

## Politics versus economy, which of the two is in the driving seat?

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First of all thanks to the organizers, I would like to thank you for coming to Palestine, for organizing this event here, and in this regard I would like to thank all the people who came to visit Palestine, whether it is from Spain, other international countries or Israel, who are here to be with us, to discuss in Palestine, this very important topic. In this regard I would also like to thank Spain for the more than 200 plus millions euro support for Palestine. But as Jesus Christ said: "One does not live of bread only". You are helping us in maintaining the society in Palestine, in paying basically our monthly wages and in ensuring that we don't starve, but in fact, one has always to remember that this aid is basically going to finance the colonialist occupation which unfortunately is still lasting.

First of all, I want to bring back the discussion in this session to the basics. To me, I'd like to discuss the core issue, the fundamental issue for us Palestinians which is mainly the occupation. I'd like to tackle this issue in a different way, a way-out of this mess. I believe is something that we can all do. It does not involve violence, but purely economics and some brave decisions that everyone can take. So, in fact the title of my presentation is: "Politics versus economics. Which of the two is in the driving seat?"

Historically the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was characterized by the economy and thus its social and economic conditions was held hostage of politics, mainly to the national decision of Israel and its political allies in the West. In difficult decisions taken by these allies, policies were implemented by Israel with a complete disregard, not only to their effects on the economy but also to international and basic communitarian law and to human rights.

To many on the West, this is what we see as people in Palestine who are on the receiving end of events here, this whole concept of international law and human rights were mainly propaganda to deploy against other despot states, while Israel acted with completed impunity. Palestinian fate whether it is social, economic or even our physical presence here, was never in our hands. Our fate was basically at the whim of decisions and actions of others, named officers of Israel. This capture versus relationship can easily be seen when looking at life in Palestine and the effect that the occupation and the colonial belt is imposing with the control of all aspects of life in Palestine, above all, social and economic conditions. If you look at the check points, if you look at controlling electricity, water, etc., everything is only a switch of a button away from an Israeli decision taking by the Israeli army, or the Israeli government.

This complete dependence or symbiotic relationship is an undisputed fact and thus is not what I would like to focus on today. What I would like to focus on today is on an emerging development that has seismic proportion and I'd like to emphasize the word seismic, earthquake proportion. It can have a potential to reverse the roles and put the economy in the driving seat of politics and not vice versa.

I am talking about the decisions of the politics of the state of Israel and its historical allies being influenced by what happens here. The catalyst for this potential for change here is mainly international law and human rights.

In February 5<sup>th</sup> maybe some of you read Tom Friedman, an article of opinion of the New York Time, an article entitled the Third Intifada. While I disagreed with many of Friedman's previous opinions, his different theories were not exactly my cup of cake, but his description of this current dichotomy that Israel faces, whether it has been forced to choose between its colonialism and its economic prosperity, is both accurate, and in my opinion, extremely relevant. So, what has been changing in Israel? How is this different Israel that Europe now is boycotting its products and its colonies, and the products of its colonies, and funds, and other investors are withdrawing investments in its banks? The answer nothing has changed in Israel. It is the same colonial entity pursuing the same ethnics' cleansing policies, as it did it in the past and as it has practiced for decades.

The significant change did not happen in Israel. The significant change, again which has a seismic properties, that I believe changed definitely for the good of us Palestinians, is that Palestine been accepted by an UN General Assembly Resolution as a non-member state. In November 12<sup>th</sup>, thanks to the support of many countries in the world -and here I would like to thank Spain for their vote in favour of Palestine- actually we managed to receive a two third majority in the UN General Assembly.



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Why is the UN two third majorities important? Because as we all know, the decision taken in the UN with 50 plus one vote can be reversed by a decision of 50 plus one votes. This has happened when there was a UN decision about Zionism quoted as racism. This was reversed by another General Assembly decision reversing that vote. So, a two/third majority decision means that decision is irrevocable. You would need 85% plus of the member states to say no to Palestine, which is something impossible. So, thanks to Spain, France and other EU countries, we managed it. In this regard I would like to thank Spain for not only not abiding to pressures from other European countries, I don't want to mention which, but I am sure you ambassador know who I am referring to, who are pushing for a common European position for abstention and basically not voting for Palestine. Thanks for standing up for Palestine and I believe this had a major influence, not only that day but also for the future.

What represent this change for us? Palestine today, being a non-member state, has the same status as Japan after World War II, as Austria for 10 years after World War II, as North and South Korea, as Switzerland up until the 90's, all are actually recognized by the international community, but by that time they were non member states of the UN. Basically, this opens to us the possibility of joining all international treaties, I personally care mainly about one, which is the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The Rome Statute established the International Criminal Court (ICC), and also of course I care about Palestine immediately joining and signing to the Geneva Conventions. How can we do that? Following our basic law, which is our Constitution; this can be done through a presidential decree. So only it only takes from Abu Mazen, to sign this.

Do ICC has jurisdiction, on what happened in Palestine? The answer is yes, and I can give you an example, which is Nigeria; - you can find it by google - the four farmers from Nigeria who sued the Shell oil Company of their country to the ICC. Basically the company extracted oil from the mayor delta of the country causing severe environmental damage. It has been considered as punishment as a world crime. Not only ICC accepted that this argument, but actually indented shell oil and if you google it again you may see that the shell oil had to pay 4 hundred and 50 million in compensations for the different people in Nigeria, basically for this case.

Basically and essentially, according to my promise and the promise of the legal opinion that I have, that any infringed on political or territorial sovereignty, on Palestine is a cause for us to go to the ICC and of course, the list is endless. So to mention few cases for those of you how do not know; Lufthansa Airlines is flying over Palestine without permission, or paying anything. Volkswagen signed a deal with Israel for the death sea salts, basically minerals using them in building cars, to mix them with aluminium, 9.2 billion. The largest cement company in Europe has two couriers in the colonies; five or six where built on Latroun, by the Germans and the Canadians cooperation, taking money on the daily basis

from people like me who travel, infringing Palestinian territory. Veolia Transport, the company that built the rail network, which you can see out side here, the tram, linking the colonies to other parts of Jerusalem, is basically infringing Palestinian sovereignty.

It is not, we do not know how many hundreds of thousands colonialists living on this part of the world, this part of the land, the territory, not only the wall, are potential world criminals, anybody who gives a support, a service, to any house in the colonies, etc. For example, Orange Telecom, which is active in the colonies, owned by this guy from Hong Kong, (we have already built up a case against him) who is a major shareholder of Samsung.

For so long it was only the "crazies" and I put it between brackets, people like me, who was saying this. I have news for you all, is not only us. Now, this is basically what is being repeated by rational people, like Thomas Friedman. I can describe to you a meeting with Abu Mazen, in November and Kerry the first time they met, during the one and a half our meeting I can tell you one hour and twenty minutes plus minutes were describing his nuclear bomb. Basically Kerry, and I am quoting exactly what he said: came and said: "you have a nuclear bomb, Abu Mazen said: "what? I don't have a nuclear bomb. Do not underestimate the power of joining the international organizations. So, Abu Mazen knows this very well. Kerry in a meeting in Washington D.C, by the end of October, I can quote what he said in a closed meeting. It was in an after dinner speech, in which Palestinians and Israelis were there, he said three things. Before I tell you about Kerry, there has been an agreement between Palestinians and Israelis to put a moratorium on us joining the Rome Statute or other international organizations. This moratorium, nine months, expires 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2014, so to ask Palestinians this is the D day. This is the day that we are all preparing for and this time we are not going to make it pass without insuring that something thus happen.

Basically what Kerry said in that dinner, he said three things; number one, Abu Mazen is the only guy in town. If you are not going to make peace with Abu Mazen, there will be no peace in the region. Number two; if the Palestinians, after the nine months period decide to join the international organizations because there is no peace treaty, or no movement on peace, then nobody can blame them. And most significantly, he finished by saying, "and then you will face one lawsuit, after another and another lawsuit". He repeated it five times. He ended by saying the choice is yours.

I can tell you I had countless discussions, with; starting from the taxi drivers who takes me somewhere, to the highest officials, and to be honest, this is the thing that I always push and more and more people are saying, yes, what you are saying make sense. This can be one of the cases. To prove what I am saying, I will tell you what happened at the beginning of this year. The xxx of the Dutch fund from Israeli banks. Something that is coming now,



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you will hear about it very soon, it is the largest proven fund in Europe. Israel because the legal opinion can go to The Hague if they don't stop investments in the colonies basically this touch prove fund prode Israel in you are investing in five banks whether the money that they are investing. You are not allowed to invest in East Jerusalem or the colonies. Of course, the Israeli banks have not withdrawn from East Jerusalem, or the colonies. So, for the first time the economy, to be honest, the economy is not going to be in the driving site and for the first time, in our history, we Palestinians, we are not on the receiving end. For the first time, we, as Palestinians, can determine our own future and, for the first time, nobody can't hide neither the Europeans, nor the Americans, nobody can hide. Anybody that is infringing on Palestinian sovereignty will pay the price. What will happen?

I believe five things have the potential of happening; three are impossible. We are going to make sure that one of the impossibilities isn't going to happen. People like me are going to make sure that this doesn't, after the nine month period, after the D day. Number one, Israel will wake up tomorrow and will say: sorry guys we make a mistake, we are going to withdraw to the international recognition the borders of 1967, and this is something that will not happen. Number two; Abu Mazen will sign the treaty and give us a chance to make sure that those who have infringed on Palestinian sovereignty will face the ICC. I don't think this will happen either. Knowing how politics is, a very dirty game (I am sorry Ambassador. It is the second oldest profession in the world, but the oldest profession has more decency). I don't think this will happen either. So, what will happen; number one, as a way out of this facing reality, Israel can push to more violence, complete disorder, you call it new intifada, you call it terrorism, you call it, what ever you want, so it will render impossible for Abu Mazen to take a decision. But I don't think Israel and the West will spend billions in building the Palestinian security structures so us to destroy it by one decision of doing that. Basically, we can't contain violence whit two small effective country to contain violence in this specific area. I think that what will really happen is, most probably, is, we call it Uncle Kerry, will come here and will imposes a solution. It will not be what we want, but it will be definitely much more than what Israel is ready, or was ready to discuss earlier.

I believe this is coming. I believe that for us who want to make peace, who are interested in surging for common grounds, it is time to convince everybody on the other side that this is possible. I recommend you read this Thomas Friedman's piece. I am happy that maybe Palestine could offer a different model from what is happening in the Middle East. We were the first flash point of violence, and now violence is all aver the Middle East, so maybe international law building a new reality based on equity and security for all, and respect for Human rights and International law could be the new model that Palestine can give to the way we solve other conflicts in the Region.