



**Annapolis: The coverage of the Three Palestinian  
Newspapers and Palestine Television of the  
Conference**

Media Monitoring Unit

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## **Introduction**

The peace conference held on 27 November 2007 in Annapolis, U.S.A., received special coverage by the three Palestinian daily newspapers: Al-Quds, Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah as well as the Palestinian Television (PBC). The coverage was comprehensive, diversified in terms of sources, and included news follow-up and analyses, in addition to the preceding preparations and political action.

This report monitors the coverage of the Conference in the three newspapers and PBC during the period 12 November-12 December 2007. The report consists of monitoring the means by which the Palestinian media addressed the statements of proponents and opponents, the positions of different parties, the nature and scale of coverage of the Conference itself and the field and political developments that accompanied and followed the Conference in news reports, cartoons, opinion columns and in monitoring the opinions of Israeli columnists.

## **First: The three newspapers: Before the Conference**

The political action in the Palestinian Territories and Israel, the summits between President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, and news of the various meetings of the Palestinian and Israeli delegations to negotiations during the period that preceded the Conference, occupied the main headlines of "Al-Quds", "Al-Ayyam" and "Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah".

The newspapers expressed real interest in the meetings held by Palestinian and international officials, with special focus on statements and declared positions towards the Conference, the expectations of President Mahmoud Abbas "Abu Mazen" and senior Palestinian negotiators towards the outcome of the Conference, in addition to the warnings of its failure. Al-Ayyam reported President Abu Mazen's statements following his meeting with Egyptian President Husni Mubarak in Cairo:

**"Abu Mazen: Three demands at Annapolis: Implementing obligations, premises of the solution and the timeframe" (front page) 3-columns, 12/11/2007.**

Many newspaper headlines covered the difficulties that negotiators faced, reflecting the atmosphere of the negotiations process and the difficult meetings between the Palestinian and Israeli sides despite Annapolis.

**"During a meeting with heads of security services (subheading)**

**Qurai: Positions are still divergent between Palestinian and Israeli negotiators" Al-Quds (front page) 3-columns, 13/11/2007.**

The three newspapers reported these divergent positions that almost led to an impasse in negotiations.

**"Palestinian official: (subheading)**

**Negotiations over Annapolis Meeting close to an impasse", Al-Quds (p. 6), 3-columns, 13/11/2007.**

During that period, the media expresses interest in the statements of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert about the Jewish state. The three newspapers focused on the strong reactions of Palestinian officials towards these statements:

**"Erekat: We reject Israeli dictates (subheading) Olmert makes the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state a condition and links the implementation of any final agreement to security conditions", Al-Ayyam (front page), 2-columns, 13/11/2007.**

The newspapers followed up, analyzed and reported reactions to these statements. Some questioned their timing.

**("The Higher Committee approves a document that rejects the Jewish nature of Israel") Al-Quds, (p.2), 2-columns, 18/11/2007.**

Al-Quds also published on the same day a news analysis entitled: **"The Jewish identity of Israel... Refugees with no return and Palestinians with no rights" (p.13) 5-columns.**

This analysis addressed Olmert's statements on the Jewish nature of the state of Israel, and their consequences on the status and rights of refugees. On 18/11/2007, the newspaper addressed the new Israeli position in its articles page under the following headline:

**"Why raise the issue Israel as a Jewish state at Annapolis Conference?" (p. 18) 2-columns**

In its editorial, the newspaper said:

**"Was it a mere coincidence that a contentious issue, such as demanding that the PNA recognizes Israel as a Jewish state, is raised before the Israeli side makes any serious effort to achieve real progress on which Annapolis Conference may build, particularly a memorandum of understanding on major issues such as the borders, settlements, Jerusalem and right to return?"**

It added: **"it seems that this is beyond mere coincidence; Israeli media has reported that a team of right-wing Israeli politicians have been trying to impede any prospects for the peace process, even a mere delusion that does not seem to meet the minimum national Palestinian aspirations".**

Concurring with the bilateral meetings that preceded Annapolis, the newspapers followed up the activities of the Palestinian Cabinet on the ground that had intensified during that period, particularly the wide-scale security campaign in Nablus by the security services under the direct supervision of Prime Minister Fayyad. The three newspapers closely followed up this campaign and Fayyad's relevant statements. On 12/11/2007, Al-Quds published the following:

**"Dr. Fayyad: Nablus is more important than Annapolis... and our goal is ending occupation and not merely conducting security tasks" (front page) 3-columns.**

With the increase in internal opposition to the Conference, the three newspapers reported under main headlines, opinion polls that revealed an increase in the popularity of President Mahmoud Abbas "Abu Mazen" and of Fateh, without mentioning the size of support to the Conference itself. Al-Quds published the following on **12/11/2007**:

**"Opinion Poll: continuous increase in Abbas and Fateh popularity and decrease in that of Haniyyeh and Hamas" (front page) 2-columns**

The report said:

**"An opinion poll conducted by Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC) and that included a sample of 1200 respondents revealed that the majority of respondents (62%) expected the failure of Annapolis Conference that President George Bush invited for, while (35.3%) expected its success. 47% of the sample expected no change on the Palestinian conditions in case of its failure".**

The newspapers, however, reported the positions of the opposition widely, but not in front pages or under main headlines. Al-Quds (p.7) published the following two-column report on 14/11/2007:

**"At a congress of one of its organization in Khan Younis, (subheading) People's Party warns of the risks that threaten the Palestinian Cause".**

**Al-Quds reported on 14/11/2007:**

**"PFLP leader in Gaza: (subheading)**

**Annapolis is a victory to Israeli-American policy and will give no serious outcome" (p.15) 3-columns.**

**"Prisoner Sheikh Adnan Asfour, a prominent Hamas leader:**

**All indicators assert the failure of the Fall Conference in meeting the aspiration of our people...and there is significant progress in prospects for internal dialogue"; Al-Quds, (p.18) 5-columns, 17/11/2007.**

**"Sa'adat calls for avoiding raising hopes towards Annapolis Conference"; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, (front page) one column, 19/11/2007.**

The newspapers also reported various official and popular Israeli reactions towards Annapolis that reflected the then prevailing Israeli political trends prior to Annapolis:

**("Barak refuses to remove checkpoints: (subheading)**

**Olmert considers releasing hundreds of Palestinian prisoners before Annapolis"); Al-Ayyam (front page corner), one column, 13/11/2007.**

**("Peres: Israel is determined to make Annapolis a success, put an end to conflict and finally make peace with Palestinians"); Al-Ayyam, (p.15), 8-columns, 13/11/2007.**

**"Olmert: The starting point for negotiations following Annapolis will be recognizing Israel as a Jewish State"; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, 2-columns, 15/11/2007.**

**"Israeli Army trains on a scenario of escalation in the Palestinian Territories following Annapolis"; Al-Quds, (front page), 3-columns, 14/11/2007.**

**"Settlers warn Olmert of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank"; Al-Quds, (p. 2) 2-columns, 14/11/2007.**

While discussions and preparations for Annapolis were on-going, the Palestinian security services were meeting security obligations in Nablus. In addition to the previously mentioned Fayyad's statements, the newspapers reported extensively on these accomplishments. The PNA wanted to convey to the World the message that it was meeting its Road Map obligations:

**"Taping the operation conducted with the participation of the Women Police and the presence of Dr. Sha'ir: (subheading)**

**"Nablus Intelligence Services discover the largest stocks of Hamas incitement material at the girls' student dorms"; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, (front page), 3-columns, 16/11/2007.**

In fact, the coverage of the three newspapers during the period that preceded Annapolis reflected the unstable political atmosphere that had prevailed then, with positions and reactions that varied from optimism to despair and frustration. While statements used to describe the Conference as a "historic opportunity", they started to speak of diminishing opportunities for success:

**"Arriving in Amman from Riyadh, after meeting Sultanov and discussing developments with Musa: (subheading)**

**Abbas informs Saudi King of his pessimism towards the chances of success of Annapolis because of Israeli positions"; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah (front page) 5-columns, 17/11/2007.**

**(Palestinian letter to Washington demanding implementation of Road Map obligations" (subheading)**

**A decisive Arab meeting on 22 of this month on Annapolis, and Israel asserts its rejection of a full freeze of settlements); Al-Ayyam (front page) 4-columns, 8/11/2007.**

**("Receiving British Foreign Minister:**

**Abbas calls upon stakeholders to overcome obstacles before Annapolis"); Al-Ayyam (front page) 2-columns, 18/11/2007.**

In addition to the coverage of the preparations that preceded the Conference, the three newspapers followed up the opposition's reactions at the popular and partisan levels.

**("During a seminar organized by Jerusalem Media and Communication Center (JMCC) in Ramallah:**

**Controversy over the feasibility of attending Annapolis Conference... and consensus on rejecting its exploitation to serve occupation and U.S. policies"); Al-Ayyam (p. 6) 5-columns, 18/11/2007.**

**"In a seminar in Khan Younis on opportunities and risks:**

**Speakers: Annapolis Conference will bring nothing to Palestinians...and aims at rescuing U.S. from its crises"; Al-Ayyam, (p.11), 3-columns, 18/11/2007.**

Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons are an issue that receives special attention from Palestinians at the popular and official levels. Hence, it was present in the three newspapers, through reporting a series of popular events that accompanied preparations for Annapolis, and which called upon the Palestinian negotiators to give priority to this issue, and linked any progress in negotiations with the release of prisoners.

**("During a meeting organized by 'Social Work' in Tulkarem and entitled 'the Prisoners' Wives Appeal' (subheading)**

**Erekat: We will not sign a peace treaty with Israel if it contravenes the demand to release all prisoners".**

**Bal'awi calls for using Annapolis Conference to release a large number of prisoners); Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, (p.5), 6-columns, 18/11/2007.**

In addition to the despair and frustration reflected in the headlines of the three newspapers, there was interest in the international mediation efforts between the Palestinian and Israeli sides prior to Annapolis, as the newspapers reported both positive and negative positions, the impasse in negotiations and the failure to reach a joint understanding:

**(U.S. is 'confident' of the success of Annapolis meeting and of reaching a joint understanding); Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah (front page), 3-columns, 20/11/2007.**

**(Solana and Waldner formulated its work strategy in a state establishment support document for peace in the Middle East**

**EU gets ready to follow up the post Annapolis era); Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, (front page), 4-columns, 20/11/2007.**

Such extensive follow up of developments that preceded Annapolis through news reports, analyses and commentaries represented a leap forward in the quality of performance of the three newspapers, which were diversified in their sources of news and information. Some newspapers gave special information about the joint understanding which was a major point of disagreement between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, and was about to cause a big political impasse possibly leading to the failure of the whole Conference.

Al-Quds reported the following news on 23/11/2007 from Israeli Haaretz:

**"Points of a Palestinian-Israeli draft document still under preparation"; (front page) 2-columns.**

Al-Ayyam on the other hand, published an item that denied reaching that draft:

**"No joint document in Annapolis because of disagreements, and each party may present its own position during the Conference"; Al-Ayyam (front page), 4-columns, 23/11/2007.**

Al-Quds highlighted President Mahmoud Abbas statements on the failure of both sides to reach a joint document:

**(I declare the failure of the negotiations on the joint 'document'**

**President: Israel wanted to achieve gains... and we rejected that); Al-Quds, (front page), 3-columns, 24/11/2007.**

With the arrival of Palestinian, Arab and Israeli delegations to Washington to participate in Annapolis Conference, the coverage became optimistic, and the main headlines of the three newspapers covered the topic:

**"U.S. State Department: Annapolis is a starting point to negotiations that lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state"; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, (front page corner), 2-columns, 25/11/2007.**

**"Fayyad: Participation in Annapolis aims at speeding up the establishment of the Palestinian state"; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, (front page corner) two columns, 25/11/2007.**

The three newspapers resumed interest in opinion polls, highlighting the rates of support to Annapolis and to Palestinian participation in it:

**"In a recent opinion poll on Annapolis Conference:**

**67.6% variably support the participation of Palestinian leadership in Annapolis Conference;**

**68.2% oppose relinquishing the right to return;**

**54.4% believe that the failure of Annapolis Conference will destabilize the region"; Al-Quds, (front page), 4-columns, 26/11/2007.**

#### **Second: On the Eve of the Conference**

With the arrival of the Palestinian and Israeli delegations to Washington, the three newspapers focused on coverage of bilateral meetings, which aimed at bridging gaps on major issues of disagreement. These developments made the headlines and occupied large spaces in the three newspapers.

**"A series of meetings in Washington preceding Annapolis in an attempt to reduce the gap between Israel and the Palestinians" (in red); Al-Ayyam (front page), 4-columns, 26/11/2007.**

In another news item:

**"Livni calls upon Arab states not to intervene in talks: (subheading)**

**Olmert: 'Annapolis' will allow for the start of comprehensive talks with Palestinians on all core issues"; Al-Ayyam (front page), 3-columns, 26/11/2007.**

The newspapers also highlighted supporting popular and partisan reactions in what seemed as an attempt to mobilize support to the Palestinian delegation:

**(During a conference at Al-Najah entitled: 'the 9<sup>th</sup> Jerusalem Day Conference': subheading**

**Nablus: A call for supporting the Palestinian negotiator at Annapolis and for increasing attention to the Holy City); Al-Ayyam (p.10), 5-columns, 26/11/2007.**

**(The people of Tulkarem watch Annapolis and express their support to Palestinian negotiators) Al-Ayyam (p.12), 3-columns, 27/11/2007.**

**"Gaza...Popular and national activities in support of the Palestinian negotiating team"; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah (p.6) 4-columns, 27/11/2007.**

Despite the support to the Palestinian delegation to the Conference expressed in the headlines of the three newspapers, other opposing reactions continued to appear in the

newspapers prior and during the Conference, reflecting to some extent a balanced coverage of supporting and opposing reactions. This unprecedented progress in the form and content of coverage of such an important event continued further.

**" Hamas attacks Annapolis Conference and refuses to recognize Israel"; Al-Ayyam (front page), 2-columns, 27/11/2007**

**" Naming it the document of non-relinquishment of Jerusalem and Refugees... Gaza: Imprisoned Deputies and their proxies sign a document against Annapolis meeting"; Al-Ayyam (p. 6), 3-columns, 27/11/2007**

The three newspapers extensively covered the opening of the Conference and the speeches of heads of delegations, as well as the accompanying popular reactions, most notably the protest demonstrations that erupted in some Palestinian cities, such as in Hebron, where the Palestinian Police killed a Tahrir (Islamic Liberation) Party activist, assaulted journalists and media crews, and repressed peaceful demonstrations in Nablus, Ramallah and Jenin.

Addressing the opening of the Conference, the newspapers had large front page headlines on the speeches of heads of delegations:

**" U.S. president asserted at the opening of Annapolis Conference the establishment of the independent Palestinian State and demanded that Israel ends its occupation of '67 territories'**

**Bush: launching peace negotiations immediately and a comprehensive agreement before end 2008"**

**Abbas: A unique opportunity... Let us make and protect the peace of the brave Olmert demands that Arab states establish diplomatic relations with his country" Al-Quds, (front page), 8-columns, 28/11/2007.**

Stressing the importance of this event, the newspaper had the headline in red, while it published on page 2, an AFP report that included the main points in President Bush's speech, and another report on the same page on the text of the joint understanding between President Mahmoud Abbas and Ehud Olmert, and which the American President read.

In its coverage of the popular reactions to the Conference, Al-Quds reported the death of a citizen in Hebron and the condolences of the government for his death:

**" Government expresses condolences to the family of the deceased and promises an investigation**

**One citizen killed and tens wounded during dispersing a demonstration protesting Annapolis in the West Bank"; Al-Quds, (front page) 3-columns, 28/11/2007.**

Al-Ayyam chose the following headline for the opening of the Conference published, like Al-Quds, in red:

**" In parallel with a trilateral Palestinian-Israeli-American mechanism for immediate implementation:**

**Annapolis Conference launches an active negotiations process to reach peace"; (front page) 8-columns, 28/11/2007.**

On the same page:

**"President calls for a comprehensive and just peace with Israel: Annapolis is a historic opportunity that may not recur"; 3-columns**

**"Olmert: The time has come for reviving the peace process"; (front page), 2-columns, 28/11/2007.**

Al-Ayyam published over 8 columns on page 9 the President's speech at the Conference, under the following heading:

**"In a historic speech at Annapolis:**

**President stresses the need for a two-state solution based on ending occupation, establishing the state and resolving all issues of conflict".**

Regarding its coverage of the death of a citizen in Hebron at a demonstration against Annapolis, Al-Ayyam chose a different heading that seemed to endorse the official story, as it showed that the demonstration did not have a permit, and published the report in the last pages.

**(Organized by 'Tahrir' Party without a permit: (subheading)**

**Hebron: One citizen killed and 35 citizens and security members wounded during a demonstration against Annapolis); Al-Ayyam, (p. 5), 4-columns, 28/11/2007.** A reference to the report appeared in the front page under a different heading.

Al-Ayyam, like Al-Quds, did not suffice to report the events at the Conference, but also published analyses and commentaries of international news agencies.

Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah chose the following headline for its front page:

**"Annapolis: agreement to launch negotiations immediately to reach a peaceful settlement before end 2008;**

**President asserts that the fate of Jerusalem is a major factor in any peace agreement and Bush stresses that the time is right and the cause is just.**

**Olmert speaks of a possibility for an Israeli withdrawal from land occupied in 1967 and calls upon Arabs to normalize relations"; (front page), 8-columns, 28/11/2007.**

While the three newspapers were keen on highlighting the importance and significance of the Conference, their headlines ignored what the American President said in his speech about the Israel as a Jewish state, despite its importance and gravity, and instead, they reported Arab reactions to these statement.

**(Saudi Arabia urges Israel to fulfill the peace conditions and rejects Bush's speech about the 'Jewish state' "; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, (front page), 3-columns, 28/11/2007.**

In its coverage of the death of a citizen in Hebron, Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah highlighted in a headline the Government's position and justifications for banning anti-Annapolis demonstrations. It mentioned the death of the citizen only in the context of the Government's statement which promised to investigate the circumstances of his death, did not follow up the real circumstances that led to killing that citizen and did not report any other story but the official story, just like Al-Ayyam.

**"Asserting its respect for freedom of opinion and the media:  
The Government: We banned demonstrations temporarily to avoid trouble and  
sedition... and a serious investigation of the circumstances that led to killing a  
citizen in Hebron  
Police disperses and bans Tahrir Party demonstrations in several  
Governorates"; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah (p.8), 5-columns, 28/11/2007.**

On the same page, Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah published another report on the same subject  
entitled:

**"Tahrir Party decides to continue demonstrating and confirms the arrest of tens  
of its members:  
Factions and forces denounce the repression of peaceful demonstrations and  
demand that the Government recognizes freedom of opinion and revokes its  
decision to ban demonstrations"; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, (p.8) 5-columns,  
28/11/2007.**

Despite the gravity of developments on the ground, the headlines of the three  
newspapers continued to focus on the political momentum that resulted from  
Annapolis. The newspapers focused on statements of Palestinian and American  
politicians, some of which raised expectations and sounded too optimistic:  
**"Abbas: Annapolis has put the train on the rail towards the establishment of an  
independent Palestinian state"; Al-Ayyam, (front page), 2-columns, 29/11/2007.**

Other statements sounded more balanced:  
**"Hadley: Bush will not impose a plan on Palestinians and Israelis"; Al-Ayyam,  
(front page), 2-columns, 29/11/2007.**

Al-Ayyam was one of the newspapers that reported details of the "joint plan of  
action" of Annapolis, and published the amended version of the American five items,  
which were extremely different from the "joint document", said to have been reached  
between the two sides.

Al-Quds seemed also keen on following up details of what happened in Annapolis  
and the emerging differences between the Palestinian and Israeli delegations. This  
constituted the focus of the headlines of Al-Quds.

**(Last minute talks to rescue Annapolis Conference  
Bush gathers both sides and exerts pressure to issue the 'joint understanding'  
The main differences and how they were addressed by 'concessions'); (front  
page), 2-columns, 29/11/2007.**

It is worth noting that despite their high interest in this event, the coverage of the  
newspapers mostly constituted of news, while they relied on international news  
agencies as well as Wafa for reports and information, with the exception of special  
reports and information they received from their own sources within official  
Palestinian parties, such as the "Joint understanding" which was published by Al-  
Ayyam.

As the Conference concluded, the three newspapers moved from traditional news coverage to analytical follow-up, presenting some local, Arab and international positions and reporting the outcome of the Conference.

**"Jordanian King stresses to Bush the importance of investing in the opportunity that Annapolis provides"; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, (front page corner), 2-columns, 30/11/2007.**

**(Not minding the transfer of sovereignty over the Haram (Holy Mosque) to an "Egyptian-Jordanian-Palestinian Coalition"**

**Olmert warns: the collapse of the two-state solution means the beginning of the end for Israel); Al-Quds, (front page), 4-columns, 30/11/2007.**

**(Abed Rabbo: Annapolis re-confirmed the central status of the cause and did not harm the Palestinian position); Al-Ayyam, (front page), 3-columns, 30/11/2007.**

These headlines expressed optimism, and reflected a serious desire of the political parties to reach some settlement. In the wake of the conference, the three newspapers' coverage constituted of an analytical follow-up of the conference and its outcome, linking the positions of various parties, the role of each in the on-going political process and prospects for achieving the desired breakthrough.

**"Analysts: Rice's reputation is at stake with the Middle East Peace Process"; Al-Ayyam, (front page), 6-columns, 1/12/2007.**

**"After Washington took over leadership of the Middle East Peace Process: Europeans hope to play a central role in building the Palestinian state through their huge financial assistance"; Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah (front page), 3-columns, 1/12/2007.**

**(Analysts: Abbas confronts the challenge of Hamas after Annapolis and Israelis will not sign a peace agreement unless it is curbed); Al-Quds (p.10), 4-columns, 1/12/2007.**

However, the major challenge the Palestinians faced following Annapolis, as reflected in the headlines of the three newspapers, was the Israeli measures on the ground, most importantly building new settlements and expanding existing ones. Palestinians responded to these measures through angry statements that attracted wide coverage, which shifted overnight from speaking about prospects of peace to speaking about escalation.

**"Israel intends to build new settlement units at Mount Abu Ghunaim in Jerusalem"; Al-Ayyam 4-columns, 5/12/2007.**

The newspaper highlighted the following official Palestinian reactions to the Israeli decision:

**"Qurai: A blatant violation of all what happened at Annapolis"**

**Erekat: The decision is a landmine that may explode negotiations"; Al-Ayyam 3-columns, 5/12/2007.**

**"During their meeting with British Shadow Foreign Minister at PLC:**

**Al-Ahmad: Israel has failed the first test of seriousness after Annapolis.**

**Sabela: Israeli practices on the ground destroyed the spirit of peace"; Al-Quds 3-columns, 6/12/2007.**

**"Abbas demands that Bush intervenes to stop Israeli settlement activities"; Al-Ayyam (front page) 2-columns, 6/12/2007.**

Not only did the three newspapers report official Palestinian reactions, but also followed up extensively international reactions towards Israeli measures. Less than a week after Annapolis concluded, the press was replete with reports and news of settlement expansion, and the optimism that Annapolis brought shifted to pessimism.

**"U.S.A. demands clarifications from Israel regarding building a settlement in East Jerusalem"; Al-Ayyam (front page corner), 2-columns, 7/12/2007.**

**"Moon: building settlements is not helpful to peace efforts"; Al-Ayyam (front page), 1-column, 7/12/2007.**

The three newspapers widely reported in their headlines Israeli reactions towards settlement expansion and building new settlements, which made their coverage of the event comprehensive. It should be noted that they also published analyses, though to a lesser extent.

**"Minister Lieberman: Building a settlement in Abu Ghunaim in East Jerusalem will proceed at highest speed**

**Unveiling a contest for a new national anthem and a different flag...**

**Settlers threaten to establish an independent state in the West Bank and 4 new outposts tomorrow, one in Jerusalem"; Al-Quds (front page), 4-columns, 8/12/2007.**

### **Third: Cartoons**

Local cartoons constituted part of this comprehensive coverage, as they reflected events, including political meetings and contacts, developments on the ground and Israeli measures, and hence cartoons were present in the press coverage. Cartoonists succeeded in portraying the political reality through their cartoons, which expressed in a sarcastic manner the opinion of ordinary citizens who followed up political events, and were affected by their repercussions on the ground; they addressed hot topics which negotiators discussed at Annapolis, including prisoners, settlements, the right to return, the joint understanding, Arab participation in the Conference, plots against Al-Aqsa, the internal Palestinian division, and public opposition against the Conference.

The prisoners constituted a major issue that cartoons addressed as a subject for political discussions at Annapolis, and a Palestinian condition for the success of the Conference, without which negotiations could not move forward. Khalil Abu Arafah expressed this in his cartoon published in Al-Quds on 19/11/2007, which showed an airplane, on which the word Annapolis was written, taking off, but tied to a chain

linked to an Israeli cell in which Palestinian prisoners sat, thus linking the success of the Conference to the issue of prisoners.

(Cartoon)

Palestinian Territories witnessed recently meetings and workshops in which speakers demanded that the Palestinian negotiating team give priority to the issue of prisoners, and several Palestinian officials gave statements in this regard, considering the release of prisoners a major condition for achieving progress in the negotiations.

Cartoonist Umayyah Jeha captured the issue of escalating Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah on 20/11/2007, drawing a white dove that carries an olive branch in its beak-an indication of the peace process-faced by a black crow, carrying the Star of David on its neck, and pecking the olive branch, in a portrayal of Israeli measures on the ground that ruin the peace process, and that escalated before, during and after Annapolis Conference, triggering local, Arab and foreign reactions that cartoons followed up and criticized.

(Cartoon)

The "**right of return**" was also present in the cartoons that addressed Annapolis, as well as the public and official reactions that asserted that right and rejected relinquishing it. The artist Mohammad Saba'neh used symbols that seemed religious in his cartoon published in Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah on 22/11/2007, and entitled "baptized by return" in an indication of the Palestinian people. It had a crucified dove of peace, with a key hanging from its neck, and phrases in the background that insinuated the resolve to return despite the suffering, pain and bloodshed. Phrases included "He is raised to life", and "the Earth will embrace a volcano, not a corpse" و"ستحتضن الأرض بركان لا جثمان".

(Cartoon)

Since negotiations were stalling, and failed to reach a joint memorandum of understanding between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, cartoons kept abreast with the situation in their own way, artistically portraying the perception of ordinary citizens, in a manner that reports or analyses could not disclose. On 23/11/2007, Al-Quds published a cartoon for artist Khalil Abu Arafah showing the two negotiating delegations walking in opposite directions, with a document in the middle entitled 'Document of misunderstanding', in an indication of the absence of a serious Israeli effort to reach a joint understanding prior to Annapolis; this document was frequently mentioned in the headlines of the three newspapers.

(Cartoon)

The cartoons were capable of monitoring and following up hidden details of developments on the ground or in the backstage. As Americans and other international parties were exerting pressure to ensure Arab participation in the Conference in order to ensure its success, Israel was escalating its measures on the ground, particularly in Jerusalem, with excavations around Al-Aqsa mosque. Two cartoons portrayed the situation: one, by khalil Abu Arafah in Al-Quds (p.18) on

24/11/2007, portraying U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice heading a meeting, with a host of Arab delegations to her left, facing Israel's delegation consisting of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Gathering a large number of participating Arab delegations was considered at the time a major success for a conference that ultimately served the interests of Israel, since Annapolis was the first Arab-Israeli meeting with such large-scale official participation.

(Cartoon)

The second cartoon was for Umayyah Jeha, and was published in Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah on 25/11/2007, reflecting the grave danger that faced Al-Aqsa Mosque because of Israeli excavations, at a time when discussions in Annapolis revolved around peace. It portrayed Al-Aqsa mosque inside a lantern going ablaze because of Israeli fire, and collapsing slowly because of the excavations and the process of Judaization.

(Cartoon)

On Annapolis eve, cartoons reflected the real state of disagreement and the different supporting, opposing and reserved opinions among Palestinians. Khalil Abu Arafah, portrayed Palestinian crowds separated and standing against each other, manifesting the situation in his cartoon published in Al-Quds on 26/11/2007.

(Cartoon)

Some cartoons expressed pessimism and lack of trust in the Israelis who escalated their measures on the ground, and expressed obstinate political positions that threaten to explode negotiations and the peace process. On 26/11/2007, Al-Hayat A-Jadidah published a cartoon for Mohammad Saba'neh, portraying a dove of peace surrounded by an explosive belt and a detonator with the following phrase written above it: "An Israeli timeframe".

(Cartoon)

Politicians from both sides raised high expectations from Annapolis and its outcome. Cartoonists addressed this issue in a sarcastic manner, as did Khalil Abu Arafah in Al-Quds on 27/11/2007 (p.18). His cartoon, entitled 'raising expectations' portrayed Annapolis as a crane raising a huge cement block on which is written 'the ceiling of expectations', and on both sides two parties appeared, one shouting 'a little higher', and the other shouting 'a little lower', in an expression of the statements that varied between optimism and pessimism, and between exaggeration in raising expectations and lowering them.

(Cartoon)

As Annapolis adjourned, it was clear that the Conference did not change any realities on the ground; settlement activity continued at the same pace, and Israelis even decided to double it few days after the Conference. Khalil Abu Arafah ridiculed the situation in his cartoon published in Al-Quds on 28/11/2007 under the following title: "Discover the 7 differences, if any".

The cartoon consisted of two parts. The first, entitled 'before Annapolis', had settlements, soldiers and a wall. The second, entitled 'after Annapolis', had the same

scene: settlements, soldiers and a wall, i.e. no change on the ground, as checkpoints remained, the building of the Wall and settlements continued, and the Conference brought nothing new.

(Cartoon)

Cartoonist Baha Bukhari, portrayed settlement activity in a different manner in his cartoon published in *Al-Ayyam* on 7/12/2007, with a settlement surrounded by walls, barbed wire and surveillance cameras. To the right, he wrote the following phrase: 'Completion of settlements', in an indication of the Israeli escalation of settlement activity following Annapolis, through expanding existing settlements and building new ones.

(Cartoon)

Another cartoon for Bukhari, published in *Al-Ayyam* on 9/12/2007, expressed the same idea indicating the settlement activity following Annapolis, both inside and outside the Wall.

(Cartoon)

Cartoons addressed this issue extensively in the context of the outcome of Annapolis. Artists captured popular sentiments, the thoughts of politicians, as well as those who were optimistic and had high expectations towards the Conference, and who later faced reality imposed by Israelis on the ground. Artist Nasser Ja'afari portrayed the situation on 9/12/2007 in *Al-Quds*, as he drew the design of a settlement, an outcome of Annapolis, placed on a train that seemed to be departing with white smoke, taking the shape of a dove of peace coming out of it. It seemed that Ja'afari was saying: 'The Conference labored and gave birth to a settlement'.

(Cartoon)

Cartoonists perceived the way Israelis killed the peace process. Umayyah Jeha expressed the situation in her cartoon published in *Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah* on 10/12/2007, and entitled 'Israeli peace'. It showed Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert grabbing the neck of the dove of peace, intending to kill it, as a symbolic expression of killing the peace process.

(Cartoon)

Nasser Ja'afari portrayed Israeli settlement activity following Annapolis as a creeping serpent, in a cartoon published in *Al-Quds* on 11/12/2007 and entitled 'new settlements in Jerusalem'. Such depiction expressed accurately popular anger, which followed the optimism that settlement activity might freeze or at least slow down creeping over their land.

(Cartoon)

Pessimism dominated cartoons after Annapolis, expressing skepticism towards the significance of international promises of a Palestinian state in 2008, while Israelis succeed in imposing their agendas and timeframes. In a cartoon published in *Al-Quds* on 11/12/2007, and entitled 'A timeframe for negotiations: printed in Israel', Khalil

Abu Arafah pointed out the pending issues between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, namely settlements, refugees, Jerusalem, water, security and borders. On the margins of the calendar the following phrase was written: '**not important**', while a person who looked like U.S. President Bush appeared carrying a sign on which is written: '**A Palestinian state in 2008**'.

(Cartoon)

#### **Four: Articles and Opinions**

Discussing Annapolis preoccupied article writers and analysts, both Palestinians and Israelis alike. They were preoccupied by their expectations from the Conference, before, during and after it convened. Articles addressed political issues that formed the crux of issues discussed at the Conference, most prominently settlement activities, Israel as a Jewish state, a new and unprecedented preposition previously in the lexicon of political action, and which did not constitute, before Annapolis, an issue of conflict or an Israeli condition in the negotiations.

Some articles also tackled post-Annapolis expectations, and the Israeli political and field escalation that accompanied the Conference. Other articles addressed the Palestinian negotiations strategy and the extent of it drawing on previous experiences, and the prevailing Palestinian division.

Skepticism in the success of the Conference before it convened prevailed in the writings of some authors who worked on reviewing and analyzing it. Some considered it a forward flight, as is evident in an article by Khaled Al-Hroub published in Al-Quds on 12/11/ 2007, under the heading:

**"The Fall Conference: fleeing from and circumventing realities"** in which he said: **"There is no exit out of this post-modernist numbness of heading towards a conference that further clips-off Palestinian rights, except in a Palestinian declaration that rejects attending the Conference, simply because it is void of content. Palestinians need a leadership, modernist and brave decision that would break the post-modernist framework to which they are driven and exposes it as void of any substance, and that the Palestinians do not have the luxury of giving time and effort to ceremonial conferences, at the time when their affairs are further deteriorating, their rights further wasted, and their blood further shed with every passing day"**.

Meanwhile, the US policy in the region was subject to criticism, lack of confidence and skepticism that the peoples would have to pay the price of this policy, as indicated in an article by Adel Malek in Al-Quds published on 12 November, 2007, (P 18) entitled:

**"From Lebanon to Iran to Annapolis and Pakistan: The Fall of American peace and the explosive belt of fire"**, in which he said: **"..and from Lebanon to Pakistan passing through Iran and the Peace Conference, there is a series of connected links despite the apparent differences, nevertheless they increase the risk of expanding the area of the explosive fire belt, once in the name of peace, another in the name of wars which she says seek change, and a better world; however, experiences affirm the opposite, as the big repeat mistakes, and the small bear the consequences and pay the price."**

Other writers expressed strong doubts in the possibility of the establishment of a Palestinian state, as promised by Americans, considering that the facts the Israelis created on the ground have transformed the dream of establishing a Palestinian State into an illusion, according to an article by Lutfi Zaghoul in Al-Quds published on 12/11/ 2007 (p. 21) entitled:

**“Annapolis Meeting....and the Palestinian State”**, in which he said:

**"...the truth is that talking about a Palestinian state pleases Palestinians, but they wonder: which state are the American talking about? Is it a state, sovereign over its land, sea, airspace, entrances and exits? Is it the state of the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1967 including Arab Jerusalem? Is it a cleansed state, cleansed from all forms of settlements, and from the by-products of the Separation Wall? Is this State an inseparable part of the other entitlements of the Palestinian Cause?"**

The issue of Israel as a Jewish state was among the most commonly addressed topics by Palestinian writers in their opinions and comments. Some writers described the Israeli demand as 'racist', while others deemed it an attempt to prevent reaching a solution to the conflict, and imposing conditions that would be impossible for Palestinians to meet.

**In an article entitled: "Olmert's bomb....Racism!!"** published in Al-Ayyam (P 22), on 14/11/2007, writer Hani Habib said:

**"Olmert's throwing the bomb of acknowledging and recognizing Israel as a 'Jewish' state is meant to put an end to any serious attempt to find real ways to resume the negotiations process on the Palestinian-Israeli file".**

In his column, '**Atraf Annahar**' in Al-Ayyam on 15/11/2007, Hassan Al-Batal commented on the same topic in an article entitled: '**Another trap in Annapolis**' and said:

**"Israel wants an Islamic State in Palestine in order to justify for itself a Jewish-democratic-demographic-demagogic state. It fears a national democratic state".**

In an article by Fadi Hussein entitled ("**The Jewish State**" in exchange for the **Right of Return**) published in Al-Quds (P. 20) on 17/11/2007, the writer proposed an "Israeli recognition of the right of return for refugees as a response to the demands of Israeli Prime Minister on the Jewish identity of the Israeli state".

Some writers, meanwhile, tried to distinguish between the demand to recognize the Jewish identity of the Hebrew state, or recognizing Israel, according to an article by Mohammad Al-Bairouty published in Al-Quds under the heading "**The Jewish Identity of the State**" on 19/11/2007 (P.20), in which he said:

**"Recognizing the state of Israel is one thing, and recognizing the Jewish identity of the state is another. States come and go, on the land of Palestine, dozens of states that ruled this country since the beginning of written history were recognized".**

This topic occupied a significant space of comments and review, as did the pessimistic comments of some writers on the success of the US Administration in

achieving a breakthrough in the wall of Palestinian-Israeli conflict at the Annapolis Conference. Some even totally excluded the possibility of Annapolis achieving peace, as emphasized by Abdul-Rahman Al-Rashed in an article under the heading:

**(No one believes that a peace will be born out of 'Annapolis' womb)** published in Al-Ayyam (P.18) on 25/11/ 2007 and quoted from Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper, where he said:

**"The problem lies in the timing, not in the conference. The proposed political project is difficult. Little is hoped from the summit, because the US Administration started its peace project too late".**

With the decision of some Arab countries to participate in the Conference, came a question posed by some writers, including Arab writers, on those countries' level of preparedness for a conference as big and as important as Annapolis. Ali Al-Abdullah indicated this in an article entitled **"What Have Arabs Prepared?"**, published in Al-Quds on 19/11/2007, where he criticized the Arabs who made no reaction to the Conference by rejecting, accepting, or preparing for it, or any other reaction, while the Americans and Israelis did the opposite, and wondered:

**"What did Arabs do? The position of Arab regimes is linked to their reluctant stance in facing up to the US Administration and refusing to clash with it, because the method of dealing with the Administration is the result of a defective traditional relationship that is slanted in favor of the latter on one hand, and because it is subject at this moment to the reading of the Arab regimes of the hot files in the region on the other hand,".**

Warning from Annapolis' failure was one of the issues raised by Arab and Palestinian writers in addressing the conference even before it was held and its outcome known. The warning of the risks of such failure was made clear in an objective reading of events on the eve of the Conference, as evident by an article entitled:

**"A State in the Morgue of a Conference..."** by Dr. Diab Nasr, published in Al-Quds on 17/11/ 2007 (P. 21), who said:

**"Any flaw in intentions is not considered a big failure of the Conference, because failure will toss the region in unprecedented turmoil".**

Ya'qoub Al-Atrash, and in the same issue (P. 22) said in an article under the heading:

**"Annapolis Conference.... Where Will it Lead to?"**, and said:

**"The lack of any progress in the peace process means more frustration and disillusionment".**

Supporting the opinion that Annapolis will not bring about any results, Nasser Taha Mustafa wrote an article in Al-Quds on 17/11/ 2007, (P. 21) entitled "**That is why we are not optimistic towards Annapolis**", in which he said:

**"The Annapolis meeting will not be more than a political show aiming to vindicate President Bush, who had pledged in the first two years of his term in office to establish a Palestinian state and has done nothing to realize it".**

During that period, articles of some writers reflected the state of internal Palestinian division and its impact on the strength of the Palestinian delegation to Annapolis, and whose participation in the Conference was met with rejection and protests at the factional and popular levels, while some writers did not conceal their support and backing to the Palestinian delegation and their criticism of its opponents.

In an article under the heading '**Palestinians and Negotiations**' published in Al-Quds (P. 18) on 3/12/2007, Dr. Najji Sharrab said:

**"The Palestinian negotiator needs a supportive Palestinian environment, distant from political contentions and failed external wagers, as long as it is governed by the fixed national principles and legitimate frameworks, and this is the guarantee for the success of any negotiations".**

At least two newspapers, Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah, did not conceal their support of the Palestinian negotiator. In its editorial on 26/11/2007 (P. 20), Al-Quds wrote under the heading "**No one has relinquished the fixed national principles**" and said:

**"We are not demanding anyone to change their positions, but rather we are demanding to be keen on the unity of the Palestinian front, to support the legitimate leadership of our people, and not resort to abusive, takfiry and treason accusations instead of rational political dialogue".**

On 26/11/2007, Hafez Al-Barghouti, the Chief-Editor of Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah wrote on the last page an article entitled: "**Support to the Negotiator**" in which he said: "**All support goes to Palestinian negotiators, because he is the honest caretaker of rights, while others violate them and reduce the Cause into the size of their small and sometimes lowly aspirations**".

The Israeli violations in Palestinian territories on the eve of the Conference and after it were also present in Palestinian writers' articles and opinions, who sharply criticized them; settlements, incursions and killings committed by Israelis left those writers firmly convinced that Annapolis would fail before it was convened and days after it was concluded.

Lutfi Zaghloul wrote the following in Al-Quds on 3/12/2007:

**"The daily Israeli systematic violations were presumed to stop, or even to freeze, even if for days, during the Annapolis meeting, but nothing of the sort happened on the ground, and the general Palestinian landscape remained under the brunt of incursions, assassinations, arrests, confiscations, and checkpoints, as if this political gathering in Annapolis is totally irrelevant".**

In its editorial on 6/12/2007 (P. 18), Al-Quds wrote criticising Israeli decisions to intensify settlement under the heading: "**...Before the Ink Dried Out**" and said:

**"Even before the ink has dried out Israel had started violating its commitments, by continuing settlements and escalation against Gaza Strip. President Abu Mazen promptly wrote to President Bush about this escalation against the Palestinian people; these practices only indicate that Israel is not serious about peace".**

While Mohammad Khader Qarrash wrote in an article in Al-Quds on 7/12/2007 (P. 18) under the heading:

**"The Continuation of settlement activity requires a serious stand"**, in which he said:

**"The current Israeli government needs to realize that the decision to continue settlement activities has a price, and without that, Israel will continue the game of playing the peace tune and making painful concessions".**

Ziad Abu Zayyad wrote an article entitled "**Abu Ghunaim is not the entire problem**" in Al-Quds on 9/12/2007 (P. 19), in which he reacted to the Israeli decision to build new settlement units in Mount Abu Ghunaim by saying:

**"Adding three hundred housing units in Mount Abu Ghunaim is not the entire problem, but rather a small part of it, because the real problem is in Israel insisting on Judaizing Jerusalem and isolating it from its Arab depth, and on continuing settlement expansion activities under a plan meant for misleading and deluding the entire world into believing that Israel has changed, and that now it wants peace".**

The three newspapers allowed a large margin of freedom of expression for their writers to express their opinions on Annapolis and handling it with their readings, analyses and comments. They dedicated a part of this margin for **Arab** writers and journalists, and had an extensive coverage.

The articles of Israeli opinion writers, taken from Hebrew newspapers, also occupied a significant space in the three newspapers. Their comments revolved on the Jewish identity of the state, doubting the results of the Conference before it convened, criticising the political class in Israel and accusing them of non-seriousness in their negotiations with Palestinians. Other articles expressed rightist view points.

In an article entitled:

**"Israel demands Palestinians to change their positions while it remains frozen in the past!"** published in Al-Ayyam on 12/11/2007 (P. 18), the Israeli writer Uzi Benziman\_sharply criticised the evasive policy followed by the Israeli government and its security systems in dealing with Palestinians, where he said:

**(It is possible to draw an analogy between these days on the eve of the Annapolis Conference with the hours that preceded going into the Lebanon war on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2006, when the government had a feeling that it had not any alternative but**

to attack 'Hizbullah', and now here is Olmert leading the state to an international meeting in the USA through the presumption that he has no other alternative). He added: "also in the leadership of the one talking about peace in an unprecedented manner from his predecessors in office, we find that the security system under Ehud Olmert is calcified in its immobile position, this is an extreme hard-line position and does not give any chance for the willingness and ability of Palestinians to show flexibility in their positions. This basic point suffices to follow the self-realizing prophecy among the Israeli leadership circles".

Other writers did not conceal their concern that Annapolis would lead to disastrous results on Israel, should Hamas succeed in controlling the West Bank, as Gideon Saar expressed in an article published in the Israeli Haaretz under the heading (**Choosing between the 'Status Quo' and the Worse Situation!**). In this article, published in Al-Ayyam on 12/11/2007, he said: (**There is a high probability that the results of the Annapolis Meeting would lead to Hamas controlling the Authority's territories in Judea and Samaria too, the effect of that is the eruption of a security hell and the consolidation of Iranian allied positions in the heart of the country**).

Israeli writers expressed varying opinions on the Jewish identity of the state of Israel as proposed by the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. Some described it as a test of Palestinian intentions, and others saw no need for a Palestinian recognition of Israel as a Jewish state.

In an article in Haaretz, published in Al-Quds on 13/11/2007 (P.17). Yehuda Ben Meir wrote the following article entitled "**Two states-but not for two peoples**":

**(It appears, according to press reports, that Palestinians oppose the formula of 'two states for two peoples' in the future agreement with Israel and insist on the formula of 'two states' only). He added: (Among the Jewish public in Israel there is a determination to make concessions, even painful and deep concessions. In his speech about Annapolis, President Bush spoke explicitly about the state of Israel as a 'Jewish state')**.

While Amos Gilboa wrote an article in Ma'ariv newspaper entitled "**Annapolis Conference...A test for Palestinians and Arab countries!**" published in Al-Quds on 13/11/2007, (P.17). He said:

**"The Annapolis Conference should be a milestone and a landmark for Palestinians and Arab countries; would they accept a simple call made from there for the two-state vision, a state for the Palestinian people; would they oppose that. This is the initial foundation for every peace building, and to every future search at every door. At the same time, it is also a higher test for our Prime Minister"**.

On the other hand, writer Amos Karmiel saw no need to beg Palestinians and obtain their recognition of Israel as a Jewish state. In his article in Yediot, published by Al-Ayyam on 14/11/2007 (P.18) under the heading "**No respectable state would beg for its identity**", he said:

**"And so precisely, in fact in our age there is no self-respecting state that would beg recognizing its identity or announcing that such recognition is a 'red line'. But where is our minimum self-respect".**

However, some Israeli writers did not conceal their desire for the Annapolis conference to succeed, and that there is no option for Palestinians and Israelis but peace and reaching satisfactory solutions, as is understood from an article by Girshin Basken in the Jerusalem Post and published by Al-Ayyam on 13/11/ 2007 (P. 18), under the heading: (**Failure in 'Annapolis' is outside the List of Options!**). He said:

**"The Annapolis Conference sponsored by the United States is the riskiest step taken by Palestinian and Israeli leaders since Camp David in July 2000". He added: "The Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, will not return home from Annapolis as heroes if they fail to reach concrete and agreed results." "At least one old fact related to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process could prove wrong in Annapolis Conference, for most observers maintained that Israeli-Palestinian peace making requires strong leaders. At present, the actual reality may be that the weakness of the leaders could mean the strength of the peace process. None of the two leaders can afford failure, and if it should be said, also neither the Palestinians nor the Israelis can afford their failure".**

Israeli settlements had occupied an area of Israeli opinion writers, where some writers criticised their government for settlement activities and their expansion on the eve and after Annapolis, considering them as contradictory to the peace process, such as an article by Gideon Levy in Haaretz, published by Al-Quds on 19/11/2007 under the heading: **"Peace acts contradict peace"**, where he said: **"A fete for Peace: Israel intends to announce freezing construction in settlements as a compensation for rejecting to discuss substantive issues"**. He added: **"From Oslo through Camp David and to the Roadmap, Israel will not freeze the most criminal settlement project in its history"**.

### **Palestinian Television**

Palestine Television (PBC) extensively followed up Annapolis Conference, as news and reports of the Conference took the lead in news bulletins during the monitored period.

PBC broadcast a number of talk shows and news programs on the Conference and its expected outcome, highlighting the Israeli political positions, and what was named at the time as **'the fixed national principles'**, as indicated in the statements of President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister of the Caretaker Government Dr. Salam Fayyad during their reception of international officials who visited the region prior to Annapolis, to hear the political views of the Palestinian Presidency and Government towards the Conference.

PBC used these programs to support the official delegation to the Conference. To this end, it hosted a group of politicians, analysts and media experts to advocate the official stance, justify participation and raise the ceiling of expectations.

### **First: Main news bulletins**

The political action that preceded the Conference took the lead in news bulletins and received the largest number of news items and reports, such as the meetings between President Mahmoud Abbas with each of the Ukrainian President, British Foreign Minister and Liberian President, and the Fateh Central Committee meeting which he headed, all of which revolved around the then on-going meetings and preparations for Annapolis Conference, and the Palestinian position towards resolving the conflict with Israel.

It also included the President's tour in a number of Arab states, including his meeting with King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah II of Jordan, Egyptian President Husni Mubarak and King Mohammad II of Morocco and his participation in the meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers, until the senior Palestinian delegation arrived in Washington on 25/11/2007 to attend Annapolis Conference.

Amid this political activity, PBC focused on highlighting the Palestinian political discourse and position, with President Abbas statements taking the lead in all main news bulletins, such as President Abu Mazen's statements following his meeting with the Ukrainian President on 15/11/2007:

"As you know Mr. President, the peace process is going through a critical period, and we are keen on formulating a clear Palestinian-Israeli document to take to Annapolis meeting... the point of reference of the peace process is the 'Road Map', including the Arab Peace Initiative and President Bush's vision of a two-state solution and peace based on justice, which will guarantee security to us and to Israel, not the Wall, nor settlements on our land. What is happening in Jerusalem and Bethlehem is transforming the Islamic and Christian Holy places into monuments, and it is not possible to accept preventing Palestinian citizens, both Christians and Muslims, from entering Jerusalem for religious practice".

PBC broadcast President Abu Mazen's speech on the 15/11/2007, the Day of Independence, in which he described Annapolis Conference as a "good starting point towards reaching a just solution". The speech included: "While it is my duty to be open with you today, as I have always been since I took the leadership of the PLO and PNA, I assert to you on the Day of the glorious Independence, that we are working thoroughly so that the forthcoming peace conference constitutes a good and decisive starting point towards reaching a just solution that guarantees the rights of all our people: Our people under occupation, who aspire for freedom and independence, and our steadfast refugees, who seek to return to their homeland. We are exerting relentless efforts with our Arab brothers whom I had met, His Excellency President Mubarak, His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan and all other leaders with whom we are communicating so that the forthcoming peace conference achieves the goal we unanimously agree on, which is the peace of the brave, an established peace that guarantees rights rather than relinquishes them, protects our national interests rather than forfeits them and protects our future and the future of all the peoples in the region around us".

Such concentration on the Palestinian vision of the solution and adhering to the fixed national principles was not restricted only to President Mahmoud Abbas statements, but also included the statements of his senior aides, and other Palestinian officials, and constituted a clear attempt to deny the opposition's accusations against the Palestinian leadership of forfeiting rights and giving concessions through participation in Annapolis, and the reservations of some PLO factions towards participation, including the following statement of Dr. Nabil Sha'ath:

"We do not mind going to this Conference, but we want a conference that pushes our cause forward, towards the independent Palestinian state, and ending Israeli occupation and the return of refugees. For this to happen, there is a need for measures that the U.S. explained as Phase I of the Road Map, while for us they mean at least freezing settlement activity, return to our offices in Jerusalem, release of prisoners, removing checkpoints and ending the siege and all that, and finally the return to 28 September 2000 borders. After the Conference, we want speedy implementation and quick negotiations".

While the Palestinian political discourse was clear about the political vision, another aspect was expressed in the statements of Palestinian officials, related to the expected economic outcome of Annapolis, such as the following statement of Dr. Salam Fayyad, Prime Minister of the Caretaker Government, following his meetings on 18/11/2007 with each of Quartet Representative Tony Blair and French Minister of Foreign Affairs:

"It was a good meeting during which we discussed preparations for the Paris Economic Conference that will be held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of the coming month, and the practical steps that must be made to ensure a suitable atmosphere for its success. As you know, this meeting will constitute an opportunity to donors from all over the world and to international and regional agencies to provide the necessary support to the PNA, in support for the implementation of the 2008-2010 Plan".

Speaking of the economic returns of Annapolis before it convened, and in order to spread an optimistic atmosphere, PBC highlighted in the lead of its news bulletin on 19/11/2007 the news of the meeting between Dr. Fayyad and Ehud Barak, the Israeli Minister of Defense, which was also attended by Quartet Representative Tony Blair. At the end of the meeting, Dr. Fayyad announced a package of economic projects in the West Bank and Gaza:

"There is an intention for economic revitalization and improving the lives of people after years of deterioration. Our economy could have been double its current size, had it not been for difficulties. Initiatives such as the one introduced by Tony Blair today are important. Nevertheless, this is just the start. We will not only have the four projects, but there are other projects in aspects that require immediate attention, such as the wastewater plant in Gaza, upgrading the Industrial Area in the Jordan Valley and improving tourism in Jericho".

Addressing preparations for a significant conference such as Annapolis, as described by several Palestinian officials, and in addition to the political positions and anticipated economic returns, PBC reported on the security aspect, shedding the light

on the efforts exerted by the security services on the eve of Annapolis, as it was both an international demand and a Road Map obligation. Hence, the Cabinet's meeting which Abu Mazen attended on 19/11/2007 was thoroughly reported. PBC reported a statement of President Abu Mazen in which he said: "In fact the Cabinet is making significant activity, most notably at the security, economic, social and other levels. We are fully satisfied with the Cabinet's work, and are following up with them future activity".

PBC also reported what Minister of Information and Cabinet's spokesperson Dr. Riyadh Maliki said:

"The security conditions and particularly the accomplishments in Nablus, and what the Minister of Interior has said: we will prepare the grounds in Nablus, tidy up the situation, and clean the city from all forms of lawlessness. The security plan consists of three phases, and we are currently in phase II, which has the following goals: cleaning the city from lawlessness, enhancing the capacity of the security services, reconstructing the destroyed sectors, reconstructing the destroyed security premises and prisons, constructing additional camps, enhancing and activating the role of the Judiciary, particularly the Judicial Police and the Women Police. These are the main topics of Phase II of the Palestinian security plan. The Minister of Interior has said: 'Nablus is the focus of everyone, as it is a sensitive city. We entered Nablus with a small force, and succeeded in forming a real force that succeeded during the first days to enhance security, arrest the wanted persons and also arrest all those who carry illegal weapons'".

On the other hand, PBC ignored the popular and factional opposition, except those that were supportive of the general Palestinian official approach to participate in Annapolis. The reports were exaggerated, expressed extreme optimism and showed that the public fully supported the leadership. On 22/11/2007, PBC broadcast the following report:

"Wide popular support for the approach of the Palestinian leadership towards Annapolis, amid high confidence that the leadership will adhere to the fixed national principles".

The report started with the following introduction:

"As the Palestinian leadership is preoccupied in preparations for Annapolis, a state of speculation mixed with optimism dominated the Palestinian streets, because of the public trust in the ability of their leadership to carry their concerns and demands and impose them on the top of the agenda of the forthcoming conference".

Then excerpts from interviews with citizens were broadcast, to verify public support to the leadership. A citizen said: "Brother Abu Mazen and the Palestinian leadership, I am confident that God willing, they will find a solution to this question, and I am very optimistic that the Conference will be successful". Another citizen said: "God willing, we hope that Abu Mazen and the leadership will find a solution for all issues".

The presenter continued the report by saying:

"Going to Annapolis does not only reflect the will of the political leadership, but also reflects the desire of the masses to attend in order to achieve the rights. Peace and the state are two Palestinian objectives for which thousands of martyrs have sacrificed for, in addition to adhering to the fixed national principles and seeking their achievement; these have always been the central popular, rather than political demands".

In order to prove his point about the harmony between the leadership and the people, the presenter reported parts of the findings of an opinion poll conducted by a local institution, indicating wide support to Palestinian participation in Annapolis, in the following manner:

The opinion poll conducted by the Near East Institute, which found out that 71% of Palestinians support Palestinian participation in Annapolis, is the best possible evidence to the existing harmony between the people and their political leadership".

The report concluded by asserting the same content: "This unity of visions and positions has united the people with their leadership, as they pack and depart to the international peace conference with double confidence".

Nevertheless, the news bulletins and the above-mentioned report of PBC ignored the fact that 29% of the Palestinian people either opposed or had reservations towards the Palestinian participation in Annapolis. The next news item reported the above-mentioned opinion poll with further detail, in the same news bulletin on 22/11/2007, and in the following manner:

"A recent opinion poll conducted by the Near East Consultant Institute revealed that the majority of citizens support participation in Annapolis Conference and that the citizens' confidence in President Mahmoud Abbas has reached its highest levels. 78% of respondents have expressed their confidence in and support of Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, while 80% considered that Fateh had the strategies that would most probably lead to achieving Palestinian aspirations".

Then the presenter read the report of the previous news item, albeit in further details. (A most recent opinion poll conducted by the Near East Consultant Institute revealed that 78% of citizens support and trust President Mahmoud Abbas, which is the highest level of support achieved during the past months. The poll indicated that 62% of respondents considered the government headed by Dr. Salam Fayyad as the legitimate government, 80% consider that Fateh had the strategies that would most probably lead to achieving Palestinian aspirations rather than the strategies of Hamas". 72% supported conducting early Presidential and Legislative elections. Findings of the poll also revealed that 64% would vote to Fateh, while 13% would vote to Hamas. 79% believed that the security conditions in Gaza have deteriorated following Hamas coup against legitimacy, while 94% believed that the Palestinian economy deteriorated to its worst following Hamas coup).

As PBC bulletins focused on political developments that preceded Annapolis, it continued to ignore the other point of view, as the bulletins did not mention the opposition of other Palestinian forces to the wide Arab participation, since it would open the floor for normalization of relations with Israel before the latter gave any real

concessions in favor of Palestinian rights. Instead, it reported statements of the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Amro Musa, in which he responded in the following manner to those who perceived Arab participation in Annapolis as normalization:

"Any approval...any agreement...any decision we take is governed by the Arab Initiative, whose conditions are clear in relation to the requirements, the content of the agreement and the final agreement.. with regard to the full implementation of Israeli obligations vis-à-vis implementation of Arab obligations which will lead to the end of conflict. Otherwise we will not follow anything else. Going to Annapolis aims at serving the Palestinian position and re-proposing the Palestinian question, in addition to having a comprehensive approach to peace as His Highness Prince Saud had said. Hence, I hope you rest assured that going does not mean accepting anything, and does not mean normalization. Normalization comes within the framework of the Arab Initiative and accepting the agreement is within the framework of the Arab Initiative. This Initiative is very important, because its elements are fixed and conclusive, and we have re-confirmed it during the last Riyadh Summit".

PBC, however, gave a significant space for the points of view that supported the Conference, as it reported official Palestinian participation from the points of view of analysts who conform politically and intellectually to Fateh, such as the following statements of Dr. Hussein Abu Shanab broadcast on 23/11/2007, commenting on the Arab Foreign Ministers Meeting:

"We must say that the purpose of this meeting constitutes a serious turning point in Palestinian and Arab national action. Hence, we say that this meeting, despite the difference in opinions about it, shall constitute a strong position, and shall be significant when it is held, given that holding it is inevitable too".

Following up the Arab Foreign Ministers Meeting, PBC monitored only the supporting popular responses to Annapolis, including a citizen who was not named saying: "No doubt that holding the Arab Summit in Cairo is extremely important, particularly as it comes prior to Annapolis, and consequently there is a need to go to Annapolis with a strong and unified stance, in order to establish the rights of our Palestinian people, most notably the right to return and the independent Palestinian state".

The arrival of President Mahmoud Abbas and the accompanying delegation to Washington on 25/11/2007, one day prior to Annapolis, overwhelmed the PBC main news bulletin, as large space was allocated for conveying his statements there, in which he stressed his determination to achieve the goals of the Palestinian people in establishing an independent state, and for broadcasting segments of his arrival to Washington, his talks with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in addition to a statement by the Presidency spokesperson Nabil Abu Rudeineh in which he said:

"There is a real historic opportunity invited for by the U.S. and with international participation; if Israel is serious, and if the American Administration is credible enough to exert pressure on the Israeli Government in order to reach a just solution, then there is an opportunity".

For the first time, PBC had a special correspondent Nasser Abu Baker accompany the official Palestinian delegation to Annapolis. He reported details of the meetings of the President and the accompanying delegation with U.S. officials, as well as the meetings between Palestinian and Israeli officials on the eve of the Conference, with special focus on what was called the "joint understanding", which was supposed to be signed prior to the Conference. Furthermore, he focused on the "invitation letter" to the Conference, which U.S. President George Bush had sent to President Abbas. The PBC special correspondent said that the text of the "invitation letter", including its international references, was similar to the letter sent to Olmert, and that both invitations were based on these references which President Abbas and the Palestinian leadership called for.

Although the Palestinian Territories witnessed on the eve of the arrival of the Palestinian delegation to Washington huge waves of protests in Gaza Strip and in Nablus, Ramallah and Hebron in the West Bank, PBC ignored them, and ignored the demonstrations that roamed some Arab capitals, including Cairo, Amman and Damascus, expressing rejection of the Conference.

On 27/11/2007, Hebron witnessed the most violent confrontations between protestors and members of the Palestinian Police and security services, during which a young man was killed, and tens were wounded. Similar clashes erupted in Ramallah and Nablus, which the Palestinian Police dispersed by force, using batons, backs of guns, shots in the air and tear gas. Member of security services threatened Journalists warning them not to cover the events.

Despite their gravity, PBC ignored these events, while Fahmi Za'areer, Fateh spokesperson in the West Bank, attacked the protests and the factional and popular conventions opposed to Annapolis, asserting that the aim behind these conventions was to weaken the Palestinian position, particularly that of the negotiators.

As PBC ignored and excluded the opposition against Annapolis, negating the other opinion, it highlighted in its bulletin on 26/11/2007 the position of five PLO factions declaring their rejection to participate in opposing conventions in Gaza or in Damascus, considering that these conventions intend to weaken the Palestinian leadership, and describing participants, including some leaders, as marginal persons and dissident leaders. The main news bulletin on 26/11/2007 said the following:

(The leaders of five PLO factions held a press conference to express their absolute rejection to participate in conventions and meetings held by ' Hamas ' in Gaza, and which aim at weakening the position of the Palestinian leadership).

( Hamas had held today a convention in Gaza Strip in which it claimed that it adhered to the Palestinian fixed principles. The convention was attended by a number of marginal personalities and some dissident leaders. Hamas brought its supporters from universities to fill the hall. It should be noted that all PLO factions boycotted the so called convention as they were keen not to give any legitimacy to the bloody coup implemented by the outlawed Hamas).

Such negation of and skepticism towards the other, culminated in a report about the same topic that PBC broadcast after the news item on the factions boycotting Hamas conventions in Gaza. The report said:

(...However, away from the delusions that Hamas spreads in Gaza Strip, the Palestinian leadership continues its battle of negotiations with Israelis, with the support of PLO factions and the masses that stand behind President Mahmoud Abbas).

PBC also reported the following statement by Ahmad Hillis, a Fateh leader, criticizing the position of Hamas towards Annapolis, and defending at the same time the official inclination to participate in the Conference:

(Fateh leader Ahmad Hillis said that Fateh and our people are going to Annapolis, away from all illusions that Hamas spreads through skepticism and accusations of treason, and asserted that the Palestinian leadership, headed by President Mahmoud Abbas, adheres to all Palestinian rights and national fixed principles).

PBC allocated part of its main bulletin to report on the supporting demonstrations to President Abu Mazen on the occasion of Annapolis, including a demonstration in Qalandiya refugee camp, north Jerusalem. On 26/11/2007, the main news bulletin broadcast the following news:

"Hundreds of students in Qalandiya Camp, north Jerusalem Governorate marched in support of the Palestinian participation in Annapolis Conference and the positions of the leadership that seeks to end occupation and establish the independent state with Jerusalem as its capital".

At the official level, PBC broadcast a statement by Dr. Riyadh Maliki following the weekly Cabinet meeting held on 26/11/2007, in which he justified participation in Annapolis and attacked opposition:

"We went strongly in order to confirm our firm commitment to the Palestinian facts, positions and fixed principles, from which we will not divert at all. Whoever says that going to Annapolis is a fallback, a defeat or a concession, has a defeatist vision. It is a defeatist vision because those do not wish to assume any historic national responsibility at these decisive moments in the history of the Palestinian Question".

As the conference was opened on 27/11/2008, PBC main news bulletin mostly consisted of the speeches of U.S. President George Bush, Palestinian President Abu Mazen and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, with special focus on what was called the fixed national principles the Palestinian President's speech contained.

PBC broadcast the full speech of President Mahmoud Abbas which lasted for 15 minutes. The presenter introduced the speech as a "brave strategic initiative". The beginning of the speech included the following:

"We need to start tomorrow a comprehensive and in-depth negotiations process over all final status issues, including Jerusalem, refugees, borders, settlements, security, water and others, and we need to support negotiations with direct and tangible steps

on the ground that prove that we are moving in an irreversible track towards contractual, comprehensive and full peace, and which includes stopping all settlement activity, including natural growth, reopening the closed Jerusalem institutions, removing settlement outposts, removing checkpoints, releasing prisoners and facilitating the task of our Authority in imposing order and the rule of law".

The speeches of President Bush and Olmert also received extensive coverage in PBC, which broadcast their speeches. PBC special correspondent to the Conference Nasser Abu Baker described Mahmoud Abbas speech at the Conference as "a strong speech that adhered to the fixed national principles, identified the demands and the foundation from which to launch the peace process and negotiations". Abu Baker added also the following in his defensive analysis:

"We do not wish to spread extreme optimism towards what happened, but optimism stems from the fact that the Palestinian leadership is adhering to the fixed principles, and it has been made clear today to the whole world, to the Israelis and to the American people and President Bush that the Palestinian leadership has come here to declare its adherence to its fixed principles".

In a similar context of analysis and raising optimistic expectations towards President Abu Mazen's speech, PBC broadcast in the same bulletin an interview conducted by its special correspondent Nasser Abu Baker with Dr. Sa'eb Erekat, the head of the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, in which he gave a rosy picture of the content of the speech and of the outcome of the first session of Annapolis by saying:

"It may be said that everyone listened to what President Abu Mazen said, which was very clear, very specific and focused on our need for peace. At the same time, we seek peace that is based on ending the Israeli occupation that started in 1967. Our peace will not come at any price, as many things occurred here today. For the first time, Arab states came in this hall to support the Palestinian people and the Palestinian negotiators. They said that there would be neither peace nor normalization with Israel without the Israeli withdrawal from all 1967 occupied territories including Jerusalem; Syrian Arab occupied Golan and the remainder of Lebanese territories. Today there was a new thing, which is if we violate an aspect of the agreement with Israel, they are capable of closing our cities, villages and camps, and use all their capacity against us, while if they violate the agreement, we write letters to the Americans and Europeans".

PBC continued to ignore the opposing opinions, and did not mention the wide opposition movement that had accompanied the Conference. The only indication of such opposition appeared during the interview with Dr. Erekat, where PBC special correspondent addressed him with the following question, which he said in a sarcastic manner: "Some also, particularly Hamas, doubt that the Conference aims at eliminating the Palestinian Cause". Erekat answered by saying: "Sir, there are supporters for the peace process and opponents to the peace process among our people...Those who support the peace process have strategic conditions for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace, but there are others in the camp opposed to peace who fully reject peace, as it is against their thoughts, against their ideology. Hence, this should not scare us. These have political positions against us. But now we rely on international legitimacy and the Arab Peace Initiative; we are not here alone".

PBC broadcast a news report about the Conference, which included this time excerpts from the comments of a number of the members of the official delegation to the Conference, all of which commended the Conference, including a statement by Dr Samir Abu Ghosheh, Secretary-General of the Popular Struggle Front in which he said:

"Annapolis Conference constitutes an opportunity for presenting the Palestinian Cause strongly amid such international participation. We must ask: Why has Annapolis convened? We must see the whole picture; Annapolis has convened because of the blood, struggle, suffering, martyrs and prisoners of the Palestinian people throughout decades".

In an indication of the PFLP position, represented at the official delegation by its Deputy Secretary-General Abdul Rahim Mallouh, the report said the following:

"PFLP has deferred its judgment on this Conference pending its outcome which it hopes would fulfill the aspirations of the Palestinian people in establishing their independent state, with Jerusalem as its capital, and giving the Palestinian all their rights which the occupation had usurped over years".

Then it presented the following excerpts of Mallouh's statement:

"This Conference will be judged by its outcome. I hope that the Arab attendance will constitute support to the Palestinian position and protect the Palestinian and Arab rights".

PBC also presented the points of view of each of the Palestinian People's Party and FIDA, two PLO factions that participated in the official delegation to the Conference, and supported participation, while the report transmitted interviews with citizens from Ama'ari Refugee Camp expressing their support to participation in Annapolis. The presenter said:

"To Annapolis...To anywhere in the World...To the Devil himself we are willing to go, participate, and stand firmly behind our leadership in order to restore our rights and put an end to our suffering".

Then the following interview with a citizen is broadcast:

"I swear to God, I as a Palestinian am willing to become allied with the Devil in order to get my rights back...We are willing to go anywhere... to anyplace in the world...If there is any chance to get back our land and rights through reason and logic, then we welcome that".

Another citizen said: "The political conditions are bad because of Hamas not the PA...The PA wants... Forty states went there and sat together".

PBC not only rallied support to the Conference among PLO leaders and the public opinion, but also among other influential groups in the society, such as journalists, intellectuals and academics. PBC broadcast a press conference in Gaza in which

participants declared their support to the Palestinian participation in Annapolis. PBC broadcast the press statement signed by a group of journalists and intellectuals and read by journalist Hussein Al-Kashef.

Despite such wide coverage of the Conference itself, the internal opposition to Annapolis remained totally absent. PBC did not mention the demonstrations in Gaza in which thousands participated. Main news bulletins did not report that the Palestinian Police repressed a PFLP demonstration inside Ramallah and arrested a number of activists, despite the participation of Abdul Rahim Mallouh, PFLP Deputy Secretary-General in the official delegation. PBC also ignored the killing of a Tahrir Party activist in Hebron, while news agencies had reported a statement for Mohammad Atwan, the spokesperson of the Palestinian Security Forces in Hebron, accusing Hamas of attempting to spread chaos in towns without mentioning any causes for what had happened.

PBC sufficed to present reports of wide popular support to the President and the leadership, including the following in the main news bulletin on 28/11/2007:

**"Citizens in Gaza expressed their support to President Mahmoud Abbas speech at Annapolis and their hopes in its success, asserting the need to adhere to the fixed national principles".**

The presenter said the following in the above report:

**"Annapolis Conference deserves to be addressed seriously, hoping for a Palestinian political victory that restores the legitimate Palestinian rights to their owners. This is what the Palestinian street that suffered from economic siege and security deterioration hopes for, especially in Gaza Strip that is still suffering from the shameful bloody coup".**

The report starts with comments from anonymous citizens and a political analysis by Yehia Rabah, which included strong praise of the President's speech, and ended with a statement by the presenter that ridiculed the other opinion and stressed the popular support to the leadership:

"The people support the leadership as their sole and legitimate representative, despite the cries of condemnation and rejection that reflect the disability, frustration and isolation of these voices that are condemned by Divine religions because of what they had committed against our children"-in an indication of Hamas.

The late main news bulletin on 28/11/2007, mentioned the protests in Hebron against Annapolis in two brief items. The first said:

**"Security Forces hold Tahrir Party and other parties responsible for the unfortunate events";** and

**"Security Forces disperse 'riots' in Hebron"**

PBC described protests against the Conference in the first item as 'unfortunate events', but did not explain the reality of what happened and who caused it. The second item described events as 'riots', hence justifying repressing and dispersing them.

Despite these grave events, PBC continued to ignore them and their subsequent reactions, focusing in its coverage on the tour of President Mahmoud Abbas on several Arab states following the conclusion of the Conference, especially his visit to Tunis where he gave a speech at the conference organized by the Tunisian Democratic Constitutional Rally, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Optimism prevailed over the PBC political and media discourse, reflecting fully the official position. This included the following statement of President Abbas during his visit to Cairo, broadcast on 1/12/2007:

"For the first time in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, there is an Arab unanimity that included all Arab brothers who are members of the Steering Committee, and we are honored with that".

Another news item broadcast on 1/12/2007 said the following:

"Ahmad Qurai, Head of the Palestinian negotiating team, asserted in a statement he gave in Amman Airport that our people and leadership are facing hard and tedious negotiations, and the road is not embedded with roses. However, he asserted that the leadership would continue on this road until the end, and that everyone must support this track carefully and without any overbidding. He demanded that Israel stops all settlement activity, removes checkpoints and re-opens institutions in Jerusalem. Qurai praised the Arab support during Annapolis Conference, indicating that Arab presence was of utmost importance".

PBC carefully selected and reported official Israeli positions in the news bulletin, as it focused on statements by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert about the Palestinian state, and ignored at the same time statements of the Israeli opposition against Annapolis and the Prime Minister himself.

On 3/12/2007, PBC broadcast the following news item in its bulletin:

"Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert asserted that it is imperative that an independent Palestinian state, living safely and securely side by side with Israel be established. In a speech at the Knesset, Israeli Prime Minister stressed the need to support the Palestinian economy in the future, in order to maintain good neighborly relations and for humanitarian purposes, he said".

Nevertheless, the optimistic discourse adopted by PBC did not last long, but came to an end few days after the Annapolis Conference, as Israelis escalated their measures and practices on the ground, through assassinations, incursions, the announcement of several new settlement programs and projects and the expansion of existing settlements. PBC resumed coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, after a period of broadcasting such news towards the end of news bulletins, or even mentioning them without details.

The news of a Special Israeli Unit shooting Security member martyr Mohammad Suleiman in Bethlehem took the lead in the main news bulletin on 7/12/2007.

On 1/12/2007, the news of seven martyrs ranked seventh in the main news bulletin, amid the peak of optimism towards the outcome of Annapolis. The first six news items reported President Mahmoud Abbas meeting with the Saudi King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, the press conference he held in Cairo prior to his departure, and statements by the Head of the Palestinian negotiating team Ahmad Qurai 'Abu Ala'.

News on the continued siege against Gaza resumed its leading position in news bulletins, after a period of absence in favor of news on Annapolis Conference. PBC resumed its focus on the patients-victims of the siege.

PBC gave the lead again to angry and condemning statements, which replaced optimistic statements by the same officials.

On 11/12/2007, the following news item took the lead in the main news bulletin: "Seven citizens martyred and ten others injured in a new Israeli aggression. The Spokesperson of the Presidency, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, described the Israeli aggression against Gaza Strip as a hideous crime. The Spokesperson added that the persistence of the Israeli Government to continue its policy of incursions, assassinations and settlement enhances suspicion in the Israeli intentions towards the success of the Final Status negotiations, which will start tomorrow, and undermines the trust, as it is difficult to continue with the negotiations process amid assassinations, premeditated killings, land confiscations and other measures, that contravene the spirit of the peace process that will be launched with wide support of the international community, represented by more than fifty states and agencies at Annapolis meeting".

### **Third: Talk Shows**

PBC allocated a number of talk shows for Annapolis before, during and after convening, in a similar approach as in the main news bulletins. To this end, it hosted in these programs a group of political and media persons.

An episode of **Al-Kalam Masmouh** (It is allowed to Speak), broadcast on 16/11/2007 at 9:55 pm, hosted Rawhi Fattouh, The Personal Representative of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and Hafez Barghouti, the Chief-Editor of Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah.

Although the subject of that episode was the 19<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the recent events in Gaza, as specified in the topic, most of the dialogue revolved around Annapolis, with focus on the positions of the opposition and the Syrian position.

Instead of the program anchor, Saed Al-Khatib running the debate, one of the guests, Hafez Barghouti, held a conversation with the other guest for over fifteen minutes about the forthcoming convention of the Palestinian opposition to be held in Damascus.

Talk shows focused on President Mahmoud Abbas meetings with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, analyzed thoroughly the visits of foreign delegations to the region, and particularly highlighted the Palestinian official position towards Annapolis, its significance and expected outcome, while at the same time they ignored the opposition and popular reactions. PBC reported only the supporting popular positions, and did not address the communiqués, statements and demonstrations that protested against Annapolis. These talk shows considered the foreign delegations that visited the region and President Abbas meetings with their heads, recognition of the Palestinian legitimacy and a kind of political support to PNA. In Al-Rai Al-A'am (Public Opinion) talk show, broadcast on 15/11/2007, at 9:43 pm, Dr. Ibrahim Abrash, Minister of Culture, said the following in response to a question by the anchor:

"Any communications or visits by foreign visitors, particularly by senior officials or leaders such as foreign ministers, members of parliament, or members of European cabinets are of extreme importance, as they assert that there is an address نوعان for Palestinian legitimacy, namely President Abu Mazen. Hence, visiting Ramallah and meeting the President is an assertion of this legitimacy, that he is the party that must be addressed. On the other hand, these visits include a kind of support and blessing of the Palestinian policy that tends to adhere to signed agreements, to international legitimacy resolution, to peace and settlement; as if they wish to say that we support you in this approach".

In an implicit indication of the positions of the opposition, talk shows highlighted the adherence of the Palestinian leadership to the fixed national principles. Responding to another question during the same talk show, the Minister of Culture said the following:

"The battle of negotiations is as fierce as the military battle; hence, despite previous experiences in the negotiations and the negotiating team, we continue to hope that the negotiating team leads negotiations smartly and shrewdly. So far we rest assured by the statements of the Palestinian negotiating team. This is a truth we record for history. During negotiations under the late president Yaser Arafat, when our delegations negotiated with Israeli delegations, we used to hear voices of rejection, particularly by the Islamic Movement Hamas and others, saying that Abu Ammar relinquished the Cause and betrayed, saying things that could not be said".

In fact, PBC followed up all stages of the Conference, since preparations until adjournment. It recruited politicians and media persons, all belonging to one political stream, who volunteered to explain and advocate the official Palestinian positions in talk shows. On the other hand, PBC fully ignored statements and communiqués of the opposition, which doubted the outcome of the Conference and warned of further concessions.

Nevertheless, some issues, relevant to the Conference, such as prisoners and the continued arrest of more than 1000 prisoners by Israel, occupied some space in PBC talk shows. Ma'a Al-Hadath (With the event), broadcast on 20/11/2007, at 9:35 pm, hosted Minister of Prisoners Affairs Ashraf Al-Ajrami and President of the Prisoners Club Qaddura Fares, in an attempt to use this issue to serve and highlight the official political position and influence decision makers.

At the beginning of the show, the anchor focused on the position of the Palestinian leadership that insisted on releasing prisoners by saying:

"Dear audience, we are used to discuss here the hottest topics in the Palestinian arena. The main subject these days is negotiations and the Peace Conference. However, from our point of view, the most prominent issue within negotiations and peace is that of the 12,000 prisoners who remain in Israeli prisons. In my opinion, this is the question, and this is the position of the Palestinian leadership headed by President Abu Mazen, who insists in each and every meeting, whether with the Israelis or the Europeans, to put the issue of prisoners at the top of his priorities. We all recall what the President said recently, that if the international conference led to an agreement, he would not sign the agreement unless there was a separate item that stipulated the release of all prisoners, especially those arrested before 1990, i.e. before the peace agreement with Israel.

Qaddura Fares, President of the Prisoners Club, considered Annapolis Conference a good opportunity that must be used to demand the release of Palestinian prisoners. Responding to a question, he said:

"Throughout negotiations, the issue of prisoners did not constitute a political crisis. The international community is now more understanding of the issue of prisoners. It is possible to exert pressure on Israel during the Conference regarding the number of prisoner, and the type of prisoners, especially that the Conference will attract a lot of attention, and with the participation of a large number of states that are effective and influential in international politics".

Void of any indication of the opposing opinions in PBC news programs, some programs included an implicit criticism and attempts of shedding doubts on such positions. The episode of Al-Rai Al-A'am (Public Opinion) broadcast on 25/11/2007, at 9:38 pm, hosted Saleh Ra'afat, the Secretary-General of FIDA, and Samih Shbeeb, a political analyst close to Fateh. Responding to a question on the accusations of the opposition that the official leadership would go to Annapolis to give further concessions, the Secretary-General of FIDA said:

"Frankly speaking, this has been their fixed position since Camp David negotiations and Conference in 2000. Those who repeat today the same criticism of the political process are the same parties that claimed that President Abu Ammar and the Palestinian delegation would commit treason in Camp David, and are also the same parties that rushed to receive the President when he came back and announced his rejection of the American and Israeli conditions and dictates in Camp David".

The anchor described the position of the opposition as 'overbidding', as he addressed the following question to the political analyst and media expert Dr. Samih Shbeeb: "Dr. Samih, Mr. Saleh Ra'afat proposed an extremely important issue in relation to Annapolis Conference: the process of overbidding that faced the late Martyr Abu Ammar, and President Mahmoud Abbas who was there in Camp David, and is going now to Annapolis. Camp David came within the framework of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations held in the presence of the U.S., while Annapolis is different! Can you elaborate on this difference, in terms of the intensive international presence and the

Arab unanimous support of the Palestinian position that adheres to Palestinian rights and to the fixed national principles".

Shbeeb gave the following response: "The Palestinian delegation is now armed by the Arab position. It is no exaggeration to say that the star of this Conference is the Palestinian national Authority, which some, including of course Israel and even some states in the region, wanted to minimize its role and marginalize it. There are between parentheses some in the Arab World, who suffer from what we may call a kind of mental sickness, namely to bring the prophecy of things before they actually happen, and before they actually see them happen".

Such implicit criticism and attack against the opposition, to the extent of describing it as suffering from a 'mental sickness', reflected a campaign to mobilize the public opinion in support of the official Palestinian leadership. PBC launched this campaign through its programs before, during and after Annapolis, during which its discourse focused on the importance of Annapolis, describing it a 'historic opportunity', with special focus on adherence to the fixed national principles in the official political discourse, and rallying support of some PLO factions to this discourse.

In an unprecedented step, PBC broadcast an interview by its special correspondent Nasser Abu Baker with President Abu Mazen on board the plane, in which the President explained the outcome of the Conference. Following are the main points in the interview:

"We have achieved what we wanted. We did not go in order to negotiate issues, but to negotiate the launching. All what has been said about negotiations, concessions or otherwise is baseless. We merely managed to launch negotiations in accordance with international legitimacy, the Road Map, the Arab Initiative, President Bush's vision and references, including the Madrid reference; hence, we are on the safe side".

PBC programs covering the Conference raised the ceiling of expectations and created an atmosphere of optimism that was diffused few days after its adjournment. Israeli practices diffused what had been agreed at the Conference, including incursions and arrests in the Palestinian Territories, and Cabinet decisions to expand Jewish settlements and construct new settlements. Palestinian officials, including those who contributed to the preparations for Annapolis, reacted and criticized these practices, attempting at lowering the ceiling of expectations, while at the same time they stressed the Annapolis achievements pertaining to American positions and Arab unanimity.

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## **Findings**

**First:** The coverage of the three Palestinian newspapers and PBC was characterized by the diversity of its sources of information and the follow-up in news, analyses and pictures of its different events and activities. The media coverage reflected the atmosphere that had prevailed in the meetings preceding the Conference, which varied between raising the ceiling of expectations and exaggerating the expected outcome even before it had convened.

**Second:** The political action in Palestine and Israel prior to convening the Conference dominated the headlines of the three newspapers and PBC news bulletins, especially the visits of different delegations and their meetings with officials from both sides.

**Third:** The three newspapers and PBC also highlighted the activities of the Caretaker Government headed by Dr. Salam Fayyad, particularly in imposing security and the rule of law. The relationship between these activities and Annapolis conference was evident.

**Fourth:** The three newspapers expressed interest in the opinion polls on the expected outcome of Annapolis, highlighting their findings in eminent headings and on front pages.

**Fifth:** These newspapers did not highlight the positions of the opposition towards the Conference, but reported them in internal pages. Similarly, PBC ignored these positions.

**Sixth:** While the three newspapers followed up several official Israeli reactions towards the Conference, particularly the supporting positions, they did not point out the positions of other parties, but sufficed to convey their statements and relevant positions regarding the Conference.

**Seventh:** Most of the coverage of the three newspapers before and during the Conference focused on news, relying in their reports and information on international news agencies and the official news agency WAFA, in addition to few reports based on official Palestinian sources. After the Conference, coverage moved to analysis and criticism.

**Eighth:** Less than a week after Annapolis adjourned, the media landscape looked replete with reports and news of settlement activity and expansion of existing settlements, reflecting pessimism on the media and political discourse.

Cartoons reflected interest in the Conference, and were responsive to relevant activities, including political meetings and communications, as well as Israeli measures and practices on the ground.

Cartoonists succeeded in expressing the political reality, both in terms of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the internal Palestinian status.

The three newspapers allocated space to opinion Palestinian and Israeli writers and columnists, addressing core political issues relevant to the Conference, and which mostly expressed doubts towards its outcome.

**Ninth:** PBC allocated a significant part of its news programs and talk shows to cover the activities and the preparations for the Conference. The meetings of the President and the statements of his senior aides took the lead in its news bulletins.

PBC news bulletins did not mention the popular and factional opposition to the Conference, especially the demonstrations that protested against the Conference, the use of force and the shooting against protestors, which killed one citizen and wounded tens.

It allocated significant space in its programs for supporting positions, focusing particularly on what was called the "fixed national principles" in the official position.

Politically, PBC ignored the reactions of Islamic factions, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad who opposed the Conference, and also ignored the positions of some other national factions that were strongly critical of the Conference.

PBC coverage of the event witnessed significant progress, as it had its own special correspondent in Washington to report on the Conference, an unprecedented step in the performance of PBC, which used to rely solely on international news agencies in such events. The reports of the special correspondent enriched the information provided to the audience.

### **Recommendations:**

First: The need to enrich diversity of sources of information, because of its importance in providing news coverage that provides the readers and the audience with all the information they seek, when reporting an important events such as Annapolis Conference.

Second: Reporting must not be restricted to news, but must be supported with analyses, critical reports and follow-up of developments of events and their outcome. The wide margin of freedom of expression that columnists enjoyed, and their intellectually and politically diversified positions constituted significant progress.

Third: It is extremely important for PBC to be open for the other opinion, rather than absent it, since it is the national official television station that is for all the people, and not the mouthpiece of a particular faction. Openness enhances objectivity and professionalism in the media.

Fourth: There is a need to diversify the sources of information of the press and visual media, provide the necessary training, and improve the capacity of program anchors and reporters.

Fifth: It is recommended that Al-Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah set up a corner for political, social and economic opinions, as is the case with Al-Quds, in Ra'i Al-Quds (Al-Quds Opinion). Such a corner is still missing in both newspapers. Instead, both

have the opinion of the Chief-Editor, which reflect the personal opinion of their chief-editors towards security developments, but do not reflect the newspapers' daily opinions and positions.