

"Prospects for the success of diplomatic efforts to resume the peace process"

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Introduction

There have been recent pushes within decision making circles and the political and intellectual elite in the United States on the role of the US Administration in offering a peace plan in addition to talk about a possible French-Spanish-Egyptian initiative about the peace process which is expected to be announced in June. This is all in the context of the ever growing complex political scene due to the nature of the Israeli government and its measures and the continued state of internal division and how these factors play into local and international developments, which in turn impact all aspects of political life in Palestine. The question is what Palestinians need to do in order to influence these developments and protect their interests and rights.

At present, the United States is faced with three transnational challenges in terms of its national security represented in the European Union, east Asia and the pan-Islamic nations, of which Palestine is a part. What is Palestinians' role in influencing this shift in the US redefinition of its national security especially since it does not look like the EU will have any real initiative for solving the conflict any time soon save to put their weight behind the US in its efforts?

Discussion

- The US-Palestinian relationship: US President Barack Obama's Cairo speech last June was the apex of the US's position on the situation. The US has been one, pushed in the wrong direction by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's arrogance and has been encouraged by its own success in the health bill passed last month, which showed that Obama's administration is not weak.
- Right now, the US has proposed proximity talks and has said – through US envoy George Mitchell - it would "reconsider" its relationship with any party that takes

provocative measures to undermine this process, which is basically geared towards Israel's settlement expansion. Arabs gave their approval for the resumption of talks within a four month period, so this is the framework in which the Palestinians must work. There is no tangible European or Arab initiative to replace it.

What role do the Palestinians have within this framework?

- We must continue our political and diplomatic courses and also popular nonviolent resistance, which could turn into pressure for supporting our negotiating points. Negotiating does not mean we are compromising our stances. Within our negotiating efforts, Palestinians must move on all tracks, including following up on taking Israel to the International Court of Justice for its crimes and making our case in international forums.

Alongside these efforts, Palestinians need to continue on the path of institution and state building in a way that supports the people. Thirdly, we must develop a mechanism of internal dialogue to help put pressure on Hamas to finally achieve reconciliation. It is a huge fallacy among the international community that Palestinian reconciliation is anti-peace and anti-negotiations.

There is an overall feeling that Netanyahu is not serious about negotiations. The United States, on the other hand, have good intentions overall but lack the "teeth" to really generate action. So far, Palestinians have fulfilled all the requirements of a return to the negotiating table and have offered clear terms of reference for negotiations: stop settlements and no provocative acts. While these requirements have been partially fulfilled, there are still no clear cut terms of reference. For example, there has been no stop to tenders for settlement construction in Jerusalem.

Right now, Israel's priority is to strike Iran in order to mix up the situation in the region. Palestinians don't want to be sold spoiled goods, so to speak. We don't want to be told now that "the way to Palestine is through Tehran." In the end, no negotiations with this Israeli government will lead to anything positive. Netanyahu wants to extend this stage and only agree to temporary borders.

Palestinian Role:

We need one national program that everyone agrees on, which includes a boycott of settlements and popular resistance.

- We should not proceed as if there were a quick solution. A solution with the Palestinians is not a priority for Israel, Iran is. Hence, any imposed solution will not bring anything positive and will be worse than Camp David 2000.
- We need to take advantage of the US. There has been progress in the American position, which has semi-recognized that east Jerusalem is part of the Palestinian territories. Also, globally, there are more countries that have a negative perception of Israel, which is important.
- We now have to improve our position to benefit from our support from world countries.
- We are too weak to impose a solution and must be careful not to get bogged down in details. The PLO needs to put a strong foot forward on the international scene.
- We need a unified position on major issues. Right now, we are split which gives the impression that we are waiting for a solution.
- One problem is that the average Palestinian is drowned in personal problems. Israel interferes in every aspect of Palestinian life. As a result, we have learned to live with the status quo. We don't react to things that are happening around us partly because Israel warns us that if we act, there will be huge consequences.
- Just like Israel has organizations such as the NGO monitor, we also need an organizations that handle issues such as following up on the ICJ and holding Israel accountable for its actions.