



CEMOFPSC ROUND TABLE: "An education of quality in the conflict area, as a way of improving peace and integration"



Interview made by CEMOFPS

28 of April 2011

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1. Given that an agreement between Hamas and Al-Fatah has been reached, how do you think this point is going to influence the educational situation in your country?

I think that what we are having now it is an attempt to create a reconciliation process, which will end 4 or 5 years of an actual division of the country. This is my point of view, something which is good: To create a perspective of the unity in the minds of people because having this division is affecting the perception of our children of our country, and hopefully it will also endorse for another round of democratic election which will say what exactly the Palestinians want.

I have no doubt the Palestinians at this stage are looking forward to have an actual settlement of the situation and especially when it comes to occupation and I hope Hamas will change, and if we are going toward that direction, it is going to be an additional step that the Palestinians will provide for the international community that says clearly that Palestine has to get rid of this occupation and has to look forward, regardless of the internal scene, because Palestinians are mostly secular and the Palestinians, at large, believe in the future prosperity of their country and they believe they have to be part of the international community and they have also to feel responsible of the future of their children, so regardless Fatah and Hamas, here we are talking about the Palestinian people and the people have to decide at the end of the day .



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2. Do you think it is going to be possible to achieve the Millennium development goal number two (**Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling**) by the 2015 (in Palestine)?

I think that we are highlighting here very crucial elements in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, especially when it comes to education for all. A perspective we have is to make sure that all who are underprivileged and marginalized as well as those who are living in a very severe situation specially in Jerusalem and Gaza and some areas that are affected by the construction of the Wall, deserve to receive the needed attention and we have to shortcut and get rid of all those measures that are hindering the attempt of Palestinians to provide education for every one.

Education is a right that is guaranteed by International law and therefore the International community or your organizations, everybody has to support the Palestinian authority and people in making sure that every Palestinian is receiving his or her education whether Israelis like it or not and this is something we have to insist on and nobody can accept the demolition of schools anymore, as well as nobody can believe at the moment, not to allow Palestinians to expand schooling facilities in Jerusalem and nobody can really believe that teachers are not able to arrive to their schools and students need to go through security checking to arrive to their schools, these are the major elements that are affecting our goal to achieve education for all, and despite all, be sure that we are in a very satisfactory level when it comes to education for all of us.

But in the end, are you optimistic?

I am optimistic because Palestine is not far at large from arriving at the destiny that we have highlighted as the goal of education for all and therefore what is really remaining are things that needs political decisions and the pressure of the international community.

3. Knowing that the Palestinian Education System depends strongly on the International Aid, how do you manage to plan the Ministry’s education policies in the middle & long term?



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First of all you should know that setting education policies and strategies are based on mutual debate and from my point of view the new trends that are really highlighting are the needs of the community.

Definitely, we have to take into consideration the international perspectives, and these are very clear in the UN resolutions and other declarations that really stood education as the priority. The most important thing is how to deal with the challenges that we are facing and therefore we need to move forward in highlighting these policies from the national perspectives but also to create platforms of dialogue with our international partners in order to make sure we all are in the same side and that we all are believing in the same issues. So enhancing partnership in education development is the only way forward and therefore international community needs to make sure that the priorities that we are highlighting are really on the ground and their adaptation should be smooth, transparent and with a very sophisticated and credible system of monitoring evaluation system that we have to build in place.

4. It could be considered that in some way there is a lack of a common co-ordination of resources or at least there is a real risk in that sense of duplication of actions, Has the Ministry in Palestine the mechanisms to assess the different donors’ ongoing or implemented agendas? How the Ministry can co-ordinate this international effort in order to avoid duplications?

We have a very active platform of debate with international organizations, it was established ten years ago, it is the education sector working group in Palestine and this is a platform and working group that gather all the active international partners in education, we are talking about donor countries, international organizations, civil societies institutions, this group is now playing as a brainstorming platform that is really very powerful in creating a common understanding. What we need is more than a mechanism or a tool which would enable to administrate, to control, what we need is more conscientious on the priorities that we have ahead of us and the challenges that we all have to meet and then work together to achieve all these goals or challenges, so it is beyond who control what and what is the role of whom, we have basically to understand the common issues, we have to make sure that we all perceive the common ground and the challenges that are ahead of us and work together in order to meet them efficiently and in an effective way.



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5. How do you manage to respond to the constant crisis episodes that take place in the area? What is the real capacity of the Ministry of Education in the Gaza Strip?

Well, regarding Gaza we are talking about Palestinians. We can understand that in Gaza, Hamas now is very influential and they control the public life but regardless, there are still a lot of people in Gaza, as well as institutions, public opinions, non governmental organisations and a civil society that are really pressuring Hamas in order to listen to the voice of the Nation, but also there is a very decent kind of approach in making sure that we are having continuous dialogue, therefore in practical terms, for the education sector in Gaza, we have a very clear partnership with UNRWA which represents almost 60% of the education system in Gaza. We are having good connection with Universities through the Council for Education and therefore Universities are still part of the National Higher Education Council and we are also trying to address specific emergency needs by different means.

Hopefully we will again resume the responsibility on the education system in Gaza and make sure that we are going smoothly to guarantee that it has what it deserves in terms of attention.