

13 April 1997

Subject: Palestinian Perspective on the Peace Process

PASSIA

Participants: Delegation from the Netherlands Superior War College, Dr. Said Zeedani, Sheikh Jamil Hamami, Dr. Mohammad Jadallah, Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi

SUMMARY

A group of high level military personnel from all branches of the Netherlands armed forces, currently engaged in an advanced defense course including study trips to different countries, visited PASSIA under an arrangement with the Dutch Embassy in Tel Aviv to be briefed about the current situation of the peace process from a Palestinian perspective.

Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi gave an overview of the current situation of the peace process, beginning with the history of resistance during the phases of steadfastness, the Intifada and the Gulf crisis and leading up to the negotiations in Madrid and Washington and finally to the DoP. He explained the Oslo approach for the transitional phase of phasing, portioning and testing as a means for building mutual trust.

He added that now we have a situation in which Israel's society is divided. Netanyahu does not want to leave the West Bank, and there is no integrity of the Palestinian territory. Will this lead to a civil war? Are Camp David style negotiations a response that will lead to a permanent solution? The main problem of going directly into final status negotiations is the lack of trust in Netanyahu's will to deliver, as he has not been delivering according to the interim agreements. If the current situation does not improve, there is a real danger of a new Intifada evolving with Arafat no longer being able to control the situation.

Dr. Said Zeedani stressed in his comments that the main problems between Israelis and Palestinians are not cultural differences, but those of two national movements that are fighting against each other over the same piece of land. Consequently, there is a need for the division of this land among the two. Israel wants security but without meeting its obligations, including the withdrawal from all occupied territories. There will be no security without peace and no peace without addressing these real issues. He went on to point out that Palestinians are not violent creatures, but simply reacting to the many problems of the occupation when they throw stones at the occupier. Jerusalem is at the heart of these problems and at the heart of the Israeli-Arab conflict. Without a solution for Jerusalem, there will be no peace and no normalization between Israel and the other Arab states. The overwhelming majority of the Palestinians favor a two-state solution, and there is a consensus that there is a need for democracy and democratization. A cultural inhibition to democracy among Palestinians definitely does not exist.

In his statement, *Sheikh Hamami* said that he agreed with Netanyahu that the Oslo process was dead. This was a consequent result of the Israeli mentality. He also underlined the danger of a second Intifada spreading violence throughout the whole region. The help of the US and the Europeans is needed in finding solutions, and especially states such as Great Britain that are guilty of producing the current situation should not stand at the sidelines and watch, but should become involved and help the peace process to move forward. The youths that throw stones should not be labeled terrorists; the real terrorism is the Israeli state terrorism.

Dr. Mohammad Jadallah presented himself as opposing the Oslo accords. He said that the

Oslo process has come to an end because the Israelis did not fulfill their commitments concerning the transitional phase. This is the reason why Palestinians are reluctant to go to final status negotiations at this time. He stressed that there is a Palestinian consensus on the main issues of the final status negotiations and that all factions favor a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza with Jerusalem as its capital. All Palestinians ask for disengagement and co-existence. He emphasized that Palestinians should build their own democracy and not become puppets of the West like most Arab regimes.

Other topics raised in the discussion included the question as to whether the Palestinians could guarantee their commitment to signed agreements in case of a change of government, the concept of integrity of the Palestinian Territories with a state comprised of Gaza and the West Bank, as well as the historic and actual role of the Netherlands.