

Farewell to Victimhood

JANUARY 2016 SALAM FAYYAD

Much has been written, and a lot more said, about the nature of the recent upsurge in both the expression and extent of Palestinian rejection of the Israeli occupation, of its tyranny and oppression, and of its systematic deepening of an already profound sense of historical injustice, rooted in the drive to establish a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine and the broad-based international support for that Zionist vision, which was much in evidence during the British colonization of Palestine. This sense of injustice has dominated the Palestinians' mindset and shaped their worldview, particularly since the Nakba—the displacement and dispossession that followed. So has the fervent denial of even the reality of Palestinians' existence, and of their historical, religious, and cultural ties to the land of their forefathers. Also contributing to the Palestinians' sense of injustice was the complete support that Israel has enjoyed from the most influential international powers, first and foremost, from the United States of America, even after Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967, and, even in the course of the so-called peace process, with those powers choosing not to play the role of the equalizer vis-à-vis the highly asymmetrical balance of power between the occupying power and the people under occupation.

Against the backdrop of this core of Palestinian anger, and taking into account the nature of the popular reaction to it, it is not surprising that some are leaning—albeit with reluctance—toward calling the current state of furious unrest a real intifada. This current unrest goes back to the murder of the Palestinian teenager Mohammed Abu Khdeir, who was kidnapped and burned alive by settlers in July 2014, and to the on-and-off expression of anger and frustration in various Jerusalem neighborhoods since then, before its eventual culmination in the escalation that began in October 2015—first in Jerusalem, and subsequently in other parts of the West Bank and Gaza, and in areas within the green line.

Though the reasons for this reluctance to use the term “intifada” are understandable, and notwithstanding the tendency on the part of some to argue that the current events do not possess the right constituents or features to be called an intifada, the historical context suggests otherwise. The current state of unrest is only a link in a long and nearly unbroken chain of successive protests, strikes, uprisings, and even revolutions

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by Palestinians in the face of injustice, tyranny, usurpation of their rights, and the threat to their very existence over the course of almost a century. It is true that this third intifada does not have the kind of all-important community support or widespread participation as did the first intifada. It is also true that it does not have the military character that dominated the activities of the second intifada. Yet, there is still much in the current upheaval that evokes a recollection of the essence of the previous intifadas, as well as the essence of other eruptions, such as the tunnel uprising in 1996, the Land Day uprising in 1976, the contemporary Palestinian revolution that began in 1965, the 1937-39 revolutions, the “thirty-six” revolution, the 1930-35 revolutions, the 1929 Buraq uprising, the 1921 Jaffa uprising, and the revolution of 1920.

The similarities also naturally extend to the inspired popular movement that began in Bili'n in early 2005, and which expanded to include a number of areas adjacent to, and in confrontation with, various constituents of the colonialist Israeli settlement enterprise. They similarly extend to the many other manifestations of Palestinian refusal to despair or to cave in before the brute force and ruffian oppression of the usurpative colonialist power. And this refusal to bow, this spirit of defiance and sacrifice, is inspired by and reflected in the heroic, near-legendary martyrdom of Atta Al-Zeir, Mohammad Jamjoum, and Fouad Hijazi, as well as that of their predecessors and the present-day descendants of Palestinian martyrs. It is kindled by the agony and suffering of imprisonment, deportation, displacement, and exile in asylum and refugee camps in Palestine and diaspora, and beyond that, by the suffering, oppression, and persecution that have dug themselves deep into the individual and collective consciousness of generations of Palestinians, including today's post-Oslo generation, the youth who lit the torch of the third intifada. For who among those youngsters has not experienced one or more facets of the struggle carried out by the Palestinians and the suffering they endured—either

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directly or through the stories passed down from their elders, which together in their entirety form the crucible and the national dimensions of the Palestinian national struggle? And who among those young men and women is not the product of an era that has witnessed sweeping social and cultural change, brought about by a combination of the immensely appealing idea of a return to the fundamentals, particularly against the backdrop of the disillusionment with, and the failure of, the ideologies that swept through Palestine and the rest of the Arab world during the 1950s and 1960s, and of the various manifestations of the information revolution that have placed these young Palestinians in direct contact with their peers from all corners of the globe, instilling in them the feeling that they have the same talent and ability as everyone else, but are inhibited in the face of the enormous power of a status quo that doggedly resists change?

Yes, let us call it the third intifada. And if there has been any dispute as to what is driving the escalation of Palestinian anger these days, there is no disagreement that there exists hope, if not conviction, in this intifada's capacity to bring about some positive change in the course of events in Palestine. Not only directly, but also by reviving interest in the Palestinian cause at both the regional and international levels. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring, the region has become completely overwhelmed by a situation of unprecedented violence and radicalization, by a lack of security, and by

the political and social instability in many countries of the region—not to mention the grave spillover effects beyond it.

Therefore, to the extent that there is a hesitation to engage in public support for the intifada or wager on its outcome, this probably merely reflects a natural fear of the unknown, or apprehension about the possibility of losing some of the benefits and privileges associated with the status quo. At the same time, there is a lot of frustration with the status quo, and growing dissatisfaction

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regarding the lack of adequate benefits and opportunities, their unfair distribution in the context of the occupation and of the state of Palestinian separation and divisions, and a general weakness in the performance of the Palestinian political system. Perhaps more importantly, there has also been an erosion in the Palestinian political leadership's ability to provide convincing answers to the public, particularly the youth, within the framework of a fully integrated political vision. In the final analysis, the balance of the aforementioned considerations points to a broad-based desire to foster conditions conducive to sustaining the current intifada, and to maximizing its capacity to yield a positive outcome. The question, of course, is how.

As a prelude to the discussion of this fundamental issue, it might be useful to consider what ought to be avoided.

First, it is advisable to refrain from expecting the current intifada to conform to any preconceived notions that may be held by the political leadership, or to try to mold it to correspond to their vision of the intifada's goals and means. For one thing, I don't believe that the political leadership even has a unified or clear enough vision on this issue. This means that any insistence on superimposing such a rigid template on the intifada could lead to polarization and fragmentation, which will perhaps, in turn, detract from the intifada's unifying role in the Palestinian struggle. And for another, when political rivalries dominate the scene and the issuance of a credit-taking statement becomes more important than its content, the continuity of the intifada becomes an overriding objective in and of itself—even if that means pushing our young men and women, including children, to engage in self-annihilation. In addition to this being both inhumane and morally repugnant, it also ends up crippling the intifada, rather than reinforcing its spirit.

Second, it is essential to refrain from overloading the intifada with burdens it cannot currently carry, whether by setting out goals that are unachievable in the short term, or by pushing for its militarization. Last, but not least, care must be taken to avoid falling into the trap of attempting to contain or restrain the uprising, and to refrain from even thinking of resorting to the use of force in order to do so. Such an approach would deepen the divide between the leadership and the people, perhaps creating a state of internal tension and instability, with dire consequences. This would be a grave mistake, and must be avoided at all costs.

The analysis thus far has addressed what ought to be avoided in dealing with the reality of the third intifada. In terms of what ought to be done, this lies mainly in attempting to quickly, fundamentally, and strategically try to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the intifada to reformulate the Palestinian relationship with the occupying power, with a view toward grounding it in different principles than those that have been adopted and applied since the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. What is meant here is not to again brandish the threat, whether serious or otherwise, to annul the Oslo Accords in whole or in part, under the rubric of making the occupation costlier to the occupying power, or even shifting to it the entire burden of its occupation. In fact, this idea dates back to the period, at the height of the second intifada, when the Israeli army redeployed in the cities of the West Bank and reintroduced direct management and control by the so-called civil administration, both there and elsewhere in the occupied Palestinian territory. Thereafter, variants of the same idea resurfaced from time to time, but the policy ultimately caught on in recent years with its adoption by the leadership, and its ultimate dissemination to the world in President Mahmoud Abbas's latest speech at the United Nations. It is fair to say, however, that this policy option has not been meaningfully operationalized. In fact, there has been no formulation of a position that could actually serve to create a new paradigm for managing the Palestinian-Israeli relationship, which, I believe, is urgently needed. To form one, we should first seek to forge national consensus on a program of action that is based on insistence to maintain all of the rights guaranteed to Palestinians under international law, and is guided by the principles of equality and parity. We should not continue to engage in an extortive political process that assumes the inevitability of more and more Palestinian concessions, as if we were willing to go far beyond the historical, painful compromise of 1988—which had formally signaled willingness on the part of Palestinians to accept, within the framework of a comprehensive settlement, a state of their own on only 22 percent of their ancestral land.

Within the logical sequence of things, the formulation of a new paradigm for the relationship between us and the occupying power requires, first of all, the adoption of a national program that enjoys broad-based support among Palestinians, both at home and in the diaspora. To facilitate this pursuit, it may be useful to draw on the experience of the Palestinians themselves. To that end, a quick overview of the evolution of the declared, or generally perceived, national goals over the progression of

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various stages of the Palestinian struggle may be revealing. In the early 1920s, the focus of national attention was not on the establishment of a Palestinian state, but on preventing the Jews from having one of their own on the land of historical Palestine. This remained the case throughout the 1920s, and through the uprisings of the 1930s and beyond, right up until the proclamation of Israel as a state in 1948. During the consequent period, and right up until the mid-1960s, the idea that dominated Palestinian political thought was the elimination of the state of Israel. Toward the end of that decade, however, two distinct strands of thought became discernable. The first focused on the preservation and consolidation of the Palestinian national identity, and was directly inspired by the impact of the Nakba and the subsequent escalation of the Zionist attempts to suppress or even eliminate this identity. The second focused on the idea of establishing a democratic and secular Palestinian state, rooted in the position that had been adopted by Palestinian communists. Perhaps it is more accurate to say, even if only in passing, that the concept of Palestinian statehood was then—and for the most part is still—phrased in an Arabic term that strongly connotes automaticity, rather than an active act of national empowerment and state building. In essence, the prevailing conventional wisdom was that Palestinian statehood was inevitable, and that the state would simply emerge upon the elimination of Israel.

The establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and its subsequent adoption in the early 1970s as a national address for the Palestinian people, went a long way toward securing significant protection for the Palestinian national identity. In parallel, several important shifts in national political thought started to occur, mainly in the direction of accepting the idea of a Palestinian state, alongside the Israeli one, in Palestine. This shift gained momentum upon the adoption of the “ten-plank program” in 1974, which, in an important sense, reflected the gist of “the attainable and nationally acceptable” slogan that started to circulate following the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. And after some back and forth, the shift in question was officially consecrated in the Declaration of Independence and the Palestinian peace initiative in 1988 at the height of the first intifada. That, of course, left no room for doubt that the Palestinians were willing to accept what subsequently became known as the two-state solution.

Today, there may be more than one opinion on the extent to which the Palestinians were able to coalesce around a unified political vision in 1988, and on what impact that might have had on the national struggle in the subsequent years. What is certain, however, is that the Declaration of Independence in 1988 represented a moment of perhaps unprecedented consensus in the history of the Palestinian people—not only because it was the outcome of an extraordinary effort by the Palestinian National Council to frame Palestinian demands within a framework powerfully supported by international law, but, more importantly, because it touched a highly emotional cord among Palestinians, wherever they were, evoking a powerful sense of hope that their very long journey of suffering and sacrifice would soon be over. For who among us cannot recall, as if it were only yesterday, when “Abu Ammar” famously declared—with his emotion-laden voice reverberating and his powerful words echoing at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in Jerusalem’s Old City, in Palestine’s streets and squares, and in the cells of Palestinian prisoners in the occupier’s jails—“In the name of God, and in the name of the Palestinian Arab people, the Palestinian National Council hereby proclaims the establishment of the State of Palestine on our Palestinian land, with Jerusalem as its capital.”

It may be said that the consensus commanded by the Declaration of Independence, which lasted for a considerable period of time, could have lasted longer on the strength of the sense of accomplishment and spirit of unity inspired by the first intifada, had it not been for the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. The signing led to a rift in the ranks of Palestinians, a situation that persists until today, thereby constituting the longest period of fundamental difference in the Palestinian political vision since the 1920s. Worse yet, the rift that occurred in 1993 has since deepened, as the hope of establishing an independent Palestinian state on the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel in 1967 faded away progressively, especially since the 1999 expiry of the timeline envisaged in the Oslo framework. This reality has steadily worsened over the course of the past decade, as a result of the state of division and fragmentation that has befallen the Palestinian political system and undermined the integrity of its constituent components, as well as regional and international developments that have pushed the Palestinian cause away from the circle of immediate interest, both regionally and internationally.

Under these conditions, it does not seem feasible to try to develop a political vision with organizing principles

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and instruments of implementation that might enjoy a sufficient degree of national consensus. That is not likely to be a productive endeavor, certainly not in time to take advantage of the opportunities the current intifada could offer, such as introducing adjustments to the national effort and placing Palestine on a path of renewed hope with a sense of possibility. Therefore, instead of continuing in the pursuit of the ideal—which has, unfortunately, only found expression in the form of rhetoric, and has led to a dangerous deterioration in the standing and credibility of the various components of the Palestinian political system—it may be necessary to take the initiative to outline a unified and agreed-upon workplan, but one whose implementation does not require all parties to immediately approve all of its constituent components. In doing so, care must be taken to avoid articulating this plan in ambiguous terms that are open to various interpretations, as has repeatedly happened before, but rather in clear, precise formulations. Specifically, I propose the following:

First: In view of the substantial erosion in the terms of reference of the “peace process” over the course of numerous failed rounds of negotiations—and with a view to allaying any concerns regarding what has effectively become of the 1988 national program, or regarding the PLO’s willingness to continue to be a party, even if only unwittingly, to an extortive process that has seemingly entailed limitless concessions—the PLO should categorically affirm its full commitment to the array of inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, as provided for under international law. These primarily include the right of return of Palestinian refugees to their homes, and the right to self-determination in a fully sovereign state on the Palestinian territory occupied by Israel in 1967, in its entirety, with East Jerusalem as its capital. This assertion of rights, without prejudice (as will subsequently be made clear) to the position of those Palestinian parties currently opposed to the two-state solution, is intended as a tool to achieve a two-pronged objective. Firstly, it sends a clear message that the PLO will not continue to negotiate on the basis of the existing approach. Instead, it must negotiate as dictated by the principles of equality and parity, on a

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basis that considers the recognition of our national rights a fundamental prerequisite that cannot be circumvented. For the principles in question are incompatible with one side’s historical narrative overriding that of the other, as was unfortunately the case in the design of the foundational component of the Oslo Accords, the so-called declaration of mutual recognition. Even a quick examination of the essence of the “Letters of Mutual Recognition” would reveal that there was nothing mutual or symmetrical about the recognition content of those letters, which explicitly provided for recognition by the PLO, acting on behalf of all Palestinians, of “the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security” in exchange for the mere recognition by Israel of the PLO as “representative of the Palestinian people.” The latter was obviously much less than a symmetrical recognition of the right of Palestinians to a state of their own.

This asymmetry is seriously problematic, for it negated our historical narrative in favor of Israel’s, and abridged Palestinian rights that are rooted in international law. In addition, it contributed to creating a situation whereby, even before the beginning of any negotiations about a solution, the Palestinians have found themselves in the position of beneficiaries who ought to be grateful for any crumbs Israel decides to throw their way. This is not how peace is made. The world needs to understand this and the Israeli leadership, above all, needs to understand it.

As Mahmoud Darwish wrote in his “Message from the Palestinian People,” to commemorate the fifty-third anniversary of the Nakba: “There can be no peace between master and slave.” This powerful message holds special relevance today, for it asserts that this third intifada—like the other two that came before it, and all other uprisings and protests of the Palestinian people—does not imply that the Palestinians have abandoned their quest for peace, but instead underscores their determination to pursue peace within a framework that is founded on the principles of equality and parity, as well as their determination to persevere in the face of oppression and tyranny.

The other objective of the insistence on a full adherence to our national rights is that it represents an important first step toward an immediate end of the division and

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fragmentation in the Palestinian political system, whose credibility has greatly suffered. The system's capacity to pursue Palestinian national objectives has been grossly undermined by its consistent failure to end the state of separation, despite repeated assertions of commitment to the attainment of this objective. Such has been the depth of failure that Palestinians have developed a growing sense of disillusionment with the political system in its entirety and doubt regarding its real intent when it comes to ending the state of separation. And all of this has led to a loss of faith in the political system, particularly among the younger generation, and to an unprecedented decline in the standing of the system. And here are the youth of the third intifada, who seem to be saying, "We are tired of waiting. We have decided to take matters into our own hands, and we have begun, together, united, to express our categorical refusal to yield in the face of oppression and the occupier's attempt to break our people's will or to bend it in any way. No, we will not wait for directions from anyone, and we will no longer abide by any logic that attempts to rationalize the failure to fortify the internal front or to stop the relentless attempts to trample on our rights. No. A thousand times no to any rationalizations. And to victimhood, we say: Farewell, forever."

Second: Despite the current preoccupation with the requirements of dealing with the challenges associated with the current intifada—and in order to focus instead on moving quickly to build on the intifada's unique character and unifying power—we must promptly implement measures aimed at bringing the current state of division and fragmentation in the Palestinian political system to an end, once and for all. This fundamentally necessitates that we begin where it presently matters the most, namely, the Gaza Strip.

This would be the right choice for two reasons: firstly, the urgent need to address the catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza; and secondly, from a strategic perspective, the need to reintegrate the Gaza Strip into the Palestinian political fold as a basic prerequisite for the success of the Palestinians' quest for the attainment of their national rights.

This reintegration requires taking some serious steps toward effectively managing Palestinian pluralism, with respect to the requirements of both Palestinian internal affairs and international relations. And this, in turn, necessitates an immediate convening and activation of the interim PLO leadership framework—ensuring that

the Palestinian government is representative of the entire political spectrum, and that it is empowered to the fullest extent provided for under the Basic Law—as well as a prompt convening of the Palestinian Legislative Council.

By vesting the interim leadership framework with the power to make decisions on matters of high national interest, in a manner that collectively informs decision-making by the PLO, the interim leadership framework will effectively ensure genuine partnership for non-PLO factions in the decision-making process as it pertains to the pursuit of Palestinian rights, while still allowing the PLO to retain its platform and its status as representative of all Palestinians. Naturally, this arrangement would be only a transitional one, and it will last until such time as it becomes possible to hold elections for the Palestinian National Council, or, pending that, until a consensus is forged on an objective mechanism for expanding the PLO's base of representation and amending its platform.

The government—vested in the full exercise of the powers granted to it under the Basic Law, and supported by the participation of all factions and political parties—must be charged with two tasks. It must rebuild Gaza, and reintegrate all Palestinian institutions and legal frameworks across the West Bank and Gaza. This must be carried out under the full accountability that results from the immediate reconvening of the Legislative Council, which will, in turn, also serve to ensure good governance.

In terms of priorities, it may be useful to focus the initial deliberations of the interim leadership on the need to develop a national agenda that features a heavily domestic focus. In addition to emphasizing the need to enhance the steadfastness of the Palestinian people, especially in Jerusalem, this agenda should primarily focus on the multiyear tasks of reconstructing the Gaza Strip and reunifying Palestinian institutions, and legal and regulatory frameworks, across the West Bank and Gaza after more than eight years of separation. The agenda could also usefully, and importantly, elaborate the concept of the truce with Israel that has reportedly been the subject of recent deliberations in connection with the situation in Gaza, with a view toward generalizing it and synchronizing its term to coincide with the timeline of the reconstruction and reunification effort. On that basis, the interim leadership would then task the PLO with communicating the Palestinian commitment to the truce, while working on securing an agreement, to be enshrined in a United Nations Security Council resolution, that the

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Israeli occupation end on a certain date, by the end of that commitment's term.

With the adoption of a national agenda of the kind outlined here—and with a firm commitment to holding free, fair, and inclusive elections no later than six months before the end of the truce and the reconstruction/reunification period—the interim leadership will have taken a giant leap toward placing the Palestinian national effort on a path of self-empowerment. This path could be of sufficient transformative power to also address at least some of the basic weaknesses of the existing paradigm for dealing with the occupying power, including in the sphere of Palestinian representation against the backdrop of the rise in the standing of non-PLO factions, and the concomitant erosion in the standing of the PLO and its constituent factions. In addition, the commitment to hold general elections would send an important message to Palestinian youth, a message of determination to effectively involve them in decision-making, especially after an entire decade has passed since the last elections were held. This, no doubt, has led to a marginalization of Palestine's younger generation, and perhaps contributed to a wide sense of alienation among this important segment of society.

In some important ways, the effort to attain national unity on the basis of the framework presented here runs counter to the so-called Quartet Principles, which essentially require any Palestinian government to fully accept the “declaration of mutual recognition.” To this, I would say, it is time to move on. For one thing, a time-bound commitment to nonviolence is about the most that all Palestinian factions, including non-PLO factions, can realistically accept. For another, the conceptual equivalent to those principles on the Israeli side—namely, acceptance of the Palestinian right to statehood—was never formally expected of the various Israeli governments since Oslo. Indeed, it would be neither just nor reasonable to expect all components of the Palestinian political system to comply with principles that are not observed today by even a single cabinet officer in Israel. Even those few in office in Israel today who assert acceptance of the two-state solution concept would be hard pressed to convincingly or

categorically deny the claim that what they mean when they say “Palestinian state” is something other than a meaningless state of leftovers. Again, I would say, let us move on.

Naturally, we cannot ignore the need for a thorough Palestinian debate on the PLO's current or prospective political platform. At its core, this debate cannot but be about, at least in part, the desirability or admissibility of continuing to hold onto the vision of the two-state solution. This issue has acquired a great and growing significance in the Palestinian political discourse since the signing of the Oslo Accords, mainly because of the failure of the Oslo framework, and the PLO's bet on it, to deliver statehood for the Palestinians within the timeline envisaged under that framework, but also

and especially, with the progressive loss of faith in the continued viability of the two-state solution concept against the backdrop of continued Israeli settlement activity and other egregious violations by the occupying power of the Palestinians' basic rights and international law.

Rather than paper over the important differences of opinion in this central domain, or try to forge consensus by going for vaguely and kaleidoscopically worded formulations, I propose that we acknowledge that, while fundamental and legitimate, those differences cannot realistically be expected to be reconciled any

time soon. Therefore, we should defer the moment of choice for settling this debate until we get to the point when we must do so. Specifically, that means when Israel, as was stipulated earlier, recognizes our national rights, including the right to a fully sovereign state on the entire territory it occupied in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, ahead of any new engagement on the parameters of a lasting settlement. In the absence of willingness on the part of Israel to entertain such ideas, the intra-Palestinian dispute as to the solution concept we should seek would remain moot. Conversely, if and when Israel shows willingness to engage on the aforementioned terms, then we should move to converge on a unified vision. In the meantime, we will have achieved unity, and advanced the national dialogue on the solution concept—not to mention that we will have advanced the cause of projecting

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the reality of a Palestinian state where it matters the most, namely, on the ground in Palestine.

Third: Along with all other Palestinian pursuits outlined above, and as an integral component of the national effort going forward, not even a minute should be allowed to pass without full engagement by all, and at all official and civil-society levels, in the one battle for Palestinian statehood. At the end of the day, what will matter most is a comprehensive and relentless campaign, and tireless dedication to project the reality of Palestinian statehood on the ground despite the occupation, and as a means of ending it. This is the core of the self-empowerment agenda that should be pursued with utmost determination, and this is the true defiant spirit of the current intifada and its predecessors. In practical terms, this vision implies the need to respond to the needs of the Palestinian people, especially in Jerusalem and in the so-called “Area C,” with a view toward enhancing their capacity to persevere and providing the means for their resistant existence in the face of the oppression and capriciousness of the occupation, as well as the restrictions imposed under the Oslo framework—including with respect to the exclusion of East Jerusalem from the purview of Palestinians, as is also the case in 60 percent of the landmass of the West Bank, including most of the territory in the Jordan Valley.

All of this is to happen on the Palestinian path to freedom in a state of institutions and rule of law: a progressive, democratic state that is worthy of our people’s sacrifices and our children’s promise; a state that advances the universally shared values of tolerance, equality, justice, and human dignity; and a state that derives its strength from its transformative potential, by unleashing new ideas and empowering citizens to create positive realities on the ground. This is actually the way to provide real support to what, at its core, the intifada is all about. And this is what the highly regarded Palestinian activist Haidar Abdel-Shafi had in mind when he exalted the virtues of “unity, justice, and order” as key enablers in the quest for freedom and restitution of rights. This is the moment of truth; there is no escaping it.

Last but not least, in our effort along the path to building the state, we must, with full determination and resolve, continue amassing achievements and successes, and building upon them. This includes taking advantage of the upgrade of Palestine’s membership status in the United Nations, not just in our foreign

relations—though that is no doubt important—but on the domestic front. This means within Palestine itself, and in conformity with the logic of the state, as inspired by the high values mentioned above and accompanied by the uncompromising pursuit of building and fortifying state institutions in all parts of the country—without any regard to the unjust classifications whose time has long expired, even before the expiration of the Oslo interim period. This is a right. It is also a duty, under all circumstances, but it has become particularly urgent now in the sphere of security, to provide the necessary protection for our citizens from Israeli settlers’ violence and terrorist acts, through the deployment of the “army” (as Abu Ammar liked to call the National Security Forces) in their military uniform in all areas of the countryside and in the Bedouin communities. Actions of this kind, and at this juncture, would also constitute a clear signal of determination to safeguard our institutional existence and unity, a signal of full commitment to persevere, and one which essentially says, “Here we are, and here we shall remain.”

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