

Introduction

Palestine has enjoyed geographic, religious and political centrality in the Middle East and has since the beginning of the last century been vulnerable to the plans and ambitions of foreign powers. The resulting conflicts have led to the dispersal and prolonged suffering of the Palestinian people, and during the past eight decades in particular the Palestinian people have fought continuously to defend their internationally recognized rights to freedom and independence.

The ambitions and policies of the various external powers involved over the years have had an undeniable impact on inter-Arab relations, and on the international relations of Arab states. They have also had a direct effect on shaping the history of Palestine and the evolution of its future. Despite this external pressure, the Palestinians have succeeded in defending and maintaining their Arab identity and political presence by organizing socio-economic institutions and a political infrastructure which have allowed them to challenge the power of the various conquerors in the ongoing national struggle. Having legitimate representation forced other parties to recognize and engage with them despite attempts to deny them their rights to self-determination and national independence.

This volume is one of a series that organizes key political documents covering the time from the pre-Ottoman period to 2007. This volume includes the text or excerpts of over 210 documents, covering the period after the Geneva Conference, the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty (1974-1979) and the period following up to the 1st *Intifada* in 1987. This chapter outlines the history of this period to provide a framework to guide the reader to the historical context of the papers.

Post-Geneva Conference - Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty (1974-1979)

In November 1974 the Arab Summit recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole representative of Palestinian interests. This placed the Palestinian Question at centre-stage in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The PLO meanwhile established a mini-state in Lebanon and Arafat delivered his first speech to the UN calling for a united Palestine with a secular government and equality for all citizens, Arab or Israeli.

Various Israeli solutions were also proposed. In 1976 the Foreign Minister (Allon) proposed an autonomous Palestine under Israeli sovereignty and an extension of Israeli borders eastward to the Jordan Valley. Prime Minister Begin proposed a similar plan in 1977.

US President Jimmy Carter took on the task of bringing a peace agreement between Israel and Egypt. The Egyptian-Israeli Peace Agreement was finally signed at Camp David in 1978.

From the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty to the 1st Intifada (1979-1987)

In Baghdad in 1979 Arab governments reacted to Egypt's treaty with Israel by boycotting Egypt, suspending its membership of the Arab League, and moving the League's headquarters from Cairo to Tunis. They planned a ten-year assistance program for the Palestinian people in recognition of the ongoing Israeli occupation.

Israel continued its policies of settlement in the occupied territories and undermined Palestinian leadership when it could. Several new peace initiatives were presented in 1982: the Prince Fahd Plan, the Brezhnev Plan, the EEC Paris Statement and the Reagan Plan. All these plans acknowledged Palestinian autonomy and Israeli security concerns. The 1982 Arab Summit endorsed the Prince Fahd Plan and called for a Palestinian state.

From its Lebanon base the PLO continued to confront the Israeli army. The Lebanon civil war and Israeli invasion was costly for the Palestinian people, most notably in the 1982 massacres at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Soon after the PLO left Lebanon and relocated to Tunis.

In 1985 the Palestinian Council first convened and signed an accord with Jordan for cooperation in building a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation but this was never implemented.

Arab-Israeli contacts continued in the quest for an understanding. The London Document outlined the respective political views of Israel and Jordan, but in circumstances representative of the time, the document was never ratified. Arab-Israeli diplomatic contacts continued. In 1987 one contact led to the highly controversial (in both countries) Amirav-Nusseibeh Document. These various moves contributed to the many proposals that followed.

A Final Note

Although we have endeavored to make this publication as reader/user friendly as possible, one should be aware that there is some inconsistency in terms of the spelling of non-English words - names and places (such as Haram Ash-Sharif or *Intifada*) – since we adhered, wherever possible, to the original version rather than apply our usual spelling rules. It is for the same reason that the volumes contain a number of minor typographical errors such as the omission of apostrophes, inconsistent capitalization, and spelling mistakes found in the originals.

Footnotes included in the volumes - excluding those marked “the ed.” - are mostly those that appeared in the original texts though the readership note that the numbering will not necessarily be accordance with the original version.

Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi
Chairman of PASSIA