hourani – I agree with you absolutely that they are less developed, yes.

Awad Rjoub, Arab Center for Media – question to Mr. Hatem, do you support giving back the security headquarters whether to the authority or to Arab country Saudi Arabia or Egypt?

Second point: the PLC presidency is accused of obstructing the PLC work?

Question to Mr. Faisal Hourani we are in the West Bank; the problems related to what happened in Gaza in terms of torture, arrests; are we heading to a situation similar to what happened in Gaza strip?

Question to Mr. Abdullah talking about Friday in Hebron, in Hebron the security service participated in the attack and six journalists were attacked not only one journalist in Hebron and I don't think all of them cursed and slapped.

Participant - There is a fear regarding the PLO, the PLO is the sole representative, legitimate representative of the people but if the PLO gives up the national and constant rights, if the PLO gives up some of these constants, can the Palestinian people at that point consider the PLO the sole representative?

Participant - First comment on what Mr. Faisal said that Hamas did not invest its victory, was it given a chance to rule?

The question there is Saudi move to bring the both sides; do you think the Saudi move will have any chance?

Comment by Faisal Hourani - He wants to give Mr. Abdulla the room so he will give Hamas the chance to speak the last like al Jazeera TV

Mr. Abdullah Abdullah – There are efforts in all the districts to start Fateh Conference and there are internal elections in some areas we hope that the conference will take place as soon as possible, this conference is an important thing hopefully we will succeed in this. For the issue of Hebron and Gaza it is not useful to look at who is worse. this is not the point, we should stand against any mistake, we should stand against any sin; what is happening whether in Hebron or Ramallah or Rafah; these are blows against our national

project, the image of the Palestinians who were the symbol of liberation of struggle, there is a conference in Brazil or Australia the Palestinian presence came always through the Palestinian scarf. What happened in Palestine distorts the image; we have to consider our methods and restore the image.

Mr. Hatem Kafisheh – I say in front of all of you and God is my witness that the Palestinian security services attacked with clubs five journalists who are known for their professional reputation. I am against attacking any journalists. I am asking: Is the mentality of conspiracy still controlling the Palestinian thought, I heard that Mr. Faisal that there is a dialogue between international leadership of Muslim Brotherhood with the United States. Mr. Aref asked if the political decision of Hamas is in Syria or by Khomeini; we have to say that the Islamic movement is original, I don't know; as if the Muslim Brotherhood were not living in this homeland and did not contribute in building the homeland I don't want to talk about the disputes that happened between factions of the PLO when they used tanks. Then they went to dialogue; we should not forget history; yes, they used tanks against each other we should learn from the mistakes of the past. The prophet said: "in conflicts anyone can make mistakes and the best person is who starts the step to reach peace", and I hope Hamas would start peace and give a little bit to the brothers because we are all brothers I make an appeal from this forum to our brothers in Hamas to start the first step and the brothers in Fateh should respond positively and I hope the meeting between President with the Saudi King would reach positive results with the efforts of Isamil Hanieh. I hope this would happen and this is the point where we should start.

Mr. Faisal Hourani – Mr. Hatem, I don't want to talk about Hamas which insisted that the contradiction is with the occupation and the Palestinian blood is a red line and the contradiction is with Mohammed Dahlan and Abu Ali Shahin. Our meeting here is to talk about the differences and learn from the lessons of the past and I hope and I wish that we could go back to dialogue.

The question was Hamas given a chance to rule? Was Arafat given a chance to invest his gain in the elections? Was any Palestinian given a chance, any factions, a chance to succeed and invest the success, you have to extract your gains. The brothers in Hamas did not plan for their victory in the elections, the victory surprised Hamas, they don't have any experience in the past that's why there was some confusion.

Abdul Rahim Malouh – I want to go back to the title of seminar the relationship between the two parts of the homeland I think that the current situation will obstruct achieving the national goals and will obstruct any party from reaching national goals whether the international conference in the fall or in Gaza waiting for the next fall or winter for a simple reason because the current split as mentioned by Mudar, the Palestinian split weakened the Palestinian factor in any compromise in any struggle in the next phase.

Let us look and watch the past three months; this is an exaggeration but 90 percent of the Palestinian political rhetoric was attack from Gaza against West Bank and West Bank against Gaza and we forgot the occupation, we forgot the settlements we forgot Bili'n achievement. This is why the split will harm the national interests and goals. It will harm our efforts to achieve progress regardless of the intentions. Everyone can accuse the others of bad intentions but regardless of the intentions, the results are bad. We have to move fast to end this crisis we have to go back to the mentality of partnership, the mentality of exclusion and monopoly destroyed the Palestinian arena, we are in front of two forces, one carrying the historical truth and the other carrying the religious truth; if we continue like this we will pay the price, the solution is through a popular movement to exert

pressure on all these sides to go back to the mentality of partnership to confront the occupation which is the basic enemy which is taking away the rights of everyone.

At the same time we should not justify oppression; there is an attempt sometime to justify oppression whether it is in the West Bank or Gaza Strip. Oppression is oppression and freedom is freedom; we have to condemn any act against any journalists or any citizen.

Aref Hijawi – We thank you all, this seminar was held and organized by the Jerusalem Media and Communication Center, JMCC. We apologize for those who were not given any chance to ask questions or make comments. Thank you for your attendance and attention.

ENDS