

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of **Global Dialogue and Democracy**. MIFTAH
المبادرة الفلسطينية لتعميق الحوار العالمي والديمقراطية



"The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in the Media Coverage of the 17th Israeli Knesset Elections"

The Sixth Report

Media Monitoring Unit

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In Cooperation with the European Union

Media Monitoring Unit Team

Media Analyst: Mansour Tahboub

Information Coordinator: Ruham Nimri

Administrative Assistant: Nahed Abu Sneineh

Monitoring Unit: 'Ala Farid, Abeer Ismail, Sa'ed Karazon

Steering Committee for this report

Dr. Hanan Ashrawi,

Dr. Lily Feidy

Maha Awwad,

Basem Barhoum,

Khalil Shahin,

Mousa Qous,

Rami Bathish,

Hisham Abdallah

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Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy-MIFTAH

P.O. Box 69647 Jerusalem, 95908

Phone Number (Jerusalem) 972 2 5851842; (Ramallah): 972 2 2989490

Fax number (Jerusalem): 972 2 5835184; (Ramallah): 972 2 2989492

E-mail: info@miftah.org

Website: www.miftah.org

Foreword

The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy-MIFTAH issues this report about the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Palestinian media coverage of the 17th Israeli Knesset Elections during the period between 7-29 March 2006, with the aim of monitoring, studying and analyzing the type of media coverage of the Palestinian –Israeli conflict in the Palestinian media.

This is the sixth of a series of reports issued by MIFTAH in cooperation with the Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel “Keshev,” which monitors and analyzes the Palestinian and Israeli media.

Through this report, we hope to contribute to developing professional, brave, critical and free media. Such a media is capable of providing better press and media services to the Palestinian public, according to scientific and professional standards that would contribute to strengthening the credibility of this media and enhance its impact, as well as assist in establishing the role of media as a watchdog over the executive power.

Monitoring topics are divided in the following manner:

A) Palestinian media coverage of the Israeli elections in general:

This section covers a set of general questions about the coverage and its connotations. Among these questions are the following:

1. How did the Palestinian media handle the Israeli elections?
2. Did the media channels take great interest in the topic? Did they highlight it and in what ways?
3. Were these elections linked to on-going developments on the ground, such as the breaking into Jericho Prison and the arrest of Ahmad Sa’adat and his comrades?
4. Were there any advertisements in Palestinian newspapers for the Israeli elections, by Zionist or Arab parties?

B) How did the media channels address the issue of Jerusalem in its coverage of the elections?

1. On what scale did the issue of Jerusalem appear in the headlines and details of the elections news in the Palestinian coverage?
2. What are the differences, if they exist at all, between the positions of Israeli parties towards the issue of Jerusalem in terms of both the present and the future?
3. Did the Arab parties clearly reveal their positions towards Jerusalem?
4. Was there any indication of the size of Palestinian votes from East Jerusalem of both types: holders of Israeli citizenship of Jerusalem who fell under occupation since 1967, or holders of Israeli citizenship as citizens of Israel (1948 Land)?
5. How did the parties address the issue of the borders of Jerusalem? Which Jerusalem did they talk?

C) The political agendas of Israeli parties

1. How do the parties perceive the possibility of resolving the Palestinian–Israeli conflict? Did the Palestinian media address the agendas of different parties regarding the conflict and their proposed solutions?
2. Did the Palestinian media highlight the points of difference or agreement in the views of parties towards the core issues of the conflict in addition to the issue of Jerusalem? These issues include the Palestinian state: its nature and borders, the refugees and the right of return, the settlements and plundering Palestinian land, in addition to the prisoners and their destiny.
3. How did the media address the issue of permanent borders of the state of Israel in the agendas of Israeli parties as well as the statements made by their leaders?
4. What was the scale of interest in the issue of the Separation Wall? How was it covered in the Palestinian media from an Israeli parties' perspective? Did the Palestinian media highlight the discrepancies in the positions of Israeli parties towards the Wall, if such discrepancies existed?

D) Occupation Practices, the daily confrontations and military operations

1. Was there any relation between the practices of occupation forces against Palestinians and the elections campaign of Kadima party?
2. Did the Palestinian media cite any incitement, escalation, or racism by the Israeli parties in the election campaigns?
3. Did the Israeli parties use any incidence of violence or Palestinian attacks to overbid and adopt positions that inflame the conflict for electoral purposes? Did the Palestinian media point that out?

E) The attitude towards Hamas

1. How did the Israeli parties perceive the victory of the Islamic Resistance Movement “Hamas” in the Palestinian Legislative Elections?
2. What are the differences, if any, between Israeli parties in their willingness to deal with a Palestinian government led by Hamas?
3. Did the Israeli parties use Hamas victory as an excuse to disclaim the Palestinian party or partner?
4. Did the Palestinian media observe any exploitation of the victory of Hamas by the Israeli parties in their pursuit to win votes, especially those of the right and the middle?

Palestinian Media Coverage of the Israeli Elections

The three main Palestinian newspapers manifested a moderate degree of interest in the issue of elections in their news, reports and analysis, especially during the first few days of the monitored period. They expressed greater interest before E-day and after the results. This was not the case with Palestine TV. To the contrary, it did not express significant interest in these elections, but addressed them in many instances as if they were taking place in a remote country that is not related to the Palestinian people.

It is worth noting that there were high degrees of similarities in the coverage of the three newspapers, possibly because of their reliance on the same sources of news and information. The three newspapers allocate almost equal space for translations of reports and articles of Hebrew newspapers published in Israel. They almost publish the same subjects that may vary in the interpretation of headlines and the editing style. The three newspapers get these translations from the same source.

There is a need to distinguish Al-Ayyam qualitatively and quantitatively which publishes the bimonthly Al-Mashhad Al-Israeli (The Israeli Scene). This is a publication of the Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies MADAR, consisting of eight pages of the same size as Al-Ayyam and is annexed to the newspaper on Tuesdays. The annex contains a variety of distinguished, comprehensive and in-depth reports, analyses and articles that are specialized in Israeli affairs.



As we go through the headlines and articles in the three newspapers, we notice a clear linkage between the facts and events on the ground and the attempts made by the ruling party "Kadima" to score additional points to its popularity by demonstrating Israeli force facing Palestinians, and the attempts to show Olmert as a strong, firm and resolved person when it comes to confrontation with Palestinians or what is called Israel's security.

Such a trend became evident in the coverage of the storming of Jericho Prison and the abduction of Ahmad Sa'adat, the Secretary-General of the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). One day prior to the operation, the newspapers published the Israeli threats to assassinate Sa'adat upon his release.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, 13/12/ 2006 Front Page

Israel Threatens to Assassinate Sa'adat and His Comrades if Released.

The day after the operation, there was a clear linkage in news headlines as well as analyses. Examples are:

Al-Ayyam 15/3/2006 Front Page

Main Headline in Red:

*Olmert's Campaign in Jericho: Arresting Sa'adat and his Comrades
9 Hours of Israeli Aggression following the Withdrawal of Foreign Guards*

Israel Rejected a Palestinian Proposal to Stop Assault

الإريحا ٢٠٠٦/٣/١٥ الموافق ١٥ صفر ١٤٢٧هـ، العدد ٣٦٤٦، السلة الحادية عشرة

٣٢ صفحة

يومية سياسية مستقلة

٢ شبك (داخل الخط الأخضر)

٢٥ قبل في الأزق

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سقوط ثلاثة شهداء وعشرات الجرحى، وموجة غضب شعبية عارمة

حملة أولمرت في أريحا: أسر سعدات و

٩ ساعات من العدوان الإسرائيلي بعد «سحب» الحراس الأجانب

أريحا - «الأيام»، وكالات: نفذت قوات الاحتلال الإسرائيلي أمس عدواناً واسع النطاق ضد سجن أريحا في المقاطعة، مباشرة بعد انسحاب الحراس الأميركيين والبريطانيين من السجن، استمر نحو تسع ساعات قامت خلالها محاصرة المبنى وقصفه بالذخائر والطائرات المروحية بشنك مكثف، وانتهت بعملية باسري الأمن العام للجبهة الشعبية لتحرير فلسطين أحمد سعدات برفاقة الأريحة، واللواء فؤاد الشويكي المتهم بقضية سفينة الأسلحة «كارين ي» ومجموعة من عناصر كتائب شهداء الأقصى التابعة لحركة فتح ومن حركة الجهاد الإسلامي.

فقد اقتحم مئات الجنود الإسرائيليون تعزيمهم العديبات والجرفات، تحت نطاء جوي من الطائرات المروحية صباح أمس، ساحة المجمع الذي يقع فيه لسجن، حيث قامت جرافات كبيرة بهدم الجدران المحيطة بالمجمع واطلقت نبيات لجيش نيران مدفعيتها في اتجاه السجن، حسب مراسل وكالة فرانس برس.

وطوقت المبنى المدرعات والعشرات من سيارات الجيب الإسرائيلية في حين حلقت فوفه المروحيات وجرفات الجيش تدمر جدران المجمع الذي يقع به السجن.

[التقمة ص ٢١]

١ موفاز يعترف بوجود تنسيق بريطاني أسرائيلي لاجتياح سجن أريحا منذ أسبوع

تل السبب - «عرب ٤٨»: أكد وزير الأمن الإسرائيلي شاول موفاز في صريحاته التي بها لصحيفة «هارتس» مساء أمس، علم إسرائيل المسبق موعد انسحاب الحراس البريطانيون والأمريكيين من سجن أريحا، واستعداد جيش منذ أسبوع لعملية اجتياح السجن واختطاف المعتقلين وفي مقدمتهم أمين العام للجبهة الشعبية أحمد سعدات، وفقد موفاز بتصريحاته هذه عاءات قادة الجيش بأنه لم يتم أي تنسيق بين إسرائيل وبريطانيا والولايات المتحدة قبل العملية.

وقال موفاز للصحيفة أن الجيش استعد لهذه العملية منذ أسبوع، وأنه صادق على الخطة حسبما تم تنفيذها أمس، بطريقة «الضغط التدريجي بدل

[التقمة ص ٢١]



"Olmert's Campaign in Jericho: Arrest of Sa'adat and his Comrades"

On the same page, the newspaper wrote: *Mofaz Admits the Existence of Israeli-British Coordination for Breaking into Jericho Prison a Week Earlier.*

This headline contains an enhancement of the conspiracy assumption. It overloads the headline with what exceeds the facts and details included in the news item.

Al-Ayyam 17/3/2006 Front Page:

Israeli Opinion Polls: Jericho Raid Granted Olmert with a Push Forward Prior to Elections on 28 March.

On page 22 of the same issue, and in an article written by Samih Shabib entitled: "Notions of Jericho Operation," the writer said that the operation aimed at showing Olmert as a national hero capable of resolving matters militarily in defense of the prestige of the state.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah: 18/3/2006 Front Page

*Poll: Abduction of Sa'adat and his Comrades Grants Kadima More Seats.
The news item is reported from the Israeli Army Radio.*



"49% of Israelis: Olmert Assaulted Jericho Prison because of Decrease in his Popularity"

Al-Quds 17/3 2006 Page 17:

"*Storming Jericho Prison ...Meanings and Indications.*" This is an article by Nadia Ailabouni, a Palestinian writer living in Athens, who considers the operation a blow against Hamas and a source of strength for Kadima.

The Issue of Jerusalem

Undoubtedly, Jerusalem enjoys a very special status in the Palestinian and Israeli media discourse. The issue of Jerusalem has been addressed by the Israeli parties in their election campaigns, and Palestinian newspapers have reported these statements and slogans. The newspapers, however, did not make use of this information and reports in order to serve the Palestinian reader. An example is what Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah published on page 16:

That is how the Coming Israeli Government will Divide Jerusalem: Taking Arab Quarters Containing 120 thousand Arabs off the Area of the City and Handing them over to the PA.

Despite its utmost importance, this report taken from the Israeli daily Ha'aretz did not persuade the newspaper, nor did it persuade Al-Ayyam or Al-Quds, to shed further light on the issue and open a debate among Palestinians at the media and political levels.

It is noted that the issue of Jerusalem was addressed only superficially in the coverage of the Israeli elections, and came in accordance with what had been reported in the Israeli and foreign media. The Palestinian newspapers did not point out the discrepancies- even if slight- between the positions of different Israeli parties towards the present and the future of Jerusalem. The newspapers did not report the size of the two types of Palestinian voters in East Jerusalem: Jerusalemite holders of Israeli citizenship, who fell under occupation in 1967, or citizens of Israel who are holders of Israeli citizenship (1948 Land), with the exception of two "AFP" and "Reuters" reports. Some newspapers may have some excuse in the unavailability and the difficulty of access to such information. However, the mission of journalism necessitated the allocation of wider space for the topic of Jerusalem in Israeli elections.

Other models of published material on Jerusalem:

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah 11/3/2006 Front Page

Olmert to Ma'ariv: We Will Withdraw Behind the Wall, Jerusalem is Unified and We Will Maintain Control Over Major Settlement Blocs

Al-Ayyam 13/3/2006 P. 7

With the Start of Jewish Purim Celebrations, Jerusalem is Transformed into a Military Base and Restrictions are Imposed on the Movement of Citizens.

In the details of these news items, the newspapers did not go beyond stating facts, mostly reported from Israeli or Western sources.



"In an Opinion Poll, 63% of Jews Support Partition of Jerusalem, and 54% are Willing to Give Up Arab Quarters."

Al-Quds 11/3/2006 P.12

Olmert: No Relinquishment of Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim is part of Israel.

In the details, statements made by Olmert asserted his positions and ideas regarding the Wall and "permanent" Jewish control over Jerusalem. He also asserted maintaining control over major settlement blocs in the West Bank as part of Israel.

Al-Ayyam 11/3/2006 published the same subject in its front page, but in more details, under the following headline:

Olmert: the Separation Wall Constitutes the Permanent Borders of Israel; We Will Stay in Jerusalem and the Settlement Blocs Will Remain under Our Control.

In the details, Olmert said that by 2010, there would be no more settlements within the Wall, since there would be final borders for Israel, adding that Israelis would not live behind the Wall.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah 11/3/2006 chose on its front page a different headline to Olmert's same statements given in an interview with Yedioth Ahronoth. The headline was:

Olmert: Ismail Haniyyeh is Not Safe from an Assassination Operation.

The three newspapers published the details of the interview on their Israeli Affairs pages.

Political Agendas of Israeli Parties

Wide sectors of the Palestinian people believe that there are no crucial differences between Zionist parties with respect to the rights of the Palestinian people. With all due respect, and irrespective of how correct such a point of view may be, the newspapers did not grant this opinion the analysis and discussions it deserves, and did not shed enough light on this issue. The cartoon published by Al-Quds newspaper on 19/3/2006 expressed this opinion.



It is noted that a number of analysts and observers described the 17th Israeli Knesset Legislative Elections as the most boring and least exciting within the Israeli society. Many spoke of the similarities between the agendas of parties over many social, political and economic issues. Opinions of most Israeli writers and analysts agreed that there was an absence of stars and big names in these elections, especially with the illness and absence of Sharon from the political arena. This may also explain the weak interest in the Palestinian media.

Al-Ayyam 13/3/2006, page 14 published an article from Yedioth Ahronoth entitled "Elections with no Stars" which spoke about the absence of stars from the Knesset Elections with the absence of Sharon, adding that the current elections tasted like a fast food meal.

Despite the above, the newspapers reported the positions of Israeli parties towards certain issues, although they were merely reflecting what the Israeli media had published. The following are some samples:

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah 14/3/2006 P. 15

Voters are Confused Because of Similarities Between Partisan Agendas

In another headline: *Olmert Declares his Agenda: "Vicious Tactic"*. In this article, "Shalom Yerushalmi" criticized Olmert's declaration of his plan and its exploitation in his campaign.

Al-Quds 18/3/2006 P.24

The most recent opinion poll in Israel:

A Majority Supports Olmert's Plan on the West Bank

In another headline: *Head of Kadima Enjoys the Best Chances for Forming the Government.*

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah 18/3/2006 P. 13

Peretz to Yedioth Ahronoth: The Kadima Wave is Receding

In the same newspaper, and on the same page, the newspaper published an article entitled: *"What Olmert Owns is...the Legacy of the Very Fortunate Sharon."* In this article, Yoel Marcus speaks about the success of Jericho operation which, although conducted by the Public Security, added to Olmert's credit.

Although some say that Israeli parties deal with the Palestinians in one manner, some discrepancies and differences may be detected, such as what Al-Ayyam published on 18/3/2006 page 19:

Amir Peretz: There is a Partner and the Unilateral Security Solution is not Sufficient.

This is an interview from Yedioth Ahronoth. In the details, Peretz spoke about four red lines:

- 1- Minimum Wages;
- 2- Labor force companies;
- 3- The law on pension for every citizen; and
- 4- Improving the health package.

In addressing the issue of Palestinian citizens inside the Green Line, or the so-called Arab minority in Israel, this newspaper published statements of some Palestinian leaders, as well as reports on their numbers, efforts and calls for unity. Once again, however, these materials were reported either from Israeli sources or from foreign news agencies.

Examples include:

Al-Quds 17/3/2006 P. 2

Opinion Polls: Big failure for Kadima in model elections conducted in the village of Ibleen.

Amir Peretz in an interview with Ha'aretz: I will have An Arab Minister in my Government, and I will be pleased with the participation of Arab parties in the Coalition.

Al-Quds 14/3/2006 P.14

They Remember Arabs only when Elections Get Closer

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah 13/3/2006 P.2

Tibi Asserts the Importance of Arab Lists

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah 13/3/2006 P.3

Barakeh: Zionist Parties Organize an Election Campaign to Steal the Votes of Arab Citizens.

Al-Quds 13/3/2006 P.2

Israeli Government Decides to Increase the Numbers of Arab Employees in Governmental Departments, and Arab MKs Accuse Olmert of the Attempt to Buy Arab Votes

Occupation Practices, Daily Confrontations and Military Operations

The Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories did not start with the election campaign and would not stop at it. However, a media observer notes that election campaigns are accompanied by an escalation of repressive measures, violence, siege, closures, and violations of the rights of the Palestinian people under occupation. Perhaps the Sa'adat issue and the circumstances surrounding it observed by Israelis, Palestinians or other parties might explain this observation.



"On the occasion of today's Knesset Elections, closing the border-crossings between Gaza Strip and Israel and imposing a total closure on the Palestinian Territories"

As we present what the Palestinian newspapers published, or what the Palestine TV broadcast during the election campaign, we notice that all the days of the campaign were replete with news of killing, injuring and arresting Palestinians. These were also full of news of demolishing houses and buildings, bulldozing lands, increased settlement activities, tightened sieges and military checkpoints, restrained movement and closures.

Following are simple examples of what newspapers reported during that period:

Al-Ayyam 15/3/2006 Front Page:

Olmert: The Settlement of Ariel Will Be Part of Israel

In the details, Olmert vowed not to abandon the largest Jewish settlement in the West Bank, few days prior to the upcoming Elections scheduled on 28 March.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah 14/3/2006 Front Page

Israel Starts Building a Police Station in Area E1, Announcing the Launch of a Settlement Project that Links Ma'aleh Adumim to Jerusalem

In the same issue on page 3:

Three Citizens Including Two Women from Yatta, Injured in Settler Attacks

The Start to Build a Settlement Road in Tal Rumeida in Hebron

Al-Ayyam 15/3/2006 P.8

471 Israeli Military Checkpoints Tear the West Bank Apart and Turn the Lives of Palestinians to Hell.

Al-Ayyam 15/3/2006 P. 3

*Occupation Imposes Stringent Constraints to Ensure the Comfort of Settlers in Hebron
Two Children and Two Solidarity Group Members Injured because of Occupation
Attacks*

Al-Ayyam 15/3/2006 Front Page

Occupation Escalates Military Measures at the Entries to Qalqilyah

Al-Ayyam 15/3/2006 P. 5

Occupation Forces Enter Nablus Twice and Storm Tens of Houses.

Al-Ayyam 15/3/2006 P. 9

*Occupation Forces Storm the City and Refugee Camp of Tulkarem and Arrest One Youth
at Kafriyat Checkpoint.*

الحملة الانتخابية الاسرائيلية لم تتأثر بفوز حركة حماس في الانتخابات الفلسطينية

واقر ميشال بن عامي المرشح والنائب عن الليكود ان التلويح بمخاطر حماس لم يات بنتيجة.

وقال العضو في اللجنة المركزية لليكود متحدثا لوكالة فرانس برس «هذا ما حملنا على التخلي عمليا عن شعار «اقوياء في مواجهة حماس» لاعتماد شعار «ليكود قوي، ضمانة لامن اسرائيل».

واضاف بن عامي ان «وحده اعتداء واسع النطاق لا سمح الله يمكن ان يرفع تايد الرأي العام لليمين. لكن علينا ان نقر بان حماس لا تبذل اي مساع في هذا الاتجاه».

وفي الطرف الاخر من المشهد السياسي، يعبر الزعيم السابق لحزب ميريتس اليساري يوسي ساريد عن رأي مماثل.

ويقول النائب المنتهية ولايته انه «في حال وقوع اعتداء، فان ذلك قد يعزز موقع اليمين باثارة رد فعل قومي متطرف مثلما حصل في الماضي، لكن فوز حماس لم يكن له اي تاثير» على سير الحملة الانتخابية.

واضاف ان «الاسرائيليين قلما يكثرثون بصورة عامة لما يحصل من الجانب الفلسطيني، باستثناء اليسار. لكن حتى بالنسبة للييسار الذي ما زال يدعو الى اتفاق سلام، فان فوز حماس يطرح مشكلة فكرية اكثر منها انتخابية».

جديرا بالمصداقية سواء عن حق او عن باطل، وهو ترسيم الحدود. وفي هذا الاطار، فان التخوف من حركة حماس لم يعد له تاثير، بل انه يعزز لدى الاسرائيليين العزم على الفصل».

وكان الليكود، اكبر احزاب اليمين الاسرائيلي، اطلق مباشرة بعد فوز حماس في الانتخابات التشريعية في ٢٥ كانون الثاني شعارا جديدا في حملته الانتخابية هو «اقوياء في مواجهة حماس».

ودعا زعيم التكتل اليميني رئيس الوزراء السابق بنيامين نتنياهو الى «استعادة اسرائيل كامل قدراتها الرادعة» في مواجهة حماس، الد اعداء الدولة العبرية، والتعهد بعدم القيام باي انسحابات جديدة.

ووصل نتنياهو الى حد اتهام الحكومة بانها هي التي تسببت بفوز حماس نتيجة انسحابها من قطاع غزة و«ضعفها في مواجهة الارهاب» بصورة عامة.

غير ان تركيز الحملة الانتخابية على هذه المواضيع لم يكن له انعكاس كبير على الرأي العام وبقي لليكود على تراجع في استطلاعات الرأي حيث لا يتوقع فوزه سوى ب١٥ مقعدا من اصل ١٢٠ في الكنيست (البرلمان الاسرائيلي) بالمقارنة مع اكثر من ضعفي هذا العدد من المقاعد لحزب كاديما.

القدس - اف ب : بعد ان استخدم اليمين الاسرائيلي فوز حركة المقاومة الاسلامية (حماس) في الانتخابات التشريعية الفلسطينية لبث الخوف في الرأي العام وكسب المزيد من التايد، تبين في نهاية الامر ان هذا العامل قلما انعكس على الحملة الانتخابية.

ورأى الخبير السياسي يعارون عزراشي انه «تشكل في اسرائيل اجماع حقيقي على تنفيذ انسحاب من طرف واحد من الضفة الغربية يرسم الحدود سواء بموافقة الفلسطينيين او بدونها، بحيث لا يهم الاسرائيليين كثيرا ان كانت حماس او حركة اخرى على رأس السلطة الفلسطينية».

واوضح هذا الاستاذ في الجامعة العبرية في القدس «لم يعد احد يحلم بالسلام سوى في اقصى اليسار ولم يعد احد يحلم باسرائيل الكبرى سوى في اقصى اليمين. والفكرة المسيطرة باتت فكرة الفصل من طرف واحد مع الفلسطينيين وقد جعل حزب كاديما من هذا المشروع حصان طروادة له، في الانتخابات».

وتابع ان «قوة حزب كاديما بزعامة رئيس الوزراء بالوكالة ايهود اولمرت تكمن في انه في اعقاب الانسحاب الناجح من قطاع غزة وللمرة الاولى منذ حرب حزيران ١٩٦٧، يعرض خيارا يبدو

"The Israeli Election Campaign not influenced by the Victory of Hamas in Palestinian Elections"

According to Palestinian newspapers, it seems that the victory of the Islamic Resistance Movement "Hamas" in the Palestinian Legislative Elections provided the Israeli parties

with rich material that helped them assert their claim of the absence of a Palestinian partner. It also provided them with an opportunity of overbidding for the sake of winning more votes, especially from the right and middle. It was clear that none of the “Zionist” Israeli parties were willing to deal with a Palestinian government led by “ Hamas.”

For example, Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah 11/3/2006 published on its front page:
Olmert: Ismail Haniyyeh is Not Safe from an Assassination Operation

Although this position was rejected at the Palestinian and international levels, Olmert did not hesitate to declare it, while many considered it mere election propaganda. Israeli Minister of Defense Shaul Mofaz had already made a similar declaration reported by Al-Ayyam on 8/3/2006 on its front page.

Mofaz Threatens to Assassinate Haniyyeh and Asserts the Continuation of Assassinations against Jihad Activists.

In the details, Mofaz said that if “ Hamas” continued what he called the terrorist approach, then Israel would continue with its assassinations policy.

On 14/3/2006, Al-Quds published an article, page14, by Awni Sadeq entitled “*Not Only Because of Elections or Hamas,*” in which he noted that since the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian Legislative Elections, the statements and actions against Palestinians increased. He added that it was interesting that some attributed that to Hamas victory and to the forthcoming Israeli Knesset Elections.

On 14/3/2006, Al-Ayyam published an article, page 18, by Ari Shabit from Ha’aretz entitled “*Olmert’s Arrogance*”. The article said that if Olmert was elected as Prime Minister, and if he carried out his pledge to withdraw in 2010, then Palestinians would have sovereignty over the whole of Gaza and over 91% of the West Bank, without recognizing Israel or ending the conflict.

The writer added that Olmert intended to establish an armed state for Hamas in “*Judea and Samaria*” and Gaza during the coming years. Despite his bizarre conclusion, none of the Palestinian newspapers dared to discuss his analysis objectively in order to reach a specific answer to the question posed by some: “*Is there in the victory of Hamas an Israeli interest?*” especially in light of the unilateral solution implemented by Prime Minister Sharon in Gaza, and which Olmert announced that he would follow suit in the West Bank.

The subject is very important, and should have occupied wide space of publishing, debate and questions, especially that many Israeli political and media observers noted during the Palestinian Legislative Elections, that Israel, together with Washington, reiterated their rejection to deal with Hamas, and attacked it in a manner that increased its popularity among Palestinians. This evidently addressed the sentiments rather than the minds of Palestinians. This intensive publicity campaign against Hamas contributed to provoking Palestinian rejection against it, increased Hamas popularity, and consequently facilitated

the suggestion of slogans on the absence of a Palestinian partner that desired peace, and granted Israel an implicit green light from Washington, and possibly from the EU, for a free hand to carry out unilateral solutions. This became clear later as Israel exploited the outcome of the Palestinian Elections, the victory of Hamas and the forming of the government. It tightened the siege against the Palestinian people, escalated the assassination, killing and repression, speeded up the construction of the Racist Separation (Apartheid) Wall, and embarked on attempts to market Olmert's unilateral plan, while Palestinians sank in their own differences.

Some may argue that this is going too far in jumping into conclusions. However, the fact that the interests of the Israeli right, the majority in Israel, have been served following the victory of Hamas, and that the Palestinian conditions deteriorated, makes the topic important and should have been adequately addressed by the Palestinian press. That was not the case.



"Olmert reveals his intention to implement a unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank and demarcate the permanent borders of Israel"

In the example above, one can notice that Hamas constituted a source of political overbidding too.

Al-Ayyam 15/3/2006 Front page:

Three No's of Likud: No Withdrawal, No Money, and No Work in Israel

In the details, the head of the Likud, Benjamin Netanyahu, said, *“Currently there is no other task but to combat the Islamic Resistance movement Hamas.”*

Netanyahu clarified that *“so long as Hamas remained in power, we will not give back any land, will not transfer any funds and will not allow Palestinian laborers to work in Israel.”*

Such reports, published in the three newspapers, give an idea about the scale of the exploitation of Israeli parties, especially the right-wing, for overbidding and scoring points in elections.

Palestine Television Coverage of Israeli Elections

Palestine Television was far from interest in the Israeli Elections. As usual, it took interest in the first place in official news and developments of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. For example on 7/3/2006, the first news item was the following: *“President Abu Mazen announced tomorrow an official holiday at all schools on the occasion of “Women's International Day”*

The news of the Israeli elections ranked 13th and came through political statements. The 13th news item came as follows: Acting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced today that he aimed at decreasing the public expenditures on settlement building in the West Bank, indicating that the funds would be transferred to basic infrastructure projects in the areas of Jerusalem, Negev and Galilee.

The next day, the news of the Israeli Elections disappeared.

There was interest in the outcome and repercussions of the Palestinian Elections, and the “Ma Wara' Al-Hadath (Beyond the Event)” program, broadcast on 8 March, 2006 was dedicated to discussing the results of the Fatah Revolutionary Council meeting, and the withdrawal of Fatah Bloc from the PLC meeting. This program hosted Nabil Sha'ath, the PLC and Central Committee member. The program addressed neither the Israeli Elections nor the Israeli situation, but the weaknesses of Fatah that led to its loss in the elections as well as their outcome.

No news about the Israeli Elections was broadcast on 9, 10 or 11 March 2006 either.

On 12 March, 2006 the Israeli Elections were mentioned as a second item on the 9 o'clock bulletin in the following manner:

In the introduction: *“As the date of the Israeli Elections comes closer, Israeli overbidding against the rights of the Palestinian people increases, amidst the closure and siege around Jerusalem and the remaining Palestinian Territories.”*

The report:

It discussed how Kadima exploited the last Cabinet meetings in its election campaign, as the Cabinet focused during the last days on Olmert's proposed withdrawal from the

Palestinian Territories, implemented on the pretext of the absence of a Palestinian partner.

The report then tackled the Israeli escalation and closure of the checkpoints on The Jewish Purim, and that the Army would maintain this closure until the Israeli Elections. The report spoke of the competition between Israeli parties participating in the Elections over tightening the siege against the Palestinian people.

On 13/3/2006, the eleventh news item of the 9 o'clock news bulletin was:

“Amir Peretz, the Chairman of the Israeli Labor Party, does not rule out the possibility of joining Kadima, led by the Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, in a coalition government. 15 days prior to the Israeli Elections, Peretz told the Israeli press that his conditions for joining were:

- 1- To increase the minimum wage;
- 2- To adopt a law that ensures a wage for each individual; and
- 3- To adopt a law that regulates the operations of agencies.

This position taken by the Chairman of the Labor Party came at a time when the most recent Israeli opinion poll had said that the Labor Party would get 18 seats in the Knesset, while Kadima would get 37 seats and the Likud 16 seats.

On Tuesday 14/3 2006, Palestine Television broadcast live coverage of the Israeli forces breaking into Jericho Prison. It interviewed Ali Jarbawi, Professor of Political Science at Birzeit University, who said, *“The coming Israeli Government will continue in a unilateral policy to impose its own vision and policy on the ground.”* He saw that one of the goals of the storming operation was to support the position of Kadima in the forthcoming Israeli Elections, and spoke of the Israeli unilateral policy.

The news coverage of storming Jericho Prison and the arrest of Ahmad Sa'adat, Fuad Shobaki and the rest of the prisoners continued. Ma Wara' Al-Hadath (Beyond the Event) program was dedicated to the Jericho Prison operation, as it hosted Nafez Azzam, the Political Bureau member of Islamic Jihad, and Kayed Al-Ghoul, PFLP member, who spoke of the “repugnant” Israeli practices against the Palestinian people, and agreed that the Government of Israel pursued a systematic policy in service of the Israeli public opinion and support of Kadima, led by Ehud Olmert. They also agreed that it sought to benefit from the violence committed against the Palestinian people in the elections.

The Israeli Elections news was totally absent from the 9 o'clock news bulletin.

9 o'clock news bulletin:

First Item:

“Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas invited the forthcoming Israeli Government to cooperate with the Palestinian side. These statements came after a meeting with Egyptian

President Husni Mubarak at Sharm El-Sheikh. Abbas said, "Any future Israeli government must deal with us."

The news revolved around the operation of Jericho Prison and the denunciation of the Palestinian people, the Arab World and the whole World of this operation. Ma Wara' Al-Hadath (Beyond the Event) program was dedicated to the repercussion of the aggressive operation against Jericho Prison and the abduction of Ahmad Sa'adat, Fuad Shobaki and their comrades. It hosted Tawfic Abu Khousah, the spokesperson of the Ministry of Interior and National Security. The program addressed the topic of elections in the context of the messages that Israel conveyed through its perpetration of this act, including:

"Israel is moving forward with a unilateral policy." This escalation was expected in the wake of the Israeli Elections campaign. The Israeli side had pre-planned this operation, which expressed the personal ambitions of some Israeli leaders and served their interests in the elections. Hence, the Palestinian people will not pay the price for the Israeli Elections.

The 9 o'clock news bulletin on 23 March 2006 the tenth item came in the following manner:

"Shimon Peres, No. 2 in Kadima, announced that the party shall seek international support for its project that aims at demarcating the permanent Israeli borders in case it wins the elections. Peres asserted that Israel would seek to get the approval of the Palestinian side on its plan, and that it would be willing to take unilateral measures."

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert mentioned that Israel was in a hurry to disengage with the Palestinian side because it did not have any time to wait until Hamas matured.

During the next days, Palestine Television did not express any interest in the news of the elections, while on 28/3/2006, E-day, the news of the Israeli Elections ranked fourth in the 9 o'clock bulletin. In the introduction the newscaster said, *"The Israelis started today morning voting for 120 Knesset Members amid tight security measures. Israel also imposed total closure on all Palestinian Territories."* The Report spoke about the tight security measures due to the elections, and the opinion poll that says that Kadima, which focused its campaign on the disengagement plan with the Palestinians, will get 37 seats, while 20 will go to Labor and 15 to Likud.

At the end of the report, the newscaster said in the introduction of the next news item, without providing any introduction or clarification, *"The results of the Israeli Elections shall not come as a surprise to our people, since the Israeli agendas proposed during the elections are hostile."* The report spoke about the need to unify the ranks of the Palestinians in order to confront such agendas that are hostile to the Palestinian people.

The report said that Israel would exploit the presence of Hamas in office as an excuse not to conduct negotiations with the Palestinian side, and consequently take unilateral policies.

The day after the elections, and after the semi-final results, the Television coverage of the results of the elections was strange, without any obvious reason. The news on the results came as follows:

“The Japanese Government called upon the Israeli Government to continue the peace process with the Palestinian side following the victory of Kadima.”

“In the meantime, The Office of the Israeli President Moshe Katsav announced that consultations aiming at forming a coalition government will start next Sunday, after Kadima’s advancement in the elections without having sufficient number of seats that enable it to form the government alone. A spokesperson of the Israeli Presidency said that Katsav would start his consultations with the heads of parties at the beginning of next week and that it is expected to assign Ehud Olmert to form the government following his party’s victory.”

The coverage of the Palestinian Television of the elections came within a context of lack of interest and opting for easy and superficial coverage, which reveals the definite absence of professional planning, methodology or vision for addressing a big event that influences the Israeli political arena and certainly reflects on the Palestinian arena.

Among the simplest media rules is to plan ahead of time, study the method of coverage and assign the reporters and editors who will prepare the material and programs that it will present to the audience when there is an important event whose date is set and which is multi dimensional such as the Israeli Legislative Elections. Had this happened, its results would have reflected on the TV programs. Indeed, the Palestine Television programs broadcast in peak hours and which the Media Monitoring Unit monitored, did not exceed poorly prepared news material with weak sources that consisted in part of foreign news agencies.

Some may argue that Palestine Television was occupied with the events taking place at the Palestinian level following the victory of Hamas in the Legislative Elections and the consultations for forming the Palestinian government. This is true to a certain extent, but it does not pardon a very important media channel such as Palestine Television from its responsibility towards its audience in giving due attention to an important topic as the Israeli Knesset Elections.

As we move to another point, which is the level of professionalism, it may be said that the editing style, the language and the presentation were weak. The language of the news items used the first person, such as the repetitive use of “our people” that weakens the media discourse. The elections news was in many cases weakly edited, and inconsistent with principles of editing, such as highlighting the headlines, introduction and details. For example, it broadcast the results of the elections after an introduction about a call from

the Japanese Government to the new Israeli Government to continue with the peace process. The item neither gave the detailed results, nor provided an analysis or commentary by experts and analysts.

The Results of the 17th Israeli Knesset Elections



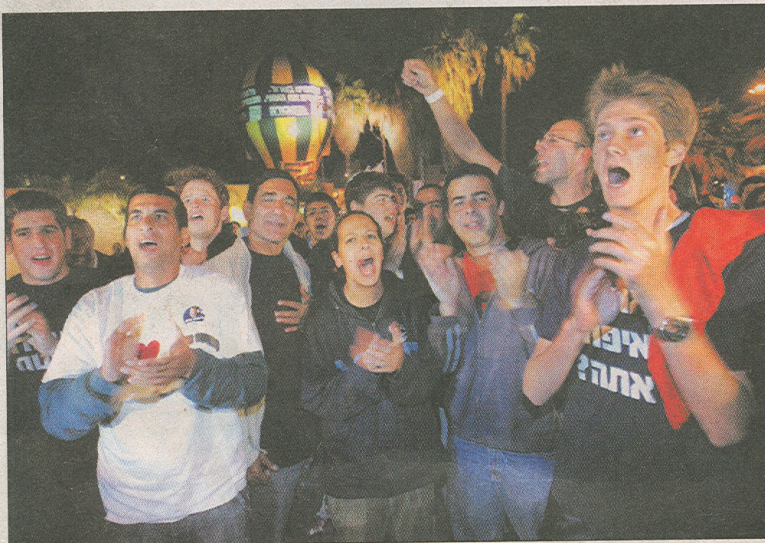
"Israeli elects today and Kadima has best chances."

Palestinian newspapers showed a reasonable degree of interest in the results of the elections, and published on 29/3/2006, the day after the elections, preliminary results with main headlines on front pages.

٦ مقاعد للأحزاب العربية، وكثلة بشارة تغيب عن الكنيست

انتخابات اسرائيل: نصر متواضع لكاديفا، هزيمة مرة لليكود

العمل يعزز مواقعه، وحزب ليبرمان والمتقاعدين يحققان المفاجأة الكبرى



تل ابيب - انصار حزب العمل يهتفون بعد الاعلان عن تحقيق الحزب فوزا واضحا في الانتخابات التي جرت في اسرائيل امس. (ا.ف.ب)

القدس - وكالات: فاز حزب «كاديفا» الذي يتزعمه ايهود اولمرت في الانتخابات التي جرت امس ولكنه حصل على عدد اصوات اقل مما كانت ترجحه استطلاعات الرأي، حسب النتائج التي اعلنتها اللجنة الانتخابية المركزية بعد فرز ٥٥٪ من الاصوات فجر اليوم (الاربعاء). واوضحت اللجنة ان حزب كاديفا حصل على ٢٩ مقعدا من اصل ١٢٠

(طلب من ١٣) (التتمة ص ٢١)

السلطة تدعو الحكومة الاسرائيلية المقبلة الى مفاوضات فورية مع منظمة التحرير
الخرطوم - ا.ف.ب: دعت السلطة الفلسطينية الحكومة الاسرائيلية القادمة التي ستنتخب عن الانتخابات التشريعية الاسرائيلية التي جرت امس الى «مفاوضات فورية مع منظمة التحرير».

(التتمة ص ٢١)

"Israel's Elections: Slight victory for Kadima, major defeat for Likud, Labor enhances its positions, and the two parties of Lieberman and the Retired strike the biggest surprise"

For the sake of research and documentation, and because of its importance, we hereby record the results of the 17th Israeli Knesset Elections, which took place on 28 March 2006, had several political, social and intellectual connotations, and had surprises. However, it is not the task of this report to analyze these elections. The official results¹ were as follows:

- Kadima -29 Seats, 690901 votes;
- Labor Party-19 seats, 472366 votes;
- Shas-12 seats, 299054 votes;
- Likud-12 seats, 281996;
- Yisrael Beitenu -11seats, 281880;
- "Ichud Leumi – Mafdal" Coalition- 9 seats, 224083 votes
- The Pensioners Paarty-7 seats, 185759 votes;

¹ Source of the Official results: The official website of the Israeli Knesset: http://www.knesset.gov.il/elections17/eng/Results/main_results_eng.asp

- Torah and Shabbat Judaism -6 seats, 147091 votes;
- Meretz-5 seats, 118302 votes;
- United Arab List-(coalition of the Islamic Movement-The Southern wing and the Arab Democratic Party and the Arab Movement for Change)-4 seats, 94786 votes;
- Democratic Front for Peace and Equality- 3 seats, 86092 votes;
- National Democratic Assembly - 3 seats, 72066 votes.

These results revealed a growth in the right wing extremism and further deterioration of the left wing, and that the majority in Israel is either right wing or tends towards the middle right.

Results of the Report

First: The Palestinian newspapers expressed a reasonable degree of interest in the Israeli elections in terms of following up what was published in the Israeli newspapers and media, or in foreign news agencies. News of the election campaign occupied front pages in many instances. The size of coverage in internal pages was also good, and this may be attributed to the fact that the three Palestinian newspapers publish on a daily basis, except for Sundays, one or more pages of translations from Israeli newspapers, which do not appear on Saturdays of every week. Here, we need to single out the bimonthly “Al-Mashhad Al-Israeli (Israeli Scene)” annex, issued by the “Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies Madar” and distributed with Al-Ayyam. This annex includes distinctive comprehensive and in depth reports and analyses.

Palestine Television was pre-occupied with internal Palestinian affairs to the extent that the news of the Israeli Elections was in many cases absent from the news bulletins or political programs and talk shows. Even when mentioned, such news would be very brief and broadcast later. Even some important statements or significant developments were either ignored or mentioned but poorly edited.

Second: As usual, the Palestinian media -with few exceptions- unfortunately failed to provide its own stories or reports about the Israeli Election Campaign and conveniently quoted Israeli newspapers and foreign news agencies.

Third: The Palestinian media did not provide the necessary coverage of the topic of the Palestinians in Israel (1948 Land), and did not provide the Palestinian public with sufficient information that respond to the relevant questions.

Fourth: The Palestinian media failed to give the Israeli positions towards the victory of Hamas the attention they deserved in terms of asking the appropriate questions and opening an objective debate about such a vital issue to the Palestinian people. The topic was in need of large media effort in order to clarify its dimensions, raise awareness regarding all its aspects, and provide the Palestinian recipient with the opportunity to make his/her own decisions and reach his/her own conclusions.

Fifth: The Palestinian media did not sufficiently clarify the differences in the agendas of Israeli parties regarding all the issues of interest to the Palestinian recipient.

Sixth: Palestine Television demonstrated grave deterioration in comparison with previous stages in which it accomplished professional progress, and failed to perform its presumed role. It provided weak and incoherent coverage of the Israeli Elections.

Seventh: The Palestinian media did not succeed in clarifying the link between the election campaigns and the escalation in the repressive practices of the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian people. It did not provide material that may strengthen the Palestinian story of the events related to the Israeli Elections.

Recommendations

In light of the above, MIFTAH recommends the following:

First: MIFTAH finds it appropriate to reiterate a previous recommendation in earlier reports issued by the Media Monitoring Unit, which is a call for the establishment of a Higher Media Council that is independent of the executive power in its operations. Such a council only plays a role of guidance and oversight and assists the Palestinian media to develop the tools, means, and methods that make it a free and objective media that enjoys credibility and professional competence.

Second: MIFTAH calls on the media institutions to conduct a serious process of self-evaluation, in order to assess their professional performance as well as that of their staff. The purpose of such an evaluation is to build their capacity and the experience of their staff, increase the budgets allocated for training, encourage qualified staff and seek to attract qualified staff even further. It achieves this through allocating adequate budgets for enhancing opportunities of the local media in its competition with others.

Third: MIFTAH asserts that it is of utmost importance for the Palestinian media institutions to rely on their own resources, seek direct access to locations where events take place, and appropriately follow-up the questions and issues raised by media coverage, and which are in many cases as important or even more important than the event itself.