

The new Palestinian government and the challenges it faces

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Introduction:

After President Mahmoud Abbas accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah on Sunday June 23, and in light of the crisis in the political and administrative system at the various levels, there is now a need to look into the nature of the challenges awaiting the caretaker government and how to address them. This is whether in terms of reforming the internal situation or finding practical steps to prepare an administrative structure capable of community development and revival of Palestinian citizenry.

In light of the absence of a monitoring role by the PLC, the continued crisis in the political system, the conflict of interests between the PA and the PLO and the absence of any prospect for an end to the split, it is important to formulate a clear strategic vision to face internal and external challenges and to operate according to this vision.

Discussion:

The crisis of the political system

The crisis facing the new Palestinian government is a crisis basically linked to the present political system and one that was faced by consecutive former governments. Hence, the current government inherited the same crisis. This created an imbalance of sorts in the political system and thinking, meaning that no government can make any positive change or assume any effective role as a result of this structural and administrative dysfunction.

This situation meant that the work of this government was nothing more than “managing the crisis” instead of solving it, especially in the absence of the PLC and its monitoring role coupled with the people’s abandonment of their own monitoring role. What also contributed to reinforcing the chaos was the internal split and the absence of any sincere intentions to end it, not to mention the absence of regional circumstances that would allow for this to happen.

This all requires a restructuring of the PLO and a revival of the role of its factions – which have been absent from the political scene—in order to be part of the Palestinian decision-making process. The PLC has not convened and has not been restructured, either through elections or appointments for a long time.

Furthermore, the battle over authority and the overstepping of authorities belonging to the prime minister, who had deputies appointed to him by President Mahmoud Abbas in accordance with the Palestinian Basic Law, was the reason for the crisis. Dr. Hamdallah should have refused this from the start. Still, the reasons for the resignation remained speculation and rumors given that there was no specific source of information in spite of the crucial nature of the information not to mention the citizens' right to know it.

Focus on the internal front

In order for the caretaker government to be able to face the challenges that await it, first and foremost economic, political and social challenges, reformation of the internal front must begin and solutions found to other internal crises such as the education, health and development systems, as much as possible. We must also not use the occupation as an excuse even while recognizing its impact on the development, economic and social processes.

There is no dispute that the hindrances facing any government are the Palestinian split and the Israeli occupation, which continues to confiscate land to expand settlements in Area C. In order to confront this, there must be support for the people on the ground, especially in this region. This would be an investment in the land and a way to preserve a geographic presence.

At a different level, attention must be given to solidifying internal security and stability, which would guarantee social protection, especially with the structural and societal dysfunction taking place. Economic matters should also be set straight and the mismanagement in national institutions and ministries should be addressed; in addition efforts must be bolstered towards meeting social requirements in addition to reconsidering the entire health and education system.

Vision:

The absence of a clear-cut definition of the relationship between the PA and the PLO and the lack of vision and message among the various institutions at the political, administrative and strategic levels, ultimately created a state of chaos. This constituted a major barrier to the process of sustainable development and growth at both the individual and state levels. Furthermore, the absence of candidness and openness between the government and citizens undermined the PA's credibility and generated a liquidy and unclear relationship between them and between the various parties.

Without a doubt, this dysfunction in the political system reflected on the administrative and institutional system. Add to this the lack of vision from previous governments or in national and official institutions and the administrative system; this is over and above the adherence to old modes of operation which hinders creativity and obstructs the implementation of integral visions between the various ministries.

Therefore, real determination for change is imperative for facing crucial decisions in this stage, locally, regionally and internationally towards reform and a change of the status quo.

Recommendations:

1. Making an end to the split a priority; stressing on the need to implement the Cairo agreement and the Doha declaration; pressuring towards forming a national unity government in spite of the lack of sincere intentions to achieve reconciliation and the absence of compatible regional circumstances.
2. Directing attention towards realizing internal security and stability, which would guarantee social protection in addition to solving any internal crisis possible such as the education, health and development systems.
3. The restructuring of the PLO is imperative in addition to reviving the role of its factions so they can participate in Palestinian decision making.
4. Giving attention to the development of agriculture, especially in the Jordan Valley and confronting the Israeli encroachment in that area; supporting Palestinian products.
5. Reactivating the PLC in order to revive its monitoring role; restoring the role of civil society institutions towards protecting public freedoms, citizens' rights and social development.
6. Confronting the settlement expansion in Area C and supporting the steadfastness of the people on this land as an investment in these areas in order to maintain geographic presence there.
7. The government must present a draft law for contemporary and progressive education in order to create a real change in the education system.
8. The legitimate Palestinian leadership must set up headquarters in the Gaza Strip so that it can work more efficiently and freely, far from the Israeli occupation; this way they would be the impacting party, not the effected one.
9. Devoting a general policy session in MIFTAH to discussing a strategic vision in the political and administrative system.