

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT
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**THE TIDE FOR THE PALESTINIANS MAY BE CHANGING BUT THEY MUST
PLAY THE ROLE**

Elias H. Tuma

Change has come in Middle Eastern affairs, presumably in favor of the Palestinians: the international community has begun to pay attention, the United States is "talking " with the PLO, European heads of state and foreign ministers have received Palestinian officials almost as if they were counterparts, Israeli peace forces, including members of the *Knesset* (parliament), have been meeting face to face with Palestinians at the highest levels of PLO leadership. The USSR also has continued to express its sympathy and support for the Palestinian cause. Change may have been the result of the *Intifadah*, or it may have been due to maturation of the Palestinian policy makers, or it may be a reflection of the increasing socio-economic and moral burden on Israel, or it may have resulted from a combination of these factors that has put Israel on the moral defensive, indicating that the tide has begun to change. If indeed it has, this change can only be the beginning of the long process toward a peaceful settlement. However, to make the process endure the Palestinians in general and the PLO leaders in particular will have to work hard to sustain their new peace-seeker image and to realize tangible results by acceptable and predictable.

The Palestine National Council (PNC) has proclaimed an Independent State of Palestine with Yasser Arafat as President. Though no formal government-in-exile has been announced, members of the Executive Committee of the PNC act as cabinet members.

Therefore the world should expect President Arafat and his cabinet to play the roles bestowed on them in accordance with national and international protocol and diplomacy.

National and international protocols are means of lowering costs of communication between governments, facilitating affairs of state, and resolving conflict. Conversely, deviation from protocol may create confusion, misunderstanding, and may actually result in conflict. For example, protocol specifies who shall meet the head of state or the cabinet member on official business; and it specifies when, where, how, and by whom policy statements are delivered. Protocol helps to maintain the dignity of office, conserve energy, and enhance efficiency.

Conforming to protocol means that private groups, splinter groups, or peace groups usually meet with their like since they can neither negotiate with officials on behalf of their government nor do they have authority to make policy. The Israelis have often asked "where are Arab and Palestinian Peace Now? Where are the Doves "among the Palestinians"? Officials of the State of Palestine cannot substitute for these private groups by meeting representatives of Peace Now or Israeli Doves. The correct step for the state officials is to promote and encourage such groups among the Palestinians, rather than expend time and energy meeting with Israeli and American individuals who have neither the authority nor the responsibility for policy making.

The Head of State and the Cabinet have the responsibility toward their constituents. To conserve energy and make best use of the resources, they should identify policy objectives and tailor behavior guidelines accordingly, and modify these guidelines as conditions change. The *Intifadah* has undoubtedly made a difference in the relations between Palestinians and Israelis, and should be continued. However, the tactics of the

Intifadah may be due for review and modification. For example, rock throwing may have been effective at the beginning but it may not be effective now, in which case it should be changed to conserve life and energy. The *Intifadah* may be carried on in a different form: for example, the Palestinians may be equally effective by practicing silent passive resistance, boycotting Israeli product and labor markets, and exercising nonviolent civil disobedience. It is not likely that an Israeli soldier will shoot a person simply because he refuses to buy an Israeli product, work in Israel, or pay taxes, but an Israeli soldier can easily find an excuse to fire at a rock thrower. The Palestine State leaders must take the lead in reviewing the tactics and promoting new guidelines to end the occupation.

The State officials have a grave responsibility toward state building and education of the future generations. At present the occupation policy school and university closure in the West Bank inflicts a heavy cost on the Palestinians and their future. The Palestinian State leaders must see to it that schools and universities remain open, which they can do by depriving the occupation authority of any excuse to close these institutions. They can do so by abandoning the educational strike approach and adopting new tactics. The students can deliver their message by holding silent strikes for one hour a week; they can march back and forth from home to school in complete silence; and they can express their most intensive resistance by concentrating more fully on their studies and the improvement of their human capital.

The Head of State and the Cabinet have the responsibility to build the state and develop its economy. The Palestinian state officials, though not on site, can begin the process of state building and economic development by helping to phase out Palestinian labor dependence on Israel. They can do so by advocating and financing the building of

schools and homes, restoring the infrastructure, promoting industry and manufacturing, and expanding vocational and professional training. These projects will generate employment and serve as a mechanism to phase out the humiliating employment of Palestinians in Israel. What is missing are the resources. The Israeli leaders will not invest in these endeavors, but they can hardly prevent the Palestinians from building schools or roads or from promoting vocational training if they have the resources to do so. The Palestinians have started many small industries and they have established five universities and Israel did not prevent them from doing so as long as Israeli resources were not required for the purpose. The Palestinian leaders should undertake these tasks with Palestinian resources.

The Head of State and Cabinet members also have the responsibility to maintain law and order. One way the Palestinian state leaders can contribute to law and order is to prevent the ongoing recrimination and arbitrary infliction of punishment on Palestinians by Palestinians, with little evidence of due process. A life lost is a great loss to the individual, the family, and the nation.

There is little doubt that the tide has begun to change. There is little doubt either that the Palestine state leaders can and must use their resources -- human and material capital, diplomacy and international good will, and the moral strength they have realized--to their own advantage. They have created an image of themselves as peace seekers. To safeguard that image and communicate their commitment for peaceful settlement and coexistence with Israel, it would be to their advantage to observe protocol, shift to silent passive resistance and boycott, and invest as heavily as they can in moral, social, and economic building of the new State of Palestine.

Elias H. Tuma is a professor of economics at the University of California, Davis. The above views are his own and do not implicate the University in any way.

FROM OUR READERS

"Sami Geraisy's paper title 'Between the Intifadah and Israel' reiterates the 'two state' solution and indicates that [it is] the Palestinians who are pressing for that option.

If that is so, could you explain the 'logo' of the PLO and of the new Independent Palestinian State which clearly shows that is now Israel plus the West Bank, plus Gaza?"

George Cohen, Executive Director of AMERICAN PROFESSOR FOR PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST; the letter is his personal concern, not of the organization.

AVP is an open forum and does not speak for any party to the conflict. Editors

OF HUMAN INTEREST

It was a unique, creative, and pleasing experience, on June 3, 1989 to see students of Arab origin being honored on the occasion of their graduation by the Arab American Club of Sacramento , California. The graduates ranged from finishing high school to completion of the doctorate in philosophy or medicine. After dinner each graduate was recognized individually, handed an honorary certificate, and then all were feasted on a gentle dose of live Arabic music.

AVP adds its congratulations to the graduates and their families , and salutes the Arab American Club of Sacramento for this fifth annual celebration which has turned into a pleasant and happy tradition , thanks to its energetic leadership. However, AVP hopes that the Arab American Club will prove as creative and pioneering in integrating women in their leadership with fair representation of both their number and their talent.

The Editors

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