



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

**Conference on
“Participation and Complementarity as
a Strategy of Governance amid crises”**

Wednesday 11 February 2026



In a conference held by MIFTAH in Ramallah and Gaza,

A call for adopting a participatory and complementary public policy and a comprehensive national framework

Ramallah- The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy-MIFTAH convened a conference entitled “Participation and Complementarity as a Strategy of Governance amid crises”, on Wednesday 11 February 2026 in Ramallah and remotely in Gaza via Zoom, with the wide participation of representatives of the government, local authorities, civil society organizations, popular committees, researchers and the academia, as well as representatives of international agencies.

The conference, emceed by MIFTAH’s Mousa Backleh, discussed the suffering of the Palestinian people, as their existence, survival and steadfastness are targeted, amid the genocidal war in Gaza Strip, and the escalating settlement activity and displacement policies in the West Bank, including Jerusalem. The conference asserted that those compound crises have revealed diminishing effectiveness of the Palestinian institutions, limitations of the centralized model of government and its inability to respond solely to the needs of the society and protect the social fabric.

The participants affirmed that participation and complementarity between the government, civil society, local authorities, and popular committees are no longer an administrative option or procedural improvement, but rather a national and structural necessity to ensure steadfastness, enhance the capacity for crisis management, and preserve the unity of Palestinian society and geography in the face of the escalating colonial onslaught.

They pointed out that the absence of the Legislative Council (PLC) prompts civil society institutions to take the initiative in thinking about public policies, contributing to the formulation of governance concepts, and presenting practical alternatives that strengthen national unity and reorganize the relationship between the state and society on participatory and complementary basis.

They stressed that the field experience in the West Bank and Gaza has proven that local authorities, popular committees, and grassroots institutions played a pivotal role in protecting citizens and providing basic services at moments of the collapse of government capacity and that ignoring these roles or containing them administratively exacerbates fragility rather than alleviates it.



Dr. Tahrir Al-Araj
The Executive Director of MIFTAH

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This stage reflects the magnitude of the crime perpetrated against us but also reveals our structural gaps and the limitations of existing governance models.

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests, from official Palestinian institutions, the Prime Minister's Office, Palestinian ministries, civil society organizations, unions and non-governmental bodies, governorates and municipalities, international organizations and diplomatic missions.

On behalf of The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy-MIFTAH, I welcome you all to this important meeting held entitled, “Participation and Complementarity as a Governance Strategy in times of crises”.

We meet today during the darkest times and circumstances surrounding our Palestinian people amidst a settler-colonial context, where our people are daily subjected to an organized and systematic campaign aimed at their erasure and at dismantling the vital necessities for living over our Palestinian land.

Your presence here today, at this very moment, is not a mere detail in a busy schedule, but rather a stance in itself; an ethical, political, and national stance affirming that thinking about governance and how to organize our public affairs in times of crisis is not an intellectual luxury, but a need, an urgent national necessity, and a conscious attempt to restore meaning and responsibility in a time when we are meant to lose them.

Today we stand before a harsh reality that no longer affects one group over another, nor one region over another.

What our people are going through is no longer a temporary incident that we await to pass, but rather an extended condition that is managed, or sometimes left without effective management, and is reflected in people's daily lives - in their homes, refugee camps, villages, and cities.

This harsh experience tests our ability not only to remain steadfast, but to govern under crises and emergencies, and to protect society without exposing it to further exhaustion and without compromising its dignity and rights.

This stage has revealed not only the magnitude of the crime perpetrated against us, but also revealed our structural gaps and the limitations of existing governance models when they are reduced to centralization, or when crises are managed with the mentality of temporary firefighting, rather than the mentality of protection, planning, and sustainability.

Many of us know this from direct experience, from fieldwork, and from attempts to manage people's affairs in the absence of coordination, delayed response, or the complexity of political, financial, and security restrictions.

Amidst this reality, an unignorable fact emerged: when Palestinian society is left alone, it pays a heavy price, but when governance is founded on participation and complementarity of roles, the Palestinian society becomes more capable of enduring, and more capable to live and remain steadfast.

We also saw this in the refugee camps, in marginalized villages, and in cities besieged by policies and decisions, when popular committees, municipalities, grassroots initiatives, and youth and women's bodies formed the frontlines of defense for society, not as a substitute for anyone, but as an integral part of the governance system in times of crisis. We are here today because we believe that steadfastness is not just a slogan, but the product of good governance based on organization, cooperation, integration, and the fair and responsible distribution of roles.

We believe that protection is built not only through decisions, but through trust, between the people and government institutions, and between society and those supposed to manage their public affairs. When this trust erodes, any government system, no matter how strong it appears, becomes fragile at the first real test.

This conference is held not to exchange accusations, nor to beautify reality, but to create a space in which we can honestly raise fundamental questions about governance in times of crisis: How do we manage our public affairs in difficult times? How do we protect Palestinian society without imposing on it additional burdens? And how can the different roles (official, local, and community) integrate in one vision rather than clash or compete?

In this context, a fundamental political reality cannot be ignored, namely the absence of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), and the vacuum that this means in its control and legislation functions at a critical national moment.

Hence, this conference comes as a national platform seeking to responsibly open a public debate on governance strategy, on public policies, and on the roles of different actors. Such discussion is an inevitable necessity, not a substitute for elected institutions, but an attempt to protect the public sphere from stagnation, and to keep general issues of governance and its management present in the national consciousness.

We at the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy-MIFTAH have always believed that civil society is neither a marginal party in the governance equation nor a substitute for the state, but rather an integral partner in governance, in protecting the national social fabric and in enhancing steadfastness.

We believe that municipalities, popular committees, grassroots initiatives, youth, and women are not mere responders to crises, but active actors in formulating solutions if their roles and priorities are integrated within a participatory and complementary national vision for governance.

We want this conference to be a space for active listening, and for brave, responsible dialogue that does not fear holding policies to account, or scrutinizing the dysfunction in governance, and at the same time celebrates achievements and draws lessons and conclusions, and opens the door to paths that are more just, more humane, and more capable of protecting society in successive crises.

Therefore, our conference will introduce an idea that will be discussed on participatory governance, and it will be discussed in depth in other sessions -due to time constraints- governed by effective, active, and nationally responsible dialogue.

Holding this conference simultaneously in Ramallah and our beloved Gaza is not a mere logistical detail, but a political and ethical message that affirms the Palestinian entity, just as it affirms that unity of thought in governance is no less important than the unity of suffering, and that participation and complementarity in governance constitute a substantial entry point for rebuilding trust and rectifying the relationship between the citizen and the institution at a moment when geography and the social fabric are subjected to systematic attempts of crushing.

Your presence with us today strengthens our belief that this dialogue is possible, and that participatory and complementary governance is not a distant idealistic idea, but a realistic option that can be built upon, if there is the will, honesty, and readiness to assume shared responsibility.

Once again, I welcome you all, and I extend my sincere thanks for your attendance and for sharing your expertise. Let us work together, not only for survival and beyond survival, but to build a just, sustainable, and free future for our Palestinian people.

We shall now begin the deliberations of the conference, hoping for your active participation and sincere, responsible engagement in the discussions, in a manner that contributes to enriching this national dialogue, and produces practical visions and proposals that enhance participation and complementarity in governance, supports our society's steadfastness and protects its social fabric. Thank you.



Dr. Azmi Shua'ibi
MIFTAH Board member

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Towards a participatory and complementary
national governance policy at a time of
existential threat.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

State and civil society institutions (the two pillars of the public sphere in Palestine); the official institution on one hand, and the potential of the civil society, including political forces, on the other. Today, we do not face an “administration crisis”, but rather a stage of existential targeting: it targets the notion of the state, the meaning of self-determination, the limits of Palestinian political action, and targets, above all, our ability to survive and remain steadfast as a people with national rights, identity, and institutions.

Reviewing the reality of governance policy is not a technical or organizational matter of implementing this policy, but rather a structural change in the governance strategy, because of a shift in the priority of the Authority's work from completion of state-building to the priority of confronting and intercepting the current Israeli project, which aims to settle the conflict, strip the Palestinian people of their right to resist the Israeli project, and make the idea of statehood unachievable.

The idea we propose for discussion and dialogue is an attempt to answer a normative question: How do we govern ourselves while under attack? And how do we protect society and preserve its institutional and political unity without transforming the national cause into merely a service provision issue?

To answer this question, consensus is required on an urgent question: What does the Zionist project want at this stage?

This stage is led by an extremist Jewish right-wing coalition, which explicitly declares that it wants to:

1. Defeat the meaning of resistance and the right to self-determination politically, morally, and legally;
2. Make the establishment of a Palestinian state "unachievable" through facts on the ground: settlements, separation, dismantling the public sphere, creating adjacent de facto authorities, not one united national authority.
3. Continue the destruction of Gaza or empty it of the conditions for life, so that it becomes “unlivable”, or push it forcibly towards displacement paths under any name and any pretext.
4. In the West Bank: escalate settler attacks, encroachment on land, and close and fragment the geography.
5. The existence of a weak Authority incapable of securing needs, safety, and security (loss of safety and hope, pushing the Palestinian to seek salvation through individual solutions, most notably emigration).

We are facing an existential threat, and the danger of losing survival with its different components and manifestations.

Faced with this reality, what is our strategy and what are our priorities for defending against and confronting these risks? And how do we manage governance and identify priorities?

In this stage, our priorities are managing the struggle for survival: this is the essence of our strategy. We propose or recommend the following:

1. Concentrate the government's work, use available resources, and secure basic services fairly and inclusively, because survival begins with water, medicine, education, and social protection.
2. Preserve collective, national, and institutional identity, because a society without unified institutions becomes easy to fragment.
3. Protect society and prevent and confront displacement, because displacement is an open and on-going Zionist political project.
4. Establish the right to self-determination and to statehood as the governing framework, not a slogan for consumption.
5. Affirm the right to self-defense/protection of society within an understanding centered on protecting people from settler encroachment and systems of violence, and on preserving the public sphere from collapse.
6. Strengthen international solidarity as a political and ethical lever, not as a public relations campaign.

Given these priorities, the government will not succeed in achieving its goals, amid the financial crisis and the Israeli siege, by adopting solely a highly centralized policy. It needs a participatory and complementary policy that transforms society into a partner, not a recipient, and transforms official and societal institutions into a cohesive national network, not isolated islands.

In brief: Participation as an alternative governance policy to extreme centralization.

Adopting a national participatory-complementary governance model preserves the unity of institutional structures between the West Bank and Gaza, adopts unified Palestinian legislation as a reference, establishes a partnership between the official and the societal levels, distributes burdens among society's components and segments according to capacity, resilience, and fairness, preserves the security of people and society, and links all those elements to political legitimacy and representation.



Participation is not inclusion as a mere formality, but a national governance policy for managing steadfastness and preventing fragmentation and displacement, without depoliticizing the cause. It is necessary to adopt it as a comprehensive public policy and as a framework of reference for governance, the details of which can be developed later, through national dialogue involving Palestinian national forces and factions.

The tenets of the “participatory-complementary governance”:

First: Unity of the framework of reference, unified institutions and unified legislations:

Participation does not mean fragmentation, but requires a clear “national umbrella”. Hence, the first condition is:

- Preserving the unified institutional structures of the West Bank and Gaza as an idea and a goal.
- Adopting unified legislation as a framework of reference for both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip: not because the law solves everything, but because legislative unity prevents turning the division into two systems with different frameworks of reference.

Unification here is not a bureaucratic decision, but a political position against the project of fragmentation: (rejecting any formula that turns Gaza and the West Bank into two separate administrative entities) or creates fragmented representation, or leads us into “governance settlements” without national unity.

Second: Official-societal partnership on the basis of integration, not substitution:

We need a formula that makes civil society a partner in "governance" not just an implementer or external observer, without it being a substitute for public institutions.

This is a partnership of complementarity:

- Official institutions are responsible for public policies, national standards, and guaranteeing rights.
- Societal institutions are partners in designing priorities, reaching out to communities, community oversight, mobilizing resources and expertise, and contributing to the provision of basic services.

The goal: To broaden the base of decision-making, and prevent the collapse of the central authority, or blackmail by external pressures; when the center is alone, it becomes an easier target for political compromise, financial blackmail, and external pressure.

Third: Distribution of burdens according to capacity, resilience, and fairness:

In times of conflict, it is not enough to say, “We provide services” because the siege limits the central capacity to secure basic needs.

The question becomes: Who bears the burden? Who receives the right? And according to what standard?

Participatory-complementary governance policy requires:

- Fair and inclusive standards for access to basic services.
- Distribution of roles between the center, local authorities, and sectors (local communities).
- Clear mechanisms for preparedness to emergency response: who decides? Who implements? Who monitors? And, how do we prevent duplication, favoritism and nepotism?

Hence, “governance” becomes part of the steadfastness battle: fairness in services prevents social disintegration, enhances community solidarity, reduces society's susceptibility to blackmail, and closes the doors to corruption that usually widen in emergencies and times of resource scarcity.

Fourth: Protecting the society and preventing displacement- protection as a governance function:

In light of settler encroachment, threats of evacuation, expansion, and attacks, and amid Israel's continued policy of using excessive force against our people in Gaza, protecting people and the public sphere becomes a governance function and not merely a “security incident”.

We must be clear: We affirm the right to self-defense/protecting society, not as a slogan, but as a political and ethical commitment towards the people. The participatory-complementary governance policy may be translated through:

- Unifying official and civil efforts in protecting endangered communities.
- Building community response systems: legal support, documentation, early warning, psycho-social support, protection lines for services, and emergency interventions that prevent displacement (such as: refugee camps or Bedouin sites or farmers in the Jordan Valley).
- Making the prevention of displacement an “operational priority” in planning, resource distribution, service provision, and institutional presence.

Fifth: Strengthening international solidarity without depoliticizing the cause:

We need international solidarity, and we need it strong, but we need it within a clear narrative:

- Solidarity that supports the right to self-determination and the establishment of the state.
- Solidarity that supports the protection of civilians and the prevention of displacement.
- Solidarity that does not turn the cause into a “humanitarian issue” separate from the political root.

Therefore, we reject the logic of “give us services in exchange for political silence” and we reject any international arrangements that circumvent national representation, or produce administrative solutions managed from outside the Palestinian administration.

Sixth: Political representation and democracy:

When we call for participatory-complementary governance, we are practically calling for democracy in its possible form in times of conflict. Democracy is not just a ballot box; it is a method of governance by which public priorities are managed. It involves people and their representatives in defining what is “urgent” and what is “more important”, obliges the decision-makers to justify their choices not impose them, opens channels for oversight, objection, and complaints, and ensures that the distribution of burdens and services is fair and inclusive, not selective or through favoritism.

Hence, the participation we propose is not a compliment, nor formal meetings, nor “consulting” the public opinion after the decision is made, but rather an institutionalized democratic mechanism that prevents monopolizing decision-making in a moment of blackmail and pressure, fortifies legitimacy through legality, and builds the trust without which no society can remain steadfast and no emergency can be managed.

At the same time, democracy is what gives participation its meaning and limits: that participation be representative not selective, accountability be real not symbolic, and transparency be within the limits of safety, all under a unified national framework of reference that protects the territorial integrity of the West Bank and Gaza, and prevents participation from turning into fragmentation or parallel authorities.

In this sense, we are not substituting politics with services, nor suspending legitimacy under the pretext of emergency, but rather building a practical democratic legitimacy that keeps the cause as one of right, representation, and self-determination, and makes the management of steadfastness part of the state project, not a substitute for it.



Recommendation:

To develop the concept of participation and complementarity at this conference in a practical and actionable manner, I propose a clear recommendation consisting of the following five points:

1. Adopt the principle of “participatory-complementary governance” as an operational policy for the current stage: a comprehensive national framework, not a closed executive plan.
2. Affirm the unity of institutional and legislative structures between the West Bank and Gaza as a political and legal reference, and reject any permanent formulas for fragmentation.
3. Adopt the principle of public-civil society partnership in planning emergency priorities, ensuring services, and community oversight, while adhering to the division of roles and avoiding substitution.
4. Consider the protection of society and prevention of displacement as a central governance function managed through complementary public/civil efforts, with a clear rights-based rationale.
5. Affirm the national red lines: the right to self-determination and statehood, the right to protect society, rejecting the de-politicization of the cause, and rejecting any arrangements that cancel or fragment national representation, while strengthening international solidarity on this basis.

Political parties do not fall "outside" the proposal of partnership between the official and the societal parties, but are rather the third party that makes participation political and representative. Parties and factions are the political lever for representation, programs, and legitimacy.

When we speak about partnership between the official and the societal bodies, we do not mean a partnership that empties politics of its content. Parties and political forces lie at the crux of this proposal as a lever that embodies representation, programs, and legitimacy.

The participation we want is not only about service management, but a governance policy that links daily steadfastness with the national project: it prevents fragmentation, preserves the unity of institutional reference between the West Bank and Gaza, and keeps the cause as one of the right to self-determination, not a humanitarian issue. As such, we call for institutionalized participation that defines the role of each party: the official for implementation, the civil for oversight, outreach, and social protection, and the parties for building consensus, programs, and accountability, according to transparent rules that prevent quotas and the monopolization of decision-making.

Where do parties fit within the proposal?

Parties: some may participate in governance through leading or participating in the government or its institutions, or engage in managing the different community institutions, such as local authorities, professional and trade unions, popular and sectoral unions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), charities, youth, and women's associations, teachers, and academics.

This mechanism of participation does not prevent managing services with a national content, but rather stimulates it.

What is the role of parties?

Parties exercise their role through their representatives in public and civil institutions, and they contribute to linking governance policy with the goals of the national project: self-determination, preventing displacement, the unity of land and people, and not turning the cause into a service provision issue.

1. Producing the “program”, not merely supporting “administration”.
2. Providing representative legitimacy: The presence of parties within participation prevents participation from turning into, “a select of experts/organizations”, and brings in the voice of the grassroots and different political trends within clear rules.
3. Building consensus in emergencies: In moments of division and pressure, parties help in building political consensus around priorities (Gaza/West Bank, relief/protection/political stance/international relations).
4. Protecting the unity of national reference and preventing fragmentation: The role of parties (when managed responsibly) is to prevent separate “local government” arrangements that terminate national representation, especially between the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
5. Directing international solidarity: Parties can contribute to a relatively unified external discourse: protecting rights, preventing displacement and rejecting “de-politicization”, instead of multiple contradictory messages.

In conclusion:

We are not looking for a “perfect model” in perfect circumstances.

We are looking for a governance policy that keeps Palestine on its feet- institutions, identity, and rights- under exceptional circumstances that target all that.

Therefore, I suggest we move from the question: “How do we manage the crisis?” to the question: “How do we protect society and preserve its unity and legitimacy in the heart of the conflict?”

And the answer I offer today, calmly and firmly, is:

We need a participatory-complementary governance policy, because it is most capable of managing steadfastness, distributing burdens fairly, preventing fragmentation and displacement, and affirming the meaning of statehood and self-determination, without turning the cause into a service-provision issue. Our discussions shall herald the beginning of a practical national path that puts this framework on the track of consensus and development.

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First session

Participation and complementarity as a government policy



Dr. Mohammad Al-Ahmad

Chairman of the Permanent Reform Committee

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Participation should be understood as a sustainable course of action, not a mere formal goal, pointing out that this approach aims to manage societal diversity as a mosaic of different sectors that may not share identical visions but are required to act collectively.

I am pleased to be here with you today at this workshop, and I thank you for providing this opportunity to speak on an issue I consider to be at the core of the reform project adopted by the nineteenth government: participation as a national approach and a practical course of action, not merely a slogan. I was keen on participating in this meeting based on the directives of the Prime Minister, because I believe that what we are discussing today is not an intellectual luxury, but rather part of the existential battle our people are fighting.

I have listened attentively to the previous presentations, and I appreciate the ideas put forward regarding the nature of the required relationship between the various components of our society. We are not only talking about a relationship between the government and civil society, but about a broader network of national relationships that transcends traditional frameworks, because the stage we are going through imposes on us a new form of joint action.

In every action it takes, the government keeps in mind its societal and national responsibility to serve the citizens and strengthen their steadfastness, in cooperation with state institutions and civil society institutions (CSOs), to serve the public interest. For us, participation is not an option, nor is it a cosmetic item in a government program; rather, it is a necessity imposed by circumstances. We are living through a crisis that targets our very existence and seeks to erase us from the map. Therefore, participation must be a permanent path and a daily work approach.

From the very first moment that the nineteenth government was formed, there was a clear acknowledgement of the importance of building a relationship based on the principle of shared responsibility between the government and civil society.

We are a diverse society, a mosaic of opinions and trends, and we are not required to agree on everything. Differences in programs and ways of thinking are healthy, even necessary. However, what must unite us is agreement on the public and national interest. On the path to this interest, we may differ, and this difference, if managed properly, becomes a source of strength, not weakness.

Hence, the government, since its formation, was keen on the inclusion of a number of figures coming from civil society, in an attempt to instill the concept of partnership in practice rather than in theory. This government includes independent figures and technocrats, and focuses on professional work, with the aim of achieving the desired reform in priority sectors, ultimately leading to the embodiment of the state.

It also held several consultative sessions on some priority issues, where relevant sectors in civil society share opinions and decisions through these sessions. Through these consultative meetings, several consultations were held with various political parties regarding the new Decision by Law on Local Elections, to strengthen democratic participation and respect for the will of citizens. These consultations resulted in improving the Law on several levels, most notably in increasing women's representation, expanding youth participation, and adopting an electoral system that enables voters to choose their representatives directly.

This comes in the context of the government's emphasis on the importance of holding elections, and on strengthening the principle of accountability and oversight, which contributes to building a strong and stable political system.

We do not claim that we have achieved perfection, nor do we claim that we have reached one hundred percent on this path. But we have started with serious steps to redefine the relationship between the government and society as a real partnership. At the same time, we realize that we are not perfect, and that there are mistakes and failures. But we continue to work to improve performance and serve citizens.

We are operating amid a brutal attack on our people. The policies implemented on the ground do not discriminate between one person and another; rather, they target everyone with the aim of Judaizing the West Bank through various tools such as settlements, confiscation of funds, checkpoints, control of land, tightening restrictions on crossings, and ultimately attempting to undermine our institutions and end the possibility of realizing statehood.

These practices are not isolated events, but episodes in one integrated project that seeks to transform our people from citizens with rights into mere local communities without sovereignty. At the same time, in light of the immense challenges and measures that hinder the government's work and paralyze its financial revenues- which have also affected CSOs- the government continues to work to mitigate the impact of these measures.

With this reality, it is not enough to monitor the violations; we live them daily. The real question is: what must we do?

We must consolidate efforts and close ranks to defend our existence. General talk about partnership is nice and important, but the current stage requires translating this talk into direct actions. We are facing a project that seeks to end the hope of establishing the state. Therefore, our responsibility is to strengthen the steadfastness of our people by all possible means.

In this regard, our vision must be clear, and based on our people's right to establish their state over their land according to international legitimacy. This right does not fall despite the strongest pressures.

More than seventy-eight years of suffering have passed, yet our people remain steadfast on their land. Belonging to this land is not a slogan, but a daily life experience. If we move to the practical side, we find that the financial and economic attack and the occupation's measures on the ground have had harsh consequences that have impacted the basic services that the government provides to the citizens.

The government is aware of the magnitude of the economic challenges facing our society, especially during the past two years. The government dealt with the unemployment of more than 200,000 workers, where it implemented a set of interventions to mitigate the impact on workers, by providing cash payments to some, providing free health insurance to all, in addition to free education for their children.

The government also introduced several measures to ease the economic burdens on society, including facilities in some basic services and providing alternative housing for families evacuated from the camps. We assert that these measures are a national duty that the government is committed to providing.

Regarding Gaza, the government has been and still is fulfilling its duties towards the Strip, by providing financial and service support before and during the war, and after the ceasefire. The government continues to pay about 257 million shekels monthly in salaries to employees, although these funds are being deducted from clearance revenues, and continues to provide education, health, and many basic services.

The government also worked on implementing hundreds of development projects to strengthen the steadfastness of citizens, including several projects in local authorities, as well as development projects in villages, marginalized areas, and areas threatened with confiscation.

The health sector has been gravely affected as a result of the financial crisis. The warehouses of the Ministry of Health suffer from major shortages of hundreds of pharmaceutical items, especially medicines for chronic diseases. The private health sector is also going through a severe financial crisis, while the public health sector operates under difficult circumstances and with limited capabilities.



This crisis does not reflect a failure on the part of the medical staff, but is a direct result of the imposed restrictions. Faced with these challenges, emergency plans were put in place to ensure the continuity of services.

Here, it is necessary to commend the national role of the private sector, which has proven to be a courageous and responsible partner. Investment under these circumstances constitutes a national stance. Many private institutions provided significant facilities to the government and waited for years for their financial dues. These practices were not imposed by official decisions, but stemmed from a deep sense of patriotism, a live attestation of participation prior to becoming a written policy.

We also must commend the patience of the Palestinian employees, who endured delayed and reduced salaries for years, yet continued to perform their duties. Palestinian universities also provided an important model of social solidarity by offering educational facilities for employees' children.

These examples draw a picture of a vivid society with enormous resilience and steadfastness. They provide evidence that the Palestinian social fabric remains cohesive. The power of our people lies not only in their slogans, but in their daily conduct. Many choose to stay despite the difficult circumstances, and this decision in itself is an act of steadfastness.

Hence, our responsibility as a government is to translate this national spirit into practical policies that enhance institutional partnership. We need clear frameworks for coordination with civil society, mechanisms that ensure the efficient distribution of roles, and ongoing dialogue linking planning with implementation. The participation we seek is not just meetings or statements, but a work system based on mutual trust, transparency, and shouldering responsibility.

In conclusion, we assert that the collective will and capacity for solidarity forms a solid foundation for facing challenges. When the efforts of the government, civil society, private sector, and citizens are integrated, our steadfastness becomes more entrenched. We do not underestimate the difficulty of the current stage, but we believe that our people, with this spirit, are capable of turning hardships into opportunities and protecting their existence and future. This is our message today: to continue working together, and to make participation a permanent path to strengthen our steadfastness and build a future worthy of the sacrifices of our people.



Dr. Abdalrahman Al-Tamimi
The expert in strategic planning

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Participation constitutes a fundamental entry point to achieve a state of stability and effective action, and we must agree on a unified national program.

I am pleased and honored to be with you today, and would like to begin my talk by identifying some foundations and determinants that help shape this meeting, because we mostly need to develop a roadmap for our roles and responsibilities in the coming stage.

The first determinant that I emphasize strongly, is that I am not inclined, under these circumstances, to use the phrase “state-building”, at least not at this time and under these conditions. Why? Because the state is not a goal we achieve merely by declaring it or by forming its institutions; rather, it is the product of steadfastness and existence. The state is the outcome of what we build through continuous steadfastness and presence on our land. When we understand that, we will realize that steadfastness is the foundation, and existence is the pillar upon which the state is built.

Secondly, we must admit this frankly: After the recent Israeli decisions and the rapid changes on the ground, thinking in the same old traditional pattern will not bring anything new, will not change the situation, and will not protect our existence.

Therefore, internal and external factors must push us to adopt a new way of thinking, and to reformulate our national strategy based on a changing reality, because wrong thinking always leads to wrong results, while sound thinking ensures positive outcomes. The traditional way of Palestinian thought, whether negative or positive, needs a fundamental change-what we call in modern sciences a “paradigm shift”. This is the greatest challenge we face today.

Thirdly, we cannot talk about strategic planning without talking about the participation of the people. In every book and curriculum on strategic planning, the first thing taught is citizen participation, because people know their needs. What society wants cannot be determined by the academics alone, regardless of their expertise.

The power of any people or any state is based on two main factors: soft power and hard power. Soft power includes culture, art, and the capacity for societal influence. Hard power includes tanks, aircraft, factories, and military and economic capabilities. However, the most important factor is how we manage this power. If we do not know how to manage our power, whether it is weak or strong, then no power-soft or hard- can help us.

The central question is: How do we transform our weaknesses into strengths, and how do we invest what we have in a way that enhances our steadfastness and existence? This is the essence of strategic planning: not wishes and dreams, but tangible actions on the ground, and achievable plans.

In this context, I wish to explain that we need to understand the history and inception of the political Zionist project. Sometimes I find some people surprised at the statements of the current Israeli government, wondering at the behavior of its Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. In reality, this project has been political since 1897, when the first Zionist Congress declared that Palestine is the national homeland for the Jewish people. Since then, Palestine was the goal. There may have been occasional partial retreats, but the strategic goal has never changed.

We must stop being astonished or surprised. The natural trajectory of Israeli policy is the full control of all Palestine. This is a documented historical fact, not merely an opinion about a person or political party.

Even the behavior of figures like Shimon Peres was not different regarding the Zionist project. In his writings, Peres refers to Palestinians as "cheap Bedouins," and describes what is given to Palestinians as the "Big Zero" and the "Small Zero". This reflects a strategic vision based on minimizing the presence and influence of Palestinians.

The real flaw is not in them, but in us- in our inability to change and adapt to changing circumstances on the ground, and in our failure to invest our power properly.

Therefore, the main theme of the Palestinian project must be steadfastness and survival, which comprises social, economic, political, cultural, educational, and even pedagogical dimensions.

Steadfastness requires changing the educational curricula. Future generations must learn historical facts and be aware of their land and rights. We cannot raise our children on illusions. Steadfastness begins with knowing history, understanding reality, and planning for the future.

Regarding the general climate, Israel works on two main goals: the social structure and the geographical structure. The 2030 Israeli project and the official documents we receive from various sources, reveal that the Israeli goal is to control the land and dismantle the Palestinian infrastructure, from water to roads, from land reclamation to population distribution.

An example is the water networks serving the settlements, and are intertwined with those in the West Bank; purchasing water now costs huge sums compared to the past. These matters are not just technical details, but are part of the larger strategy to diminish the Palestinians' ability to manage their land.

Moreover, The Zionist project aims to displace the population and isolate them in small cantons. In fact, the Palestinian's movement towards cities has helped reinforce this project, as cities like Ramallah have become the "Qibla of Palestine," while the countryside and villages have become deserted. This requires the reconsideration of urban, agricultural, and social planning.

Amidst such reality, conventional thinking is no longer useful. We must adopt a new mode of thinking and develop practical programs and projects that enable steadfastness. This leads us to talk about Palestinian society itself, and our role in enhancing participation and complementarity.

Participation does not mean that we become identical; it means reaching an agreed-upon national program in the areas of development, education, health, and social affairs. It is not merely superficial conversations, but constructive dialogue that leads to practical results, where the roles and responsibilities are defined for each party in a manner that achieves national goals.

Complementarity means that every action taken by a CSO should be complemented by the government's work; every action taken by the government in agriculture should be complemented by the economic sector; and every project in health should be complemented by education. We must have an integrated and harmonious national project that achieves one goal: steadfastness we are discussing today.

Upon evaluating existing projects, we must ask: Are these projects suitable for the new stage? Do they contribute to steadfastness? Or are they scattered projects with no clear strategic vision uniting them? This evaluation is necessary prior to any investment or development decision.

Having an enabling environment for partnership is a main condition. Without a suitable environment for cooperation, partnership will not be achieved. This environment means clarity of priorities between the government, the private sector and civil society. The utmost priority must be steadfastness and remaining on the land. This includes: population management, land protection, and rational investment of resources. The Jordan Valley is a living example of the importance of strategic planning and complementarity: The Jordan Valley constitutes 27% of the West Bank's area, and its springs contain 93% of the available fresh water.

We must ensure land reclamation, protection of farmers, and sustainable agriculture- not just permitting large-scale farming without scientific planning. Farmers must be supported even if they incur losses, because their role in steadfastness is greater than financial profit.

Education must also be part of the steadfastness strategy, not merely a producer of certificates. Today, thousands of new graduates enter the job market without prior planning, while hundreds of thousands of young Palestinians leave the country. This is a direct problem for national steadfastness.

In brief, projects must enable steadfastness, whether agricultural, industrial, or social. Partnership between the government, civil society, and the private sector is not a luxury, but a national necessity. It must be methodological, cumulative, and complementary.

No more room for insignificant differences or futile debate. The focus must be on who performs their role best to achieve the national goal.

All these principles and observations confirm that the coming stage requires strategic awareness, coordinated action, and optimal investment of human and natural resources.

We must deal with the land and people intelligently, and invest our capabilities in ways that enhance steadfastness. Participation and complementarity are not mere talk, but practical tools that we must apply in every aspect of life, from agriculture to education, from health to the economy.

In conclusion, I wish to affirm that our main goal is Palestine, which we all love, and our land, on which we must stay through the steadfastness of our people.

All our projects, all our decisions, and all our cooperation must fall under this heading: steadfastness and remaining on the land, protecting resources, empowering the population, and strengthening national capabilities. If we succeed, we will build a state, protect our people, and build a sustainable future for coming generations.

Thank you all for your presence and your national commitment.



Issam Haj Hussein

The Executive Director of the Coalition for
Accountability and Integrity-AMAN

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Participatory governance between the leadership, the civil society organizations, and the different sectors must start with the early stages of decision-making.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the esteemed audience and to everyone who contributed to organizing this meeting. It comes at a critically important time to discuss a set of significant national decisions taken by the Palestinian leadership during 2025 and up to the present day, and the impact these decisions have on the future of the Palestinian national process, and on the relationship between the leadership and the citizen, and between the leadership and CSOs.

Let us affirm an important fact: a set of decisions have been issued or announced by the Palestinian leadership, which we consider extremely important in governance and in shaping the national path towards achieving the aspirations of our people. These decisions include the appointment of a Vice President, having a draft Palestinian Constitution, having a draft Political Parties Law, a decision to hold elections for the Palestinian National Council (PNC), and a decision to amend the Local Elections Law, which sparked widespread debate as you all witnessed.

Although these decisions have been issued separately and without a unified framework or a clear plan, however they all move in a specific direction, or came within a certain context related to managing governance, organizing the institutions of the Palestinian state, as well as the relationship between the leadership, the citizens, and CSOs.

Unfortunately, the context in which these decisions were made was not clear or announced, neither to the citizens nor to the institutions. This naturally raises questions about the reasons, motives, and goals behind each decision.

Some consider these decisions a response to regional and international factors, while others consider them coming within the context of confronting the occupation and its escalating daily practices. They may also be part of internal reform plans within the Authority or the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), or a mix of all these contexts together.

I want to emphasize that transparency in clarifying the context in which national decisions are issued is the cornerstone of any genuine participatory process between the leadership and CSOs, and between citizens and the public sector. Participation does not begin after the law or decision is issued for comments to be made; rather, it begins first by clarifying the context in which these decisions were made.

We must all understand why the Vice President was appointed now? And why is there a draft Constitution? Why was the date for the PNC elections specifically set for next November?

Clarity of goal and objectives enables us to move to the next step, which is participation in the distribution of roles and tasks. Once there is consensus on the context and identification of goals, we can begin to define tasks and competencies. Hence, genuine participation begins with examining the context, then complementarity in implementation.

The third pillar is monitoring and evaluation. Any political or legislative process, be it drafting a law or taking a sovereign decision, must go through three stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. This means we need effective evaluation tools that enable us to know whether the issued decisions have been implemented correctly and whether they are achieving their intended goal.

Among the most important tools for monitoring and evaluation is the system of accountability. Accountability is a fundamental pillar in any participatory and complementary system. Through accountability, mistakes can be corrected, whether they come from civil society, the government, or the leadership. If we make a mistake at any stage, we can, through follow-up, rectify the flaws and avoid their recurrence.

Accountability also ensures adherence with agreed-upon decisions. When there is consensus on a specific policy, it becomes easier to hold any party or official who deviates from this consensus accountable.

For example, if the government issues a decision to rationalize spending, and we find an institution that is not compliant with this direction, our oversight role is to point out the flaw and hold those responsible for implementation accountable. This process ensures that national decisions are effective and serve the public interest, not narrow factional or partisan interests.

The last point is “citizen trust”. Unfortunately, in previous years, we witnessed a widening trust gap between the citizens and the leadership because of decisions taken without justification or clarification. This led citizens to feel that these decisions might serve private interests, not the public interest.

To enhance trust, we need to clarify the context and reasons behind every decision, and maintain continuous communication with citizens through the media, interviews, and official occasions, not just through specific official platforms.

Hence, to our colleagues in CSOs, especially those working in the NGO sector, I say: The relationship between the government and civil society must be institutional, not based on a personal relationship between officials. Participation and complementarity must be guided by declared public policies that are approved and binding on all public institutions.

This includes agreement on tools for interaction with the government, for example, when dealing with various administrative committees, and defining clear mechanisms for communication between the government and CSOs.

CSOs also need internal empowerment and organizational structuring that enables them to play an effective complementary role. This includes enhancing institutional governance, training staff on understanding and analyzing public policies, and developing their own oversight and accountability tools.

The provision of clear and regular information is also essential, because participation is only achieved with accurate data and information that enable civil society to participate effectively, to hold officials accountable, monitor decisions, and continuously evaluate performance.

I wish to emphasize the need to expedite issuing the “Access to Information Law”, which has long been delayed, and which constitutes a major tool for ensuring transparency and accountability.

A practical example is the local authorities’ elections, where we notice significant interaction from CSOs and criticism of some laws. However, when the PNC elections were announced, there was no interaction or clear position. The reason is the lack of clarity regarding the context and objectives of these elections for civil society. This highlights the importance of clarifying the context before taking any steps, to ensure fruitful and constructive interaction.

Participation and complementarity, in government or in civil society, require consensus on policies and goals, effective institutional organization, internal governance, and the provision of information and full transparency. This is the way to rebuild trust between the citizen and the leadership, and achieve tangible results in governance and national reform.

In conclusion, I re-affirm that genuine national action is based on consensus, transparency, accountability, empowering CSOs, and working to provide information and data, to ensure that national decisions serve the interests of our people and strengthen the democratic process and genuine participation.





Amjad Al-Shawwa
Director of PNGO in Gaza Strip

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The war experience provided a practical model of the importance of participatory governance and coordination among the different components of the society, as effective tools for responding to humanitarian needs.

I shall begin my remarks openly. As the colleagues before me mentioned, our situation in Gaza Strip remains different and harsh. Until this very moment, we are still suffering from the waste crisis and its health, environmental, and humanitarian repercussions on all levels. This is not a marginal issue; it is an issue that touches people's daily lives, their dignity, and their health.

Let me share a scene with you from this morning. At seven a.m., I was accompanying the Mayor of Gaza, Yahya Sarraj, at one of the largest dumpsters in Gaza City, Firas popular market, which over the past period has turned into the largest dumpster in the Strip, with around 170,000 metric tons of waste accumulated there.

After two years of suffering and continuous work, and through a genuine partnership between Gaza Municipality, civil society, and the UNDP program, today the first trucks began removing waste from this dumpster to a temporary landfill south of Gaza City, away from populated areas. Today, we have actually begun addressing this file. This is a living example that participation is not just a slogan, but action on the ground.

We often hear the phrase, “coordination comes first” but what we witnessed during the war and its aftermath provided us with a practical model of participation and coordination among various segments of society.

Over the past weeks, we worked intensively with Prime Minister Dr. Mohammad Mustafa, Minister of Justice Sharhabil Al-Zaeem, and the relevant government agencies on a highly sensitive issue: the national team on missing persons. Unfortunately, this issue has not received sufficient attention for a long time, although it affects thousands of families. The initiative came from PNGO to form a national team comprising representatives from government institutions and CSOs to follow up on this humanitarian and legal file.

In parallel, a new body, called the “Mothers Movement”, was formed days ago, a movement for the mothers of the missing.

This issue is not only humanitarian, but also legal and ethical. Those are thousands of citizens, children, women, and youth, who went missing during the war, and their families still do not know their fate. Joining an international framework of mothers' movements gives this movement additional strength, and reflects society's determination to never forget this issue.

We are acting at all levels to create a genuine state of participation: with UN agencies, international organizations, CSOs, and government bodies and municipalities. Our goal is to create a real space to impact people's lives and alleviate their daily suffering.

It is true that we have entered a new phase after four and a half months of the ceasefire, but the reality remains harsh.

Since the ceasefire, hundreds of martyrs have fallen, and the bloodshed continues daily. Around 900,000 citizens are living in tents, and thousands of families are residing in semi-destroyed homes. These numbers are not just statistics; they are human lives trapped between hope and pain.

Our primary function as civil society in Gaza and in Palestine is to create opportunities and spaces for people.

These spaces can only be achieved through real partnerships and broad participation. We must acknowledge that the people are ahead of us. They are ahead in returning to their areas, and in building forms of self-recovery before any official recovery plans were put in place. They established displacement centers with their own efforts, and they invented new economic and social means for survival. Many initiatives were led by women who demonstrated an immense capacity for steadfastness and creativity.

In this context, the National Committee for the Reconstruction of Gaza was formed. It is a technocrat committee comprising respectful figures, including representatives from civil society. However, to date, its tasks are still not sufficiently clear.

The main headline is relief and recovery, but we have not yet seen clear executive plans, given the complexities of the border crossings and funding issues, especially concerning the announced 100-day plan.

We hope that this plan will be developed in a genuine participatory spirit, including civil society, the private sector, municipalities, and the various bodies operating in Gaza. We need to reformulate a plan that conforms to the reality in the field and responds to the actual needs of the people. The alternative is imposing on us external visions that do not reflect the aspirations of the people of Gaza, visions that might transform reconstruction into projects that do not serve the population so much as they serve other interests.

Our position is clear: Reconstruction must stem from the vision of the people of Gaza Strip, be managed by Palestinian hands, while preserving the unity of the Palestinian land and linking Gaza with the West Bank in a comprehensive national framework. We are still in an urgent relief phase, and we are discovering daily cases of malnutrition among children and pregnant women.

At the same time, more voices are demanding governance mechanisms that ensure the participation of all parties, within the framework of a transitional phase that leads to the national institutions assuming their full responsibilities.

During this phase, we rely heavily on the role of civil society, the cohesion of our social fabric, and on protecting our national identity in the face of any attempts at separation or attempts at reshaping the administrative and political reality in a manner that derogates our unity.

Even symbolic details, such as names and slogans at the border crossings, hold deep political connotations and require us to have a firm stance.

The issue of UNRWA is one that cannot be ignored. Amidst accelerating events, we almost forgot that UNRWA is not just a service institution; it is a living testament to the refugee issue. We have critical observations on UNRWA's performance over the years, but our national responsibility obligates us to defend it in the face of the ongoing targeting, whether in Gaza or the West Bank. The attacks against the refugee camps and the destruction of UNRWA's facilities remind us of the magnitude of the challenge.

We need a comprehensive national effort, at the governmental, civic, political, and social levels, to support UNRWA and preserve its role until a just solution to the refugee issue is reached.

At the same time, we must amplify the people's voice and mechanisms of accountability. The people's voice is not a source of fear, but a source of strength, and the true incubator of any project. We must boost people's capacity to participate and influence.

Regarding aid distribution, we have witnessed an important development through establishing joint distribution centers, involving the United Nations, popular committees, and CSOs. This mechanism helps reduce duplication and improve distribution efficiency, despite the challenges related to the multiplicity of databases and the overlapping roles of various parties, in addition to the impact of political division.

We also had an important experience in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce in Gaza Strip. During the war, a type of opportunistic private sector emerged, lacking any professional values. However, in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, we trained dozens of new institutions on basic humanitarian standards, and we are currently working on developing a code of conduct, obligating any merchant wishing to participate in tenders to adhere to clear values.

These steps may seem simple, but they constitute an attempt to establish a minimum level of controls amidst a weak rule of law system.



Furthermore, we are working with our partners on a neighborhood approach, aiming to integrate shelters with the surrounding communities and provide integrated services including education, health, and psychological support. We are part of a joint operations center comprising the government, the UN and municipalities, and we seek to maximize the benefit from limited resources and provide more efficient services to the people.

These efforts stem from a harsh experience we lived through, an experience of death and devastation, but from within it, we are trying to create new forms of life.

We hope that the National Committee for Reconstruction will soon be able to operate inside Gaza Strip with a different spirit, ensuring the participation of all sectors and adopting a better model for management and recovery.

In the end, our message is clear: Participation is not an option, but the only way out of this crisis that Gaza Strip is experiencing.

When the efforts of the government, civil society, and the private sector are integrated, and when the people are at the heart of the process, we can transform pain into strength and build a future worthy of the sacrifices of our people.

Thank you very much, and I hope that we will all be up to this responsibility.



2

Second session

How to preserve a unified national framework during crises



Amir Daoud

The Director General of Documentation at the Colonization and Wall Resistance Commission



The past years have witnessed the absence of a unified and comprehensive Palestinian response that keeps abreast with the escalating settlement activity.

Discussing the idea of complementarity among Palestinian institutions at this sensitive historical moment is not a casual discussion, but rather one that requires courage and responsibility.

We face a stage that can be described as an existential threat, a stage that compels us to re-read our political and national reality deeply, and to deconstruct the context that brought the Palestinian situation to where it is today, before talking about participation and complementarity among institutions.

The current situation was not a sudden explosion that occurred in the Palestinian landscape, nor was it an isolated event far from its historical context. It is rather, the product of a long and extended path that can be traced back to 1967, a path that witnessed ups and downs, passing through multiple stations where the intensity of confrontation sometimes faded and at other times intensified.

However, the defining moment in this path was the formation of the extreme right-wing fascist government at the end of 2022, a moment that reshaped the political and field landscape in an unprecedented manner.

When discussing this government, it is not possible to separate what is happening on the ground from the nature of the coalition agreements. These agreements were not mere political understandings to form a government, but rather constituted a clear work program practically implemented today in the Palestinian territories. Reviewing the main themes of what we are witnessing, unprecedented settlement activity escalation, and changes in the legal system governing the relationship with the Palestinian land and citizens, clearly reveals that what is happening is a direct translation of those agreements.

The moment of 7 October 2023 came as a historical juncture that the Israeli government exploited as an exceptional opportunity that might not be repeated, in order to accelerate its projects aimed at devouring what remains of Palestinian geography.

The settlement activity is no longer restricted to traditional expansion or the establishment of new settlement outposts, but has become an attempt to comprehensively reshape the geographical, legal, and political reality.

This is an obvious shift in the nature of conflict management. The occupation is no longer concerned with managing the conflict through containment or phased methods, but is rather explicitly moving towards the idea of resolving the conflict, by imposing facts on the ground aimed at reducing the Palestinian presence and transforming Palestinians into marginalized groups lacking the basic requirements of sovereignty and rights.

This shift places the Palestinian people before a genuine existential threat, not confined to military or security dimensions, but extending to geographical, demographic, and legal dimensions.

The large scale devastation occurring in Gaza Strip cannot be viewed in isolation from what is happening simultaneously in the West Bank and Jerusalem. We are witnessing an integrated process that aims at reshaping Palestinian geography through fragmentation, control and subjugation. This process amounts to geographical genocide, as the Palestinian spatial structure is manipulated through settlement expansion, road construction, land control, and the imposition of legal systems serving the colonial project.

Colonial settlement is no longer just an expansionist policy; it has become a full-fledged project seeking to change all existing relations with the Palestinian land.

On one hand, settlers are directed to impose facts on the ground by force, and on the other hand, the Israeli government is working to transform these facts, even those previously considered illegal by its own standards, into permanent official procedures by enacting laws in the Knesset. Thus, the field tools complements the legal tools in service of one goal.

In contrast, no unified and integrated Palestinian reaction commensurate with the level of the challenge has materialized yet.

Despite the long historical experience of the Palestinian people in confronting the colonial settlement project, the past three years have revealed a state of confusion and indecision.

Palestinians have not been able to accumulate sufficient tools of confrontation that respond to the magnitude of the shock and the accelerating transformations. A pressing question has prevailed: What can we do to face this reality?

Hence, the importance of discussing practical recommendations and invoking the experience of the Colonization and Wall Resistance Commission as a model to be adopted. This experience, in its current phase, is based on four strategic foundations that constitute a framework for responding to existing challenges.

First, supporting the steadfastness of citizens, especially in the most fragile communities most exposed to settler attacks. The expansion of the scope of Israeli measures has made it impossible for any single institution to cover all needs. With the worsening financial crisis that national institutions face, it has become an urgent necessity to rely on complementarity with international organizations and CSOs, in order to distribute roles and cover areas needing urgent intervention, especially in Bedouin communities.

These communities witnessed, after October 7 2023, a catastrophic situation by all measures. The displacement of more than sixty-six Bedouin communities as a result of settler terrorism constitutes a harsh blow to the Palestinian social and geographical fabric.

These communities, by virtue of their lifestyle and dependence on herding, are a direct target of the colonial settlement project, necessitating compounded efforts to protect them and strengthen their steadfastness.

Second is documenting violations. Documentation is not a secondary activity nor a simple administrative measure, but rather a strategic process that builds a sovereign national archive and forms the cornerstone in formulating a national counter-narrative.

Connecting events to their settings, in terms of time and place, and providing accurate and reliable data, enables the submission of comprehensive files to international human rights and legal bodies, and contributes to exposing the nature of the settlement project to the world.

In this context, partnerships with international human rights and legal organizations play a central role. Documented reports constitute an important pressure tool and open the door for legal accountability, although these paths are long and complex. Investing in documentation is an investment in national memory and in tools for advocating rights.

Third is the legal follow-up, at the local or international level, or even before the occupation's courts.

Despite the firm belief that these courts are biased and complicit with the political and security levels, legal action remains a field where available loopholes may be exploited, some procedures can be obstructed, and the legal contradictions in Israeli policies can be exposed.

Combining these three foundations- supporting steadfastness, documentation, and legal follow-up- in a complementary and participatory framework between official, civil, and international institutions, constitutes a fundamental entry point for building a more effective Palestinian strategy. The challenges we face today exceed the capacity of any single party and necessitate adopting organized collective action.

In conclusion, the current stage requires a high level of awareness and responsibility. We are facing a project that seeks to radically reshape the Palestinian reality, and it cannot be confronted except through a strategic vision based on complementarity, coordination, and collaborated efforts.

Enhancing people's steadfastness on their land, building a national archive, and activating legal paths, are complementary elements that together constitute an integrated defense system.

I hope this vision has contributed to clarifying the nature of the challenges we face, and at the same time affirmed the importance of joint action. As harsh and complex as this stage appears, it also opens the door for rebuilding our national tools on more solid and integrated foundations.

Thank you.



Yahya Al-Sarraj
Mayor of Gaza City
“Via Zoom”

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A comprehensive emergency committee and specialized committees have managed the crisis by adopting decentralization in decision-making and delegating field level powers.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the esteemed audience and to all who contributed to organizing this important meeting. It comes at a critically important time to discuss the role of Gaza Municipality and its experience during the difficult circumstances that Gaza Strip is going through, in the context of the ongoing aggression that has lasted for a long period, and which has affected all state institutions and the daily life of the Palestinian citizens.

It is natural for municipalities to operate under difficult circumstances, but amid the ongoing wars and the prolonged genocide our people are experiencing today, these operations become more difficult and complex, especially with the intensification of the occupation's practices and its crime in both the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

We shall attempt to briefly review part of the role of Gaza Municipality as a realistic, national, and steadfast model in providing services to the local community, despite all the challenges.

We shall try to answer an important question: How did the Municipality manage to balance between providing services and helping citizens without becoming a substitute for the Authority? And how did it maintain the independence of its work within the specified legal frameworks? The Law is clear and defines the powers of each party, preventing any overlap.

I shall start with the general framework. Gaza Municipality presented an experience that is not ideal, but realistic and inspiring. The Municipality, and most municipalities in Gaza Strip, managed to maintain a minimal level of services and prevent full collapse amidst direct targeting and a severe shortage of resources and capabilities.

The population of Gaza City alone amounts to about 800,000 people, making it the largest municipality in the Strip in terms of population. This is a major challenge for the Municipality within a narrow area not exceeding 56 square kilometers, making the population density inside the city more than 14,000 people per square kilometer, which is very high.

Any malfunction in the Municipality's work is immediately reflected on society and human life in all its dimensions. Hence, we always emphasize that municipalities cannot stop performing their duties for even one hour.

During the aggression, Gaza Municipality was on the frontline of confrontation. Other government institutions experienced near-total paralysis because of the inability to move or provide services, as a result of direct targeting by the occupation.

The Municipality was not spared targeting. It was directly subjected to the destruction of an estimated 80 to 85% of its facilities, including administrative buildings, vehicles, and heavy, medium, and light machinery used to carry out various tasks, whether in maintenance or in public service provision.

Moreover, around 90% of the infrastructure was destroyed, including water wells, water and wastewater pipes, rainwater drainage networks, as well as public parks, which lost more than 100,000 trees. The seafront was also deliberately destroyed, constituting a massive economic and tourism loss. Through this, the occupation attempts to compel citizens not to remain in the city, and forcibly displace them.

More than 60% of the Municipality's human resources were also forced to move from their homes within Gaza City to the South, following the occupation's instructions. Often, they were forced to displace because of the destruction of their homes or the inability to stay in them.

Unfortunately, more than 70 municipal employees were martyred, some while on duty, and others with their families in their homes or temporary tents.

This period was also marked by a scarcity of fuel and basic resources. Obtaining fuel became extremely difficult for operating generators, pumps, and vital facilities. Electricity was cut off immediately after October 7, 2023, and the only source of power was the available electric generators or solar energy, much of which was dysfunctional due to being targeted.

Nevertheless, the Municipality tried to provide whatever services it could, no matter how simple, but they had a profound impact on the lives of citizens and strengthened their steadfastness.

Regarding financial and material damages, we estimate that the amount required to reconstruct the facilities of Gaza Municipality alone, including development to ensure steadfastness until 2050, is about US\$ 2 billion. This includes rebuilding roads, infrastructure, water and wastewater pipes, machinery and vehicles, electronic systems and buildings and facilities, the central archive containing valuable documents over 80 to 100 years old, as well as water laboratories and important historical documents.

However, the Municipality did not lose important documents, as electronic copies of the archive were saved, preserving the historical value of the original paper documents.

A comprehensive emergency committee was formed since the beginning of the aggression for crisis management in Gaza, along with forming specialized committees and an attempt to decentralize decision-making, granting powers to individuals to make quick and effective decisions in the field.

During the aggression on Gaza, there was also high field participation from the Municipality's senior management. The Mayor and council members continued to work throughout the aggression, never missing a single day in the field. This strengthened the steadfastness of the workers and encouraged them to continue performing their duties despite the difficulties.

Direct coordination with neighborhood committees and partner institutions in Gaza was one of the major factors of success. These committees helped accurately identify priorities and required services and monitor the number of population in each area, taking into account movements and threats resulting from various Israeli targeting. This contributed to improving the efficiency of service delivery and strengthening the steadfastness of citizens.

The emergency priorities adopted since the beginning of the aggression and still applied until now are:

1. Water: It was, and still is, the top priority, to ensure the continuation of basic life in the City.
2. Health and Environment: Collecting and removing waste to avoid environmental and health damages that could lead to disease outbreaks.
3. Wastewater: Working to alleviate the wastewater crisis with available resources, although complete repair was not possible.
4. Opening Roads: To ensure the passage of citizens and vehicles, including emergency vehicles, ambulances, civil defense, and municipal vehicles, despite the massive destruction caused by strikes on public and private buildings, mosques, schools, and churches.

Moreover, the Municipality innovated a service to support private water wells in homes, providing fuel to operate wells owned by citizens, to compensate areas that did not receive municipality water. This had a significant impact on strengthening the steadfastness of citizens, especially in areas far from the city center.

I wish to stress that municipalities have an important participatory role with the government, without overlooking the role of the central government.

Our experience showed that sometimes, some ministries try to influence the work of municipalities or attempt to directly assume their role. This affected the freedom of movement of municipalities and the performance of their tasks. There is a need to address this matter in a clear and decisive legal manner, to strengthen the role of municipalities and stop any interventions that hinder their work or weaken the services provided to citizens.

During the aggression, the Municipality proved that it was the last wall upon which the citizen in Gaza relied, in the wake of the near-collapse of the government and its inability to provide its services fully. This confirms the importance of clearly defining powers and strengthening the role of municipalities in law and in practice, to ensure efficient and continuous service provision.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the experience of Gaza Municipality is not just a narration of challenges, but rather a testament to national steadfastness and defiance in the face of the ongoing aggression, and to the ability of our local institutions to continue performing their duties despite the hardships. It also affirms the importance of participation between the government and civil society, and the vital role of municipalities in safeguarding citizens' rights and enhancing their daily lives.

In conclusion, I wish to assert that this realistic experience stresses the importance of strengthening the independence of municipalities, providing necessary resources, clarifying legal powers, continuing coordination with neighborhood committees and civil society, and the need to recognize the vital role of municipalities as a fundamental pillar for the steadfastness of Palestinian society under all difficult circumstances.

Thank you all.



Tareq Al-Zarou

Chair of the Palestinian Engineers Association and
Chair of the Professional Associations Complex

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Given what the Palestinian cause is facing, it is imperative that everyone adopts a participatory and complementary approach with decision-makers to confront the occupation settlement plots.

I am pleased and honored to be with you today as the Chair of the Palestinian Engineers Association and Chair of the Professional Associations Complex.

First, I would like to shed the light on the importance of the Professional Associations Complex, this umbrella framework that brings together seven major unions in our beloved country: the Medical Association, the Dental Association, the Veterinary Association, the Engineers Association, the Agricultural Engineers Association, the Pharmacists Association and the Bar Association.

The composition of those associations is not purely professional. Our associations, just like all our institutions, are national institutions before being professional. They are part of the national fabric, breathing the daily concerns of the people, and bearing a responsibility that transcends the boundaries of the profession into the realm of national duty.

Hence, the role of these unions is complementary to all state institutions, whether they are ministries or decision-making bodies. We are not a substitute for state institutions, and will never be. Our relationship with the government and with state institutions is one of complementarity and participation, not competition or rivalry.

Amidst the difficult political and economic circumstances our people are going through, we, the Professional Associations Complex, will never allow our relationship with any official institution to be competitive. We are partners in responsibility and partners in facing challenges.

Since 1948 until today, our people have been living through continuous chapters of catastrophes, setbacks, and harsh occupation measures. However, what our Palestinian cause is going through today, and what our people are subjected to in terms of the destruction of people, structures, and all aspects of life, places us before an extremely dangerous phase.

The occupation's practices in the West Bank are not less serious than what is happening in Gaza Strip. From the south to the north, our land and people are subjected to a systematic campaign targeting our existence and our identity.

We see with our own eyes how pastoral settlement is spreading in an organized and escalating manner. Even if only one or two settlers are somewhere, once any Palestinian approaches the area, occupation patrols come from every direction.

The phenomena we used to hear about, such as the so-called "Hilltop Youth", have become a tangible reality on the ground. This is part of a clear occupation plan, targeting both the West Bank and Gaza.

In the wake of recent developments, we heard about establishing new administrative frameworks in Gaza Strip. Here, we have a legitimate concern towards the recurrence of previous experiences in different forms and names, such as reproducing the Village Leagues under new names. We hope that does not happen, and that we maintain a clear national direction against any attempts to break our unity.

The Palestinian cause today requires from us all, from the ordinary citizen to the senior official, including the professional and national unions, to strengthen our complementary and participatory relationship.

We must be present with decision-makers, because the settlement project is dangerous. It does not target Palestine alone; rather, the expansionist Zionist ideology, which speaks of a greater state extending across the region, is not just slogans. There are manifestations of this ideology in our region, although often unannounced. This places a larger responsibility on every institution and every union, exceeding their professional role to a major national and political role.

There are simple yet substantial things that we, and generations of our children, have forgotten over time. Our duty is to remind them. The occupation does not work with short-term plans; it plans for decades, for fifty and sixty years ahead. What we see today is the result of long-term planning.

They are targeting us even at the level of culture and identity. The heritage of our Palestinian mountains, the terebinth, hawthorn, and oak trees, have declined, and other species alien to our environment are replacing them. This is not just a botanical change; it is part of a cultural change affecting our relationship with our land.

Today, it has become common to use names imposed by the occupation on our places. We ask each other about locations, and we mention the names of settlements, while the indigenous Palestinian names recede. Ancient villages and areas have become unknown to many of our children. This reality imposes on us, each from their position, in unions and institutions, to restore national culture, and to nurture our children with true knowledge of their history and geography. The memory of our cause must extend to its roots, not be linked to a specific event or a limited time frame.

From the perspective of the Professional Associations Complex, we believe in partnership with everyone. We realize that the government cannot fully cover some aspects, either because of its own shortcomings or because of the financial crisis it is facing. This crisis is influencing the employees, the workers, and the entire economy. Here, the role of professional unions is to fill the gaps as much as possible.

We are not in a position of competing with the government, but complementing it. We seek to bridge the gaps and provide any possible professional and national support. We remain, as professional unions, at the forefront of the ranks, working alongside state institutions, supporting our people, and preserving both our professional and national roles.

Today we have a great responsibility, but our faith in our people's ability to remain steadfast is greater. With the concerted efforts of official institutions, professional unions, and society in all its components, we can confront the schemes targeting us, and protect our identity, our land, and the future of our children.

Thank you.



Mohammad Nassar

The Director of the Private Sector Coordination Council

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The private sector initiatives are not only an economic driver, but a social and national partner that contributes to stability and steadfastness.

Distinguished audience,

Around one hundred thousand workers became unemployed because of the recent crises, while a larger number has been directly or indirectly affected. This is not merely a statistic; it represents the stories of families, the anxiety within homes, and the threatened future of the youth.

Amid this reality, the role of the private sector can make a real difference in people's lives. The private sector can play an important and decisive role in providing new job opportunities, supporting vocational training and rehabilitation, and stimulating small and large enterprises.

This role is not only economic, but rather social and national, because it contributes to reducing unemployment, stimulating the economy, and enhancing stability and steadfastness.

This sector does not solely seek profit, but is a national partner that seeks to consolidate its presence and strength over the land of Palestine, and to absorb the workforce here.

In clearer terms: The establishment of any new factory or new enterprise is a strengthening factor to the homeland. Every economic enterprise contributes to consolidating people on their land and supporting their steadfastness in the face of challenges.

Should this sector fall, God forbid, it would not be merely an economic loss, but a general collapse impacting the entire homeland. The private sector is a fundamental pillars for our economy and society.

The Palestinian private sector has undergone long and harsh experiences through years of crises and emergencies. It is, by its very nature, the closest to daily reality and to understanding practical challenges on the ground. It is an employer of thousands of workers, a main driver of the economy, and a direct actor with supply chains and markets.

The cumulative experience of the private sector has made it a key player in facing crises. This role was clearly demonstrated during the First and Second Intifadas, as well as during the COVID-19 pandemic. In all those phases, the private sector was a powerful driver of steadfastness and an active partner in crisis management. The private sector contributed to funding health and relief efforts, supported the steadfastness of institutions and workers, and continued to provide basic services despite incurring significant losses, complementing government measures.

Similarly, during the genocidal war on Gaza, private sector institutions and businessmen played an important national and humanitarian role. They contributed to providing relief to our people in Gaza through official and civic channels.

Hence, we affirm that public policies, even if well-founded on sound theoretical foundation, may overlook some details, or may not be fully achievable, unless formulated in partnership with the real actors on the ground, most notably the private sector.

The participatory approach between the public and private sectors is not a luxury or a choice: it is a national imperative serving the public interest. We must mobilize all potentials and unite the all sectors to face crises.

I wish to speak about a practical experience that embodied the private sector's initiative and assumption of responsibility. The private sector took it upon itself to work and exert pressure to open the border crossing (Allenby Bridge) around the clock. We all witnessed the suffering endured by Palestinian citizens at the crossing, which is supposed to be a bridge of dignity but often turned into a station of humiliation.

Faced with this reality, the private sector acted, lobbied, and communicated with ministries, ambassadors, and the government, to work towards ensuring the crossing was opened continuously. This move was risky, and might have resulted in negative reactions towards the private sector, as this matter is not strictly within its mandate.

Nevertheless, the private sector bore the financial and moral cost, and insisted on continuing this initiative. Those efforts were led by the Secretary of the Coordinating Council, Nassar Nassar, out of a belief that serving citizens is a national responsibility that cannot be overlooked.

Regarding the shekel crisis, which was blamed on the private sector, I wish to clarify that the private sector has nothing to do with this crisis. The crisis was linked to illegal funds and complex banking issues, where banks faced questions about the sources of certain sums of money. This is a side issue that should not be used to accuse the private sector or hold it responsible for matters outside its scope of work.

In fact, the private sector is not doing well, as some might think. It is struggling for survival and persists in the face of dangerous twists and recurring crises. This sector has been subjected to direct attacks by settlers and successive Israeli governments. Bulldozers, equipment, vehicles, quarries, and crushers have been burned, and several factories have suffered attacks and significant losses. Yet, the private sector has remained resilient and steadfast, confronting these challenges.

In Gaza Strip, the private sector was among the first sectors targeted when the war broke out. Factories, enterprises and offices were destroyed in a clear attempt to paralyze the economy and push society into a state of destitution and chaos. Nevertheless, businessmen and institutions continued to do what they could to support the people and preserve what remained of economic life.

In conclusion, I affirm that the private sector only asks the government to consider it a genuine partner, not a source of revenue collection or a party that can be exploited.

The relationship should be based on partnership and mutual trust, and the realization that the strength of the private sector is part of the strength of the homeland.

Hence, we propose a set of recommendations that we hope will receive attention and action:

1. Establishing a permanent coordination mechanism between the government and the Coordinating Council of the Private Sector during crises, ensuring rapid response and complementarity of efforts.
2. Engaging representatives of the private sector in economic emergency committees, to benefit from their field expertise.
3. Adopting the Coordinating Council as an official channel for economic consultation, as it is a comprehensive framework bringing together the various Palestinian economic bodies.

I assert that the private sector is not a secondary party in crisis management, but rather a genuine partner in national steadfastness. Through our collective efforts- government, private sector, and society- we can face challenges and protect our economy and our homeland.

Thank you.





Farha Abu Al Heija

Chair of “Not to Forget” Association in Jenin refugee camp

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Popular committees inside refugee camps are carrying out their national, political and participatory role with the government and civil society organizations.

Many have not come to the camps in the northern West Bank, so today we come bringing the Jenin refugee camp to this platform, to place before you its voice and suffering, hoping that together, with your presence and support, we can effect real change.

The role of the popular committees in the camps is vital, sensitive, necessary, and national. It is not a narrow relief role, nor is it a traditional role. Rather, it is a national role linked to the function and role of the popular committees, which operate under the umbrella of the PLO Department of Refugee Affairs.

The popular committees constitute the frontline of defense for the refugees, and today they bear responsibilities that exceed their capabilities and resources.

More than a year has passed since the forced displacement of Jenin refugee camp. Almost 18,000 displaced people from the camp are living in a state of genuine homelessness today. Homelessness here is not a metaphorical description, but a harsh reality: families with no stable shelter, scattered across 32 locations in the Jenin area.

This displacement reflects the magnitude of the suffering and the extent of the need, and at the same time shows the importance of the role played by the popular committees at this stage.

Today, the popular committees are undertaking roles that often exceed those of the government and some CSOs.

However, this is not a comparison or an accusation, but rather an affirmation that the current stage requires real participation. We must all unite in supporting our people, because the scale of the crisis is too great for any single party to bear alone.

We often reiterate, "Steadfastness of the Palestinian people", but the reality we live in the camps is one of heavy daily suffering.

The group most affected in this crisis is women: women with no stable shelter, no sources of income, and no guarantees of food, medicine, or education for their children. More than 900 families in the camp relied on small enterprises as a source of livelihood, and these enterprises have been completely lost with the destruction of the camp.

The Jenin refugee camp today is destroyed to the extent that no one is allowed to approach it. Its four entrances are closed, and the area has almost been turned into military barracks. Even checking on what remains of homes and property has become nearly impossible. This reality compounds the feeling of helplessness and aggravates the scale of human suffering.

We do not deny the role of civil society or the role of the chambers of commerce, nor do we deny that the government contributed to paying house rents for six months. This must be acknowledged to be fair. But life is not only about rent; there are basic daily needs: food, water, healthcare, education, and medicine. Many of these aspects are still not adequately covered.

It is our duty to thank everyone who has provided personal support or supported the popular committees in providing part of these needs. But with thousands of displaced families, each family averaging five to seven members, this is an entire community deprived of the basic elements of decent living.

Inside the camp, around 1,800 houses have been completely destroyed, while the rest of the houses are partially destroyed through burning, demolition, or vandalism. The entire camp had its features changed; its streets were widened by force, several institutions were demolished, and many houses were removed. The clear goal is to change the form and features of the camp and wipe out its identity. This not only happened to Jenin refugee camp, but to the camps of the north, and may also extend to the rest of the refugee camps.

For us, the camp is not just a residential gathering; it is the emblem of the Palestinian cause. Without the refugee camps, the Palestinian cause will not be resolved.

We have heard a lot about participatory and complementary programs, but the question is: To what extent has this been translated on the ground? Our experience in the camp says that implementation is still below expectations.

From this platform, we appeal to decision-makers to realize that we are going through the worst social, humanitarian, and political phases. Without genuine solidarity among us, and without mutual support, no secure future is possible for our people.

The popular committees today are undertaking roles beyond what many expect. Their involvement did not begin with the current displacement, but started several years ago with repeated incursions, destruction, and violations inside the camp.

Suffering in the refugee camps is not a transient event, but an ongoing reality. At the same time, the damage is not restricted to the camps alone; the entire homeland is affected: cities, villages, neighborhoods; settlement expansion and daily pressures affect everyone, whether in the Jenin area or elsewhere.

Hence, we need a clear national vision, that is not mere words, but one that transforms into action plans and real support initiatives.

We need persons like you, capable of grasping the magnitude of the suffering and of preserving the historical memory of our cause.

We must not forget what it means to be a refugee, and what the northern West Bank is suffering today may extend to the center and south tomorrow.

I re-iterate that the situation in Jenin refugee camp and northern West Bank camps is among the most difficult we have ever experienced. We need your support, not only with aid, but with ideas, with belonging, and with stances. It is no longer enough to remain silent about our political and human rights.

In conclusion, I re-affirm that women are the most affected by this crisis, and any support plan or intervention must place them at the core of attention. Their suffering is a true indicator of the scale of the wound in our community.

Thank you.



Discussions and Interventions:

At the end of the second session, there were interventions from the audience, in which they stressed the need to find realistic solutions and to work diligently to achieve them. They also emphasized the importance of participation of various CSOs, the private sector, and the government, and stressed that the conference's deliberations should be translated into an actionable national work plan.

Recommendations and the closing statement:

MIFTAH Public Policies Officer, Uhoud Mraqtan, read the final recommendations and statement of the conference.

Recommendations:

- Adopting participation and complementarity as a national government policy

The conference concluded with general consensus points, calling for the adoption of the principle of "participatory-complementary governance" as a public policy for the current stage: a comprehensive national framework.

The conference affirmed the unity of institutional and legislative structures between the West Bank and Gaza as a political and legal frame of reference, and rejected any permanent formulas for fragmentation.

It demanded adopting the principle of governmental-civic partnership in planning emergency priorities, ensuring services and community oversight, while adhering to roles and avoiding substitution.

The conference called for considering the protection of society and prevention of displacement a central governance function, to be managed through a governmental-civic framework and with a clear rights-based rationale. It called for establishing national red lines: the right to self-determination and statehood, the right to protect society, rejecting depoliticizing the cause, and any arrangements that cancel or fragment national representation, while enhancing international solidarity on this basis.

- Strengthening the role of local actors in crisis management

The conference demanded acknowledging the central role of local authorities, especially in emergencies, and developing the experiences of the Gaza Municipality and the popular committees in the Jenin refugee camp as two national models to be evaluated, developed, and rolled.

The conference called for providing the popular committees in the camps with a legal and institutional framework that ensures sustaining their role as legitimate social entities, especially amid the challenges facing the refugee issue. It stressed the need to move from improvised responses to sustainable participatory crisis management, based on planning, resource integration, and linking community interventions to fair and transparent spending plans.

- Accountability and community trust

Enhancing community accountability mechanisms as they constitute a complementary element to participation, ensuring justice in resource distribution, protecting civic action from politicization and polarization, and contributing to rebuilding trust between society and governance institutions.

In conclusion, the conference affirmed that confronting the escalating colonial onslaught cannot be achieved through closed centralized tools or top-down approaches, but rather through a national participatory and complementary governance model based on partnership, mutual recognition of roles, and strengthening active social structures, within a comprehensive national framework that protects the social and geographic unity and strengthens Palestinian steadfastness.

At the end of the conference, MIFTAH affirmed its commitment to continue this discussion, build on the conference's outcomes, and seek to transform them into sustainable policy and dialogue channels, in a manner that urges the Palestinian government to adopt a participatory and complementary governance policy, and establish a local administration model that reflects the will of society and protects its unity, during one of the most dangerous and complex stages in contemporary Palestinian history.



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