

## **“Developments in the current political situation and their repercussions on the Palestinian cause”**

**Attendance (without distinction):** Nasser Al Qidwa, Hanan Ashrawi, Nur Odeh, Anan Al Ateera, Elias Zananiri, Kamil Mansour, Bishara Doumani, Ammar Hijazi, Omar Awadallah, Adham Zein Eddin, Najat Abu Bakr, Ammar Dweik, Aqel Taqaz, Qays Abdel Karim, Abdel Qader Husseini, Samieh Bamieh

**MIFTAH Team:** Lily Feidy, Riham Faqih, Najwa Yaghi, Rula Muzaffar, Mohammed Abed Rabbo, Hassan Mahareeq

### **Introduction**

Political developments have and continue to occur in Arab, regional and international arenas. The most significant development in the past few months has been Arab and regional polarization, which has resulted in changes in the nature of relations and alliances between countries in the region. This included attempts to exonerate Israel of its responsibilities under the pretext of its security. As a result, political prospects for reaching a fair solution for the Palestinian people that would culminate in the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital remained deadlocked.

At the international level, the new US administration under President Donald Trump also had its subsequent adverse impact on the Palestinian cause given the administration’s populist and racist nature and the sharp setback in rights and liberties it prompted. These developments left a negative impact on the cause in terms of its marginalization and diminishing American and international interest in reaching a political solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

### **General framework and discussion**

The participants highlighted the most significant challenges at the internal Palestinian level, citing the fact that the division is still ongoing. They warned that if the political divide continues and proliferates, this will open up the possibility of a geographic separation between the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which will adversely impact the future of the Palestinian cause and the entire Palestinian political system.

The speakers warned that the problem is not solely about policies but about the structure of the system itself. It is also related to how this system deals with Gaza and the absence of a strategic vision in this regard, thereby legitimizing and normalizing the separation. In practical terms, they maintained, this means an abandonment of the goal of establishing an independent

state. It was noted that the Gaza Strip and West Bank constitute geographic and demographic pressure on Israel, which they warned, could blow up in the face of both Israel and the PA.

The speakers said there was a need for a complete change in the overall Palestinian political system and for halting the continued collapse of this system's institutions and the subsequent withdrawal of the intellectual and political elite. In response, they called for a national salvation conference in which the various factions participate and also for developing an initiative preceded by a meeting with the president. They said this also necessitated discussions to reaffirm the national Palestinian identity and the need for a self-revival of political forces so they could rise to the required level of confronting the challenges to the Palestinian cause.

The participants confirmed that these dangerous changes did not prompt an elevation of the Palestinian political discourse to the level of defiance to or admission of these internal and external challenges. Instead, the Palestinian political dialogue remains similar to the current conditions in the Arab region in general. This resulted in a decline in the role of a number of the political institutions that constitute the Palestinian political system and completely weakened their role, such as the PLC, the PLO Executive Committee and the judicial establishment whose authorities have been trampled on. In return, the security establishment stood out as a key and influential force and powers were concentrated in the PA thereby strengthening the security establishment at the expense of a democratic system.

In this context, the speakers warned against the PA turning into a police state in light of legislations, violations and a setback in rights and freedoms, in addition to the security obsession resultant from the division, which has become an excuse for violating freedoms.

They also addressed the issues faced by civil society including internal campaigns by the executive authority and external assaults such as attempts to criminalize the BDS movement by the United States, Israel and Europe. They noted the considerable setback in the latter's positions towards a number of issues due to growing populism in these countries in addition to the issue of immigration and immigrants that feeds into this racism and ultimately had a negative impact on the Palestinian cause and international interest in it.

On Jerusalem, the participants stressed on the major dangers facing the city, where the Israeli occupation is given free rein to destroy Palestinian institutions, squash its national identity and further entrench its annexation. They said these measures called for more political, economic and cultural consideration for Jerusalem from the Palestinian political system. They noted the tremendous negligence towards Jerusalemite institutions and that the city's residents also felt abandoned as if they were not part of the PA's daily calculations.

**Palestinian diplomacy abroad:** The participants pointed out that there was no Palestinian vision to confront escalating Israeli diplomacy abroad, nor has there been a very clear position taken on regional developments in the absence of any real and serious Palestinian action. They added that a substantive Palestinian narrative was also absent and that there was no action at the

international level or in the overall diplomatic arena. This, they maintained, called for the development of a genuine Palestinian vision with clear dimensions and firm stances. It also called for raising the cost of Israel's occupation of Palestinian land through popular resistance and by looking to international public opinion for support.

The speakers warned that the current regional conditions could lead to a process of forced expulsion to empty the West Bank and Jerusalem of its citizens in the absence of one, unified political leadership and the inability to make any radical change in the thinking of the political elite.

### **Recommendations**

- A call for a broad-based salvation conference in which the various forces participate in order to improve the internal situation and decide where things are heading.
- To formulate a comprehensive plan and rescue for Jerusalem at the economic, cultural and existential levels in order to support the steadfastness of its citizens and institutions.
- To work towards preventing the ongoing collapse of Palestinian political system institutions, reviving them and restoring the prestige of the PLO, which is considered the biggest achievement of the Palestinian people.
- To rewrite a Palestinian strategy that takes into account Palestinians living inside the '48 areas and redefines the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people.
- Reaffirming that the Palestinian cause is the cause of the people which is linked to its right to independence and freedom.
- To address countries and urge them to build and put into action a system of sanctions against Israel on the basis of abidance by international law and accordance with the Geneva Conventions.
- To not allow any political settlement to become an alternative to national rights and to maintain a united national goal around which the people mobilize.
- To take steps to confront the divisional approach in the Gaza Strip or adopt methods of pressure on certain parties to reunite the two parts of the homeland.
- To reconsider the relationship with Israel including reviving the boycott and opposing security coordination; to revive the option of genuine popular resistance with the participation of the entire Palestinian people.
- To adopt a modern, advanced and effective political discourse that reflects a true understanding of the external changes and conditions and which coincides with global discourse; to revive the components of the Palestinian political system in terms of individuals and programs.