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| **Guest Speaker:** | **Professor Yezid Sayigh Assistant Director of the Center for International Studies University of Cambridge, UK** |
|  | Written Transcription of the Audio Tape  **PART ONE:  Lecture**  I have so many different ideas milling around that I’ve had a hard time actually organizing them in a coherent way and deciding what needs to be said today and what can be left out.  I hope that you will excuse me if part of my presentation appears to be ‘in process.’  [[http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-b.jpg](http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-b-L.jpg)](http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-b-L.jpg)The ideas that I want to put forward to you are my interpretation of the dynamics of the situation, and what different permutations they might give rise to.  Therefore, mainly what I will be doing is identifying potential scenarios or potential evolutions of where this particular situation can still go.  I am not going to try and cover all possible outcomes.  But, I am going to emphasize a couple.  I agree very much with what Mahdi said initially, that we live a catastrophe.  I think what happened to the Palestinian people is a catastrophe.  What is partly catastrophic and partly tragic about it is, to a very large degree, self-inflicted.  In my view it wasn’t inevitable.  It was avoidable, in my view as well.  And, although I most certainly don’t exonerate Israel for what it has done over the past eight years to bring us to this impasse, I’m more interested in looking at the Palestinian side - the internal dynamics on the Palestinian side, what they add up to and what Palestinians can do or should be doing if they want to get out of this mess.  Having made this critical initial remark, my starting point is to take a very quick look at what, I think, is the legacy of political action that the Palestinian Authority and its opposition brought with them at the start of the Intifada, nearly two years ago.  I think this helps us to understand a lot about why the Intifada has unfolded in the way it has and why it has gone the way it has.  Then, I will develop a critique and move on to looking at the whole issue of reforms, since this seems to be the current focus of diplomatic efforts and everyone’s interest.  Lets look at the reform issue, see what the dynamics are, and whether something good might come out of it, or what the prospects are.  Then finally, I will make a few closing remarks on how this relates to the other parties, in particular the international community, and where things might go.  If I give myself enough time, I will explain my thoughts in detail. If not, I will throw out some ideas and then take discussion.  [[http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-c.jpg](http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-c-L.jpg)](http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-c-L.jpg)I would like to begin by saying that, in my opinion, there is clearly a legacy of political behavior with a particular style that the Palestinian Authority, and President of the Authority, Yasser Arafat, operated by for the six years prior to the start of the Intifada.  And more over, that the Palestinian political parties, in particular the opposition groups, but also rings of Arafat’s own Fateh group, had established ways of political action, ways in which they talked about the issues and priorities that they pursued between 1994 and 2000.  I won’t get into much detail.  Again, we can discuss this later.  These are issues that I have previously discussed, written about and have criticized elsewhere.  But, what I think is most telling is that when the Intifada broke out and the Israeli counter measures were applied, from virtually the second day of the Intifada, it became almost immediately apparent just what the weaknesses and flaws were within the Palestinian system, the political system, the system of governance, and the mode of political action on the part of the governing authorities, and on the part of opposition groups.  All the flaws and weaknesses that had been built and reinforced and made a part of the system over the previous six years became immediately apparent when faced under pressure.  In effect, the Palestinian Authority was almost instantly paralyzed from about the third day of the Intifada.  If you went to Ramallah or to Nablus or to other places, you could almost immediately sense the complete lack of governmental control or guidance.  The entire political leadership became focused on one thing and one thing only: the confrontation, how to deal with it, or prolong it, or whatever.  Public services, requirements and needs were almost completely left alone.  [[http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-a.jpg](http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-a-L.jpg)](http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-a-L.jpg)Luckily there were ministries like the Ministries of Education and Health which had a very long, established pattern of providing services under difficult conditions - developed through nearly thirty five years of occupation - and therefore, they went on operating more or less normally.  But, the rest of what made the Palestinian Authority a government, rather than just a provider of health and education services, immediately became almost irrelevant.  It was immediately obvious that whatever the Israelis did that had an impact on people’s lives - on their ability to go about their normal business, to trade, to move goods and so on  - did not receive attention from the senior echelon of the Palestinian PLO/PA.  This was evident in the way people were allowed to shoot from civilian areas, to shoot at crossings for goods and so on, thereby making it easy for the Israelis to apply their counter measures in the most punitive way, and to get away with it.  Again, I think that this was partly due to habits, long ingrained habits, of just not thinking about these types of issues, and not thinking in the terms of confrontation having its requirements, material requirements - that your people have to be able to produce, to earn an income, etcetera, in order to be able to confront, in order to be able to persevere.  The way everyone behaved was totally opposite.  This is a very crude characterization, but I simply want to get the key idea across.  I think that where we see this legacy at its worse is that almost everything that has happened in the past 21 or 22 months has not elicited a coherent response by the Authority, either at the top level or even at lower levels.  At the level of individual cities like Ramallah, or Nablus or Hebron, where despite a lot of experience of living with the Israelis and dealing with them - confronting them for the past six years, and then the experience of previous bouts of violence with Israel since the start of the Intifada, that by the time the Israelis did something - like impose a curfew, or block another route, or impose various punitive measures or invaded or whatever - that by then, the Palestinian Authority was in a position to anticipate, to plan for these things, and to take political decisions, first whether to resist or not.  And, not to end up in a position that was neither nor, not to have an effective media response, an effective civilian response - in the sense that people’s needs had been anticipated in terms of water, medicine, health care, emergency relief etc. etc.  Israel walks in, imposes a curfew.  Everyone simply obeys.  Where is the legacy of grassroots action, of thirty years of PLO activity, of recruitment, of mobilization?  With 145,000 people on the payroll, and it seems simply not to occur, to this leadership, to defy the curfew and call for 100,000 people in the streets of Ramallah saying “No. Its five past two.  We are still in the streets, and we are not moving.”  To arrange it, to plan it, to have internationals and media and consuls general watching, etcetera.  To systematically plan something, sometime, somewhere in order to resist and to break the Israeli dictate.  [[http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-d.jpg](http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-d-L.jpg)](http://146.185.164.77/passia.org/meetings/2002/images/july/9-7-02-d-L.jpg)Of course, this is something that you don’t create in a day.  Now, you don’t issue an order for everyone to go down to the streets, because what you would find is that no one in Ramallah would go.   However, if you had built up a legacy in which people were mobilized, in which people were given realistic targets in which small victories were achieved the first time, then you could move on to a bigger victory, and finally when there is a big blanket curfew you could resist it.  I’m giving examples. I am sure that any one of us could pull out fifteen or fifty other examples of small things with which a self-respecting authority would have immediately struck its due.  Take another example.  I say this as someone with an activist background, as someone who is clearly suggesting that resisting Israeli policy and confronting Israeli policy is legitimate and is necessary.  Of course, how you do it is very important.  There are moral and political issues here.  But, take another example, Serbia during the Kosova campaign in 1999.  When the Allies said they were going to bomb infrastructures, the next thing the Serbs did - whether the State ordered it, or whether associations, unions, labor, student associations etcetera, did it, was that they all piled on to the bridges and said “You bomb the bridges you are going to bomb 1,000 people per bridge.”  What happened here, and it is interesting because I actually heard this comparison from a Serb in England who was astonished that the moment the Palestinian Authority anticipated that the Israelis were going to go on the rampage and bomb police stations and facilities and PA buildings, what happens is everyone immediately vacates everything, and makes it easier.  They did not say: “No, we built this.  We built this with donor money, with our own money, with whatever and everyone is going to resist.  We are going to have 100 civilians in every police post.”   It is a fundamentally different attitude to achieving goals.  I think that ultimately this also has the very negative, very invidious effect of thoroughly distorting how the Palestinians have confronted Israel.  Because again, if there had been a tradition and a purposeful attempt to build the civilian basis for political action, then it would have been probably less likely to resort to weapons, to guns and bombs.  I think that the two are reverse sides of the same coin.  Guns were seen as the easier recourse.  It didn’t take preparation, it didn’t take hard work, you didn’t have to mobilize people, and it is easy to shoot.  And, if the whole purpose is coercive you want to create a crisis and involve the outside community in order to deliver some sort of ceasefire on your terms. Then, it is simple to shoot at the other side and create a crisis.  It is a lot harder to mobilize people and to give them the conviction to follow you, to follow your leadership and go into the streets.  I want to add one other aspect, which is the Palestinian opposition.  In this I include not only Hamas and PFLP or whoever, but also the Wings of Fateh.  I think they repeated the previous catastrophe of Jordan in 1970 where the opposition parties wholly underestimated the ability of the adversary to act forcefully, and overestimated the amount of international protection they had.  In Jordan they thought that Iraq and Syria offered guarantees which would prevent the Jordanian army from going too far against the PLO.  This was totally misjudged.  Secondly, they believed that their strategy against the Jordanian regime involved dragging Fateh and the PLO with what they thought was a superior force of the PLO into the fray and therefore would defeat the Jordanian Army.  Here too, I think the idea was always that the rest of Fateh, the PLO, the PA, the police force, and another 40,000 guns could be pulled into this.  And equally, and at the same time, Area A protects us and we can do what ever we want.  Also, I think at the back of their minds, as in Jordan in 1970, there was the idea that although they all criticized Arafat for everything day and night, in the end if they get themselves into trouble Arafat would find a way out.  There is this idea among most Palestinian groups that somehow he will always find a way out.  I think that the opposition has contributed very centrally to where we are today.  Now, do we have prospects for changing this situation?  What are the prospects? Here I move to the current reform agenda.  I am not going to discuss the agenda as such, I have worked on it for four years and have devoted a lot of time to it.  What I would rather do is relate the reform agenda to whether or not we are going to move from a situation of conflict between Palestinians and Israelis to a return to negotiations that could ultimately produce a meaningful and sustainable solution.  This means ending the violence and achieving reasonable terms for peace with Israel, between Israel and Palestine.  My starting point may be a concluding remark, but I will flag it here.  There is a very difficult challenge facing the Palestinian leadership, whoever that is – reformed or unreformed, repentant or unrepentant, which is to achieve control over violence.  Whether they intend to use it or prevent it, they have to control it, and to use it effectively, or to prevent it effectively, whichever it is.  They have to achieve some sort of terms with Israel.  There is a peace to be made.  There are borders to be determined and so on and so forth.  And thirdly, there is the issue of governance, of establishing a political system that satisfies Palestinian desires and aspirations, and that could produce meaningful government regulation, service delivery, create the sort of environment within which people can go about their business, and achieve growth, and jobs, and so on.  These are three very difficult challenges and I have always seen them as inter related from the day this Authority was established.  Now, it certainly seems to be a view that the governments of the world, at least ostensibly, also share.  It is obvious that Israel, under Sharon, with total control of the resources, of ground access etc, is not committed to helping make this work.  I hardly need to persuade you on this.  But, all that said, I’m interested in seeing whether the reform process on the Palestine side has any prospect.  What I mean is, to the extent that the Palestinians can do anything about it, what should they be doing?  In other words, I don’t see Palestinians as passive recipients or victims.  Because if that is how we’re to see them, then we might as well give up and call it a day.  Either they are passive or they are active.  If they have an ability to do anything, then they do bear a responsibility to do that thing.  They can’t have it both ways.  To be absolved of the responsibility because Israel controls everything and is nasty and has bad intent, and yet are actually able to do certain things whether it is to blow up buses or to reform or to call for certain things or to make offers like Arafat’s recent acceptance of the Clinton proposal.  They do ultimately have to take responsibility for their own actions.  I say that in a positive way, because despite being very much victimized and brutalized, and with Israel performing terrible things, I believe the Palestinians do hold the key to getting out of the situation.  I do not think that anything is going to shift on the Israeli side without the right Palestinian input.  The Palestinians have the ability to start changing the dynamics within Israel in order for us to ultimately see the end of the Sharon government, and without getting an even worse government.  It may be totally unfair, but it is the Palestinians who are in the position to make that shift and bring about that shift within Israel.  And they equally have the ability to make it worse, and that is what we have seen in the past 21 months.  When talking about the system of reforms, inevitably one has to speak about Yasser Arafat, and the existing leadership.  I am going to be quite blunt and crude about this.  I came to the conclusion over two years ago in Spring 2000, after having worked on reform issues in this country for two years, and having dealt on a professional level with the Palestinian Authority in order to assist in bringing about various reforms in a constructive and cooperative manner, that this was a system which was so finely balanced internally that it could no longer reform itself by its own volition or its own initiative because the Arafat system is one of de-institutionalizing, fragmenting, and therefore getting everyone counter-balanced within that system.  Whether it was the PLC, whether it was Fateh, whether it was big business, whether it was labor, any type of social or political force within society was fragmented, put into competition with itself, and operated in a sort of quick sand.  Anything you thought might be a fulcrum to lever reform immediately gave way under you, and you found yourself swimming again in this bottomless pool.  Moreover, this system was held in a fine balance within a context, within a contractual framework with Israel - of agreements and arrangements with Israel, as well as secondary relationships with Jordan, Egypt and the USA in particular, and to some extent the donor community, the EU.  Where all these external inputs and agreements and understandings, with the focus on security but also the influx of money and so on, enabled the system to stay in this position, to survive, not to collapse of its own weight since it was a dysfunctional system, and enabled Arafat to maintain the concentration of executive power and to play this game.  Which meant, to my mind two years ago, that this system could not, not only not reform itself, but the implication was that it wasn’t going to change unless there was some sort of uprising from below.  I didn’t see that being allowed to happen because, again as we have seen, at the moment there is a substantial threat to law and order as the Israelis see it, they can close the entire area off, seal it up, that’s the end of the story.  So, if for instance, you were you to have a popular revolution against the PA, it was going to go nowhere.  The only other factor that could have changed this set up was going to be external intervention.  And that meant an Israeli intervention, which would crash in, break up the system, and bring about its collapse.  I was coming to the conclusion that without a collapse, this system wasn’t going to be reconstructed in any other alignment.  It just wasn’t allowing accommodation, modification and tinkering.  Arafat was simply not allowing that.  His system just didn’t allow for that.  I am putting out these statements in order to invite challenges and to allow me, maybe later, to go into detail.  Now having said all this, I therefore will state very simply and frankly that I think there is no prospect of reform - meaningful reform, good governance, and good negotiation and good peace with Israel under Yasser Arafat.  This is my view. I think he is responsible for bringing about immense damage to his own society, to the social fabric of the Palestinians, and not just to the structure and foundations of the economy.  I think that it is criminal what has happened and what the Palestinian leadership has allowed itself to do.  Now that said, I don’t think today’s most important battle is to specifically remove this man.  I think he has weakened.  I think the system has collapsed.  The system can no longer do anything.  There is no coherent response to any of the diplomatic, political, economic, or security measures being inflicted on the Palestinians.  The Palestinian leadership has the most absurd discussions.  There is no coherence. I don’t think one needs to fight to bring about this collapse deliberately or to move Arafat to do this, that or the other.  That to me is not the big issue any more.  The issue is whether or not key decisions that effect key levers within the system are still held by him or have been pried out of his hands.  To do with financial decision making, to do with the power of the security forces within Palestinian politics; whether or not the PLC, individual, civilian ministers and other parts of society, the NGOs, and of the PA itself are now becoming able to take some sort of initiative and imprint the process themselves, rather than finding that whatever they want to do is always stymied at some point, or blocked at some point by Arafat and the political echelon around him.  Let me develop that a little bit.  We now have a situation where, for the first time, we have a cabinet that could, under reasonable conditions, perform quite well.  It’s a slimmer cabinet.  It could still slim down, I think.  There are a few ministers I would like to see out.  There are a couple of ministers there that should be abolished altogether.  But I think that we already have a critical mass of ministers who are good technocrats, are professionals, who know what needs to be done, and are willing to do it.  Now, that is one element.  Of course, this could go absolutely nowhere if Israel stands in the way.  This is very clear. That Israel, at the end of the day, can make none of this work.  But, were Israel to lift any of the measures and if Arafat is pushed step by step into giving up power, for instance over the Ministry of Finance - so that people within the Ministry of Finance don’t issue every single piece of paper that comes their way with Yasser Arafat’s signature on it, but have to have it checked by the Minister of Finance or the appropriate officer, and if they are not part of the budget, or not issued in the proper way, they don’t get paid.  These are the sorts of things that have to be done.  So, we’ve got one element there for the first time.  What I think is very interesting and somewhat unexpected from my point of view, and I’ve only been here for a few months, is the extent to which the security services have been discredited in the past couple of months.   There was a time until very recently where we automatically assumed that the succession issue after Arafat would automatically go into involving Mohammad Dahlan, Jibril Rajoub, with or without a few other slightly lesser security figures.  You know, Tawfik Tirawi, maybe Ghazi Jabaly fancied himself etc. The idea was that, by virtue of being in command of four or five thousand armed men, they were therefore strong and had a power base from which they would launch themselves.  Because they held the security portfolio, they were moreover people with access to the Israelis, to the CIA, and that these were the people with the right sort of resources that made them strong.  I think it is interesting that because of the debacle of March/April, which didn’t surprise me at all - I never assumed that 40,000 policemen were going to stand up to the Israeli army. And, people who presented these types of illusions, I think, did their own people a great disservice - I think it is healthy for people to have seen that this is not what the police force is about, this is not what it could do, the idea that there was going to be another Beirut 1982 scenario is ridiculous.  The net result though for Palestinian politics is that you get someone like Mohammad Dahlan, who reads where the wind is blowing and voluntarily gives up his security apparatus, I presume, once understanding it no longer is the critical power base he needs in order to compete in the new arrangements.  In fact, he is just as well off relinquishing this power base, handing it over to his deputy, and quite happily saying, “I want to get into politics.”  And, Jibril Rajoub, whether willingly or unwillingly, whether he stays out or goes back in or whatever. I think, he would be sensible to move on.  Ghazi Jabaly anticipates him being fired, resigns and says he wants to run for president.  I read in all this a process in which these people may be and continue to be very important in Palestinian politics.  They have the right connections.  But, they are no longer important exclusively by virtue of being commanders of security forces, commanders of power, above all military power, of guns.  And therefore, they understand that they have to get into the political process, into the civilian arena, in order to pursue their further ambitions. So that they can become president, or whatever else they want to be, rather than simply head of preventative security and to parachute from there to the presidency.  That in itself, I think, is a healthy process, a healthy beginning.  It also means, to my mind, that these particular figures will have to do two further things.  One is that they will have to compromise.  They will have to negotiate and make deals with other people within the system who previously they could have ignored entirely - people like the technocrats and professional ministers in the cabinet, people like Salam Fayyad, Minister of Finance and Maher Al-Masri, Minister of Economy and Trade, or Ibrahim Ad-Dughmah, Minister of Justice and Naim Abdul Humus, Minister of Education, the people who have a good track record, who want to get on with the job.  Who, however, don’t have a political base. They don’t have a militia base.  They aren’t political operators and that’s their weakness.  But, when you get someone like Rajoub and Dahlan and the rest of them who want to be part of this new game, they are going to actually have to find a way of working with these people and finding a trade off.  Because the one will no longer, I think, be able to work without the other.  This is, to my mind, the positive scenario.  If they are going to get out of this situation and get to anything better where the PA is not destroyed, where Israel doesn’t take complete control, where the donor community and the US and the rest don’t just give up and say “Sorry we call it a day.  We can’t do anything more.  We abandon the whole effort.  And, we are going to cut the funds.”  That battle will come to towards the end.  I think that if there is to be a happy ending, this would be it.  That Arafat’s power has weakened, I think, fatally.  That the system has cracked, there are huge cracks, and that the system has effectively collapsed.  That there are cracks even within the security system that was so crucial, which was part of the Israeli–US–Palestinian triangle.  That system doesn’t work any more.  This allows something good for Palestinian politics because it forces powerful contenders to negotiate with each other and to find common ground and to find a platform and to form coalitions.  That, in itself, I think is a healthy thing.  The other thing that is needed, whether it is the technocrats or the ex-security chiefs or whoever else, is a vision, a program.  What is lacking in this place and what I still feel is lacking, not just Fateh and Hamas have no programs, the Palestinian Authority has no program, political program.  *(comment from audience)*  *(response)*  *(Well I haven’t heard it yet.  The most recent being the national initiative of Mustafa Barghouthi, Haider Abu Shafi and Ibrahim Dakkak, which is a good thing but I read it and I didn’t read it again so I might be unfair, but I thought that this too was not yet a program)*  I am talking about a vision or a political program in which people come out and say what they intend to do about governance, what sort of government, what sort of rule of law do they really intend to establish and that they will impose the rule of law.  Which in turn, allows them to deal with people on their side who have other ideas about what to do about Israel, whether to shoot at it or throw stones at it.  And, to establish that there is a system through which people can compete and rival agendas can compete.  And, if Hamas has a rival agenda that says “No we should go on blowing ourselves up,” then there should be a means through which they can compete politically.  If they dominate, then they are free to pursue their agenda.  They have a program.  Let them pursue it.  “I have an agenda that says mine is not like that.  I have my own program for governance, for rule of law, for dealing with Israel, for how we confront Israel and for the terms of peace.  And, I need to put in some detail.  How I see dealing with the refugee issue.  How I see dealing with Jerusalem.  How I see with dealing with settlements and borders.”  The detail has to be there.  This is where even the National Initiative type activity fails, because it is about forming a national unity cabinet in order to deal with these terrible challenges.  Yes, but at the end of the day what are you going to push? What is the line?  If you have a cabinet in which you’ve got Hamas and Jihad and Fateh and all the rest, what is your proposal?  What are you going to try and sell to them?  What are you going to disagree with them about, in detail?  Or, are we going to go on having this all, at the end of the day, put off and kept vague?  So, whether it is Jibril Rajoub or Salam Fayyad or Nabil Sha’ath or whoever is nominated for Prime Minister, or Hamas, or whoever, we need a program.  These people have to come up with a political program that addresses those three issues of the mode of confrontation with Israel, rule of law and terms of peace.   And the details have got to be there.  And unless it is, I don’t see what the difference is between the National Initiative of ex-communists, or the Hamas program, or the Fateh program.  Because, they are all agreed on an independent state in 1967 borders.  They are all agreed on a sort of  ‘*Islah’ -*whatever that means, and you know sort of good governance.  And, none of them put the detail in this.  What exactly is the difference between those three? I don’t see it today.  And, they have got to differentiate themselves.  Otherwise, they are not going to compete and they are not going to offer a model or something to lead with.  Now, to go back to the Arafat question.  For a start, I find it offensive and certainly counter productive when the powers that be, inside and outside, turn the whole issue into one of Arafat and of identifying the successor, and we go around and say “so and so, ah no well he used to be a communist,” or “so and so, ah no but he’s from Gaza.”  I find that this is not the issue.  The issue is, is there a system?  And does anyone have a proposal, a project, a platform, a program for the system?  What sort of system do they want to put into place?  And will they fight for it?  Will they work for it?  The system is the important thing.  Otherwise you take Arafat out, you bring XYZ in or, you put Salam Fayyad in, or I don’t know, who ever else, and you don’t change the system, and the incentive structure, and the rest of the whole bag of tricks, and you change nothing at all.  All you do is that you extend the life for two months until it becomes obvious that the replacement is no more capable of delivering than the one he or she replaced.  The counter argument among the Palestinians of course is that now is not the time for a new change, now is not the time for Arafat to go.  *(side discussion)*  *Participant: a consensus for elections.  Everybody talks about elections*  *YS: I think elections are a red herring to be honest.  I don’t think this is a real issue at all.  You can have an election.  After all, Mugabe just had an election the other day.  You know even Milosovic had elections and he was actually properly elected and he still did terrible things.  I mean, so what.  This is a red herring.*  I am more concerned with what we are constructing, what we are replacing.  I think that many Palestinians find it hard to swallow that the US has suddenly discovered reform and democracy and wants to push it down their throats.  They are entirely right. This is a sham.  And certainly, Sharon’s interest in reform is a complete sham.  But, I also think that Palestinians should look at the fact that a) The system has already collapsed and is melted down, so they should be thinking about where to go next anyway.  b) The fragmentation they fear or the Somali situation of armed militias in every little neighborhood - of Fateh blocks here, and Hamas blocks there, and so on, competing - is a situation they already have.  The fragmentation is already there.  It is not something that will happen once Arafat leaves.  It is something that’s happening with him there, and will get worse and worse with him there.  So, I don’t think that’s the sort of trade off for Palestinians.  But again, I think that the focus of the issue isn’t whether we remove Arafat or not.  The issue is the system and to identify what the system is.  I would love to see a group of people come out with a public platform that gives their description.  And, just as the people who signed the petition recently against the suicide bombings, which is quite a courageous step – I think they could go further and establish that there are moral and political grounds to opposing the bombings and not just pragmatic ones.  But, people who will start to stand up.  They are in the minority and minorities are good things.  Democratic politics are about being in the minority.  I would like people to push a minority platform that, one day, when the timing is right, can become the majority program.  But, if you don’t dare say it until the conditions are right, and they are secure that it is going to be the majority, that there already is a consensus about these issues, then it is never going to happen.  And this is, again, the flavor of the debates that I get into with Palestinians a lot of the time.  Look, I have gone around all over the place.  Let me wrap up a bit.  Where does this take us?  Again, it is evident that all of this can go nowhere if Israel stands in the way.  And certainly, I don’t see the Sharon government helping.  And, the Palestinians unfortunately are not in a position where an umpire will call foul and say “we know you Palestinians are playing right and that Israel just broke a rule.  So, Israel has to stand aside and it is your free kick.”  It is not going to work like that.  Palestinians are just going to have to do what they have to do regardless of what obstacles Israel puts in their way.  I think it is important for the Palestinians to push, not just to pursue governance and to start showing that they are good people who are accountable, and are democratic, and freedom loving, and all the rest.  No.  Even if they are not freedom loving or democratic or whatever, even if they have only one element which they are able to push, finally, frankly, and that is a clear, detailed, concretized vision for peace which goes beyond the broad principles and starts to flesh out where the trade offs are that the Palestinians are willing to settle for with Israel.  There has to be a peace plan which has details.  Now we are starting to get Arafat, finally a year and a half later, suddenly saying “Oh, I accept the Clinton proposal.”  Of course, its coming far too late from the wrong man.  But, this is the sort of thing we need to be talking about.  Maybe not that particular proposal, but something that goes into that sort of detail and tells the Israeli general public what peace will cost.  What the maximum is that they will have to pay in order to get security with a Palestinian state.  And tell Palestinians what they are going to have to pay in order to get independence.  This has to come out and be pushed.  Without this particular element, as well of course control over the violence itself, there is no chance of a significant shift within Israeli domestic politics back towards a situation in which people center left might think its worth making the effort, there are Palestinians to talk to, they know what the issues are, they identify these issues correctly and they are proposing appropriate responses, and moreover are suddenly dead serious about the substance of negotiations.  This is not about Israel  - and their whole thing with “we made all these generous offers and the Palestinians never offered anything, etc,” I am sure I don’t need to go into the background with you.  But, what the Palestinians, I think, have failed to do was not to be fully frank in putting a package together that they were going to fight for, as opposed to the “sell in the dark” because he was embarrassed about it and he was afraid to tell his own people.  That sort of peace just wasn’t going to hold anyway.  They had to have the courage of their convictions and say, “This is what we, your leadership suggests to you, the Palestinians, first and foremost.”  And, if they didn’t have the courage to do that, they were never going to be able to sell it.  And, I think that they needed to fight for that politically.  That is something that the Israeli public needs to hear.  It will take time and it will take consistency, repetition and consistency also with other measures that the Palestinians are seeing in other areas.  To conduct themselves in ways which are appropriate to that vision of peace.  It is no good saying that you want to achieve peace with Israel and that we are only against settlers in the occupied West Bank.   And then, as Marwan Barghouthi said last year when I last discussed this with him, that Fateh’s line is “only targets outside of 67 borders.”  And I say “OK so what about Hamas blowing up discotheques in Tel Aviv.” and he says ‘*hada ijtihad,’*  ‘everyone has their own interpretation.’  This is not a symphony orchestra and the tubas can do whatever they like.  It doesn’t work like that.  Either, he had real convictions in what his line was and he is going to fight for it because he has assessed that this is the right way to go and doing anything else would reap disaster, or he wasn’t up to leading.  And everyone above him was in that same position, I believe.  Again, I will not say more about the extent of the abdication of leadership that has occurred in the past 22 months.  It extends upwards and downwards.  But, the point again is that behavior has to be consistent with the political program.  And, it has to be hammered again and again and again.  There has to be a strategy for peace that involves engagement with the other side, involves dialogue with the other side.  And therefore, I think by the same token it involves engagement and dialogue with the Palestinians.  Something the Authority doesn’t do with its own people.  It has to talk to its own people.  I’m not surprised that they never talk to the Israelis systematically because they don’t talk to their own people systematically.  But I think that this, incidentally, part of the political faction, including the opposition - that for six years the opposition didn’t make settlements in East Jerusalem a central point of confrontation with the Israelis any more than the Authority did.  Poor Salah Ta’amari and the Land Defense Committee.  They had to bear on their shoulders the full national issue of fighting for the land for six years.  Not only did Arafat and Abu Ala and the rest of them not fight for it, Hamas and Fateh didn’t make it a central issue either.  It was a collective abdication I think.  So, the Palestinians do have it in their hands, under the most difficult conditions.  Unless they take the right steps, there is no shifting of the internal political dynamics within Israel.  And unless there is, we are not going to get rid of Sharon, and we are going to stay stuck in this Catch 22 situation.  It is terrible.  It might not be possible to exit.  This is where I come to my closing grim conclusion.  We have confrontation/violence with Israel in one area, rule of law/governance, and negotiations/peace treaty.  These are three issues.  And, to my mind we need a Palestinian leadership or a situation in which, what with the conditions created by the US, Israel, and the Palestinians, it becomes possible to tackle the three issues.  It is like the slot machine in the casino.  You have to get the three apples in a row to win.  Or, the matrix - you’ve got to get ticks rather than crosses against each one.  So, violence and rule of law and negotiation, you have to have all three starting to come together at the same time.  And, if you get two of them, and the third is not working, its likely to derail the other two.  So, you can reform. But, if there are still people blowing themselves up, then the Israelis, certainly under Sharon, have no real reason to say “Oh well yes, but we know that you are really reforming.  Such a great job, and we want to help you out.  Well, we are going to ignore Hamas.”  It won’t work like that, and so on, and so forth.  So if you would take a matrix of three by three you get nine boxes.  And in each one of those boxes, but one, there is an x, at least one x.  And, there is only one box in which you get ‘three ticks.’  So, basically, my reading is that you’ve got odds of one to eight.  And the odds are, as I have suggested, that with Arafat’s grip weakening, what with civilian technocratic ministers appearing who are starting to pursue the agenda that has been there for at least four years or six years and should have been pursued long before, and with the security chiefs finally having to start shifting how they operate within the system - they are the same guys, they have the same type of outlook on political and social values, they are not suddenly nice guys; but they understand that they can’t operate within the previous framework and they have to shift to a new framework - which I think opens the opportunity for new types of politics.  This is not a wonderful scenario.  But, it is the only one, I think, that is a ‘three tick,’ possibly, maybe, solution.  Otherwise, what I think we face is the following, and Israel may well do everything it can under Sharon to insure that the following is what happens.  We have a situation in which the reformers are simply unable to break through enough of the deadlock around them under Arafat.  Arafat maybe, plays behind their backs, or doesn’t really relinquish enough power or, Salam Fayyad finds that when he comes to the crunch in terms of expenditure, the people within the Ministry of Finance that reports to Arafat, are still not obeying him and that Arafat is still sort of supporting them and whatever.  That is one scenario.  Or, I don’t know what, something happens with the Security.  There are different ways in which this might not go forward.  Whatever happens, the reform doesn’t work, or Israel tightens the siege, or this and that, and it is not working.  We are in a situation where already the only reason that the PA has survived so far, why Palestinian civil society has remained civil generally, is in large measure because 145,000 salaries are still being paid and almost entirely thanks to the Arab States and the EU.  Already, the Arab States are not fulfilling their full payments as of seven months ago, only the Saudis are, I believe.  The EU is paying, but are saying quite openly “this is as far as it goes, and we are now afraid that we will end up paying for the occupation.”  And whatever the reason, we face a situation imminently, if not by Autumn then, I think, by the end of this year, where the money is going to stop completely.  Now, it might not if the reform process takes off, there is a bit of momentum, there is a better security situation, the Israelis lift some of the siege, there isn’t a resurgence of suicide bombings and so on, and it starts to somehow work, despite everything.  Then, maybe the funders will find good enough reasons to go ahead providing money, and persuading the Arabs to cough up some more.  But, that is a lot of “ifs” already.  And, if any of those don’t work, we have an imminent situation where 145,000 more people are without a salary.  This is in a situation where Qalqilya, for example, has gone from having a poverty ratio of about 17-18% to 85% of families living below the poverty line of $2 a day.  That’s a 500% increase within a year and a half or so.  And, if you get another 145,0000 salaries that are taken out of the economy and a lot of them still have guns or whatever, you, are going get a Somali situation, or banditry, or extortion, or pauperizing, starvation, and all sorts of things.  I, personally, am furious with the leadership that has led its people to this stage.  It is not enough to say that the Israelis are nasty guys, and that they are racist, and they are this and that.  They can be all these things.  They have done everything the nastiest way possible, and although they have other options, they have always chosen the option that is the most punitive and most collective against the civilian population.  But, it has been the responsibility, as far as I am concerned, of the Palestinian leadership to anticipate these things, to assess them, to respond to them, to deal with them, to prioritize etc.  Anyway, these recriminations are irrelevant at the moment.  We face a situation where we are moving to a total meltdown.  Already, Palestinian society has had the foundations of its economic activity destroyed because farmers and industrialists etcetera are not simply losing sort of day to day income, they are losing the entire network with which they deal - their markets, their clients and so on.  They are losing the skills that have emigrated.  There is immense damage, the damage to social fabric, the trauma to children.  I don’t have figures but I will bet that there is a rise in domestic violence, of divorce rates, and of whatever.  There are terrible things happening to the social fabric that we don’t even know how to measure yet.  There is pauperization.  It is not just poverty, it is pauperization of an entire society.  And if the institutions are melting down, and have melted down, and the political legacy has sort of destroyed itself, how will the society ever put itself together again, especially if it remains under occupation - which is quick to identify new leaders and to dump them in jail?  That is what is going to happen.  I don’t believe the Israelis are fair and that, in total control, they are going to allow for Palestinian society to reform.  It is simply going to be sucked in again into the Israeli labor market and economic market, import market etcetera.  In any case, how do you recreate social leaders?  How do you recreate political organizations?  It is not an easy thing.  It is not an inevitable thing.  What finally also has to be brought into this picture is, again, the international community - now lead by the ‘Quartet’ which is meeting to set up committees, as I understand it, economic, security and one third committee to assist and advise and presumably govern fraternally and paternally the Palestinian Authority in its reform process.  In other words, we have a situation of incipient international administration, which, maybe, is not a bad thing.  If the international community were to take on the administration of the occupied territories in a way that assured the protection of the civilian population and its ability to go about its business - the freedom of movement of people and goods - that sort of international administration would actually do something, let alone, and never mind, whether they stop settlements or not.  Even leaving that aside for the moment.  *(Side comment ……another mandate.*  *Response: …….A trusteeship, a mandate, whatever you want…)*  We have something that is less than that.  We have a ‘Quartet’ that at the moment is trying to put itself lock step with the Palestinian Authority reform agenda.  I think that probably they are doing this for the next three to six months, the one hundred days, maybe then a second 100 days, during which the Palestinian Authority will be given time to do things and still be given enough money to go on doing them.  And the ‘Quartet’ will be there, providing a bit of political protection, a bit of support, and constant pressure on Arafat so that he keeps giving up powers.  But, if it is not working, either the ‘Quartet’ at some point will say, “We call it a day.  We’re cutting the funding.  We’re pulling out,” and we go back to some new version of occupation, or, the ‘Quartet,’ seeing what is coming, starts to push for new provisional, temporary, interim measures - to do with security, to do with the movement of goods at the Qalandia Check Point, or the Erez Check Point, or whatever it is so that people can trade, and various types of injections and emergency relief.  Incidentally, just as the whole NGO sector has already given up on its big projects.  Most NGOs now, international NGOs in Palestine, are all looking at relief and emergency issues.  Now, there is nothing more permanent than the temporary.  All these temporary measures that are going to be conducted by the political international leadership, i.e. the ‘Quartet,’ I suspect that they will get into a set of political, security and trade arrangements that they will encourage the Israelis to allow the Palestinians to have as a temporary measure.  And, if there is no political horizon, we are left with the temporary measures, and those will become the status quo for a long time to come.  And finally, that means that we are now faced with a situation – I think that the cross roads were two years ago, we’ve already gone beyond the cross roads - and unless a ‘three ticks’ scenario works out, maybe, basically, there is no Palestinian state.  There was a window of opportunity.  It passed.  I think we missed it.  There is a one in nine chance that I am wrong.  But, there is an eight in nine chance that I am right, by my analysis.  This also means that we are moving to something entirely new, for which the international community does not have answers.  The sort of questions that arise will be: Should we go on paying salaries if Israel is in re-occupation?  Does that mean that we are just helping Israel occupy?  Shouldn’t we dump it back in Israel’s lap?  In which case, maybe, if at the end of the 100 days or 200 days, if I were in the shoes of the Palestinian cabinet, I might say that we have reached the point where we are unable to operate under these circumstances and we dissolve the Palestinian Authority, we give ourselves two months within which we shall prepare all our files for transfer (those that the Israeli army hasn’t already trashed) to boxes and CDs and shall hand them back to the Israeli military government along with our financial accounts and our legal weapons, and say to Israel, “We can’t operate.  You are now back under formal occupation under the Geneva Fourth Convention, the international community has to take over its own responsibilities under the Geneva Convention, and we as the cabinet and PLC are now re-designating ourselves as the Palestinian National Assembly or whatever, dedicated to achieving independence, and to resisting Israeli occupation through peaceful means.”  (Or, whatever they want to choose.) And, we now become a political party and get thrown in jail.  This is where we are heading.  The Palestinians can go into it and fall apart, or they can take the initiative and make the transfer, the transition.  I don’t think the international community has the ability to change the scenario, unless it is willing to confront Sharon, frankly and head on, on the settlements and on the peace treaty, and on this, and that, and the other.  I don’t see the US doing that.  Therefore, I don’t see Britain doing that, and therefore I don’t see the EU doing that, nor Russia for that matter, in fairness to everyone else in Europe.  That, or the international community, through the ‘Quartet,’ says:  “This is where we are heading, we can’t allow this to happen, and we are going to have to devise an international administration type situation.”   I’m not sure that I see that either.  It may be that we end up with something that is none of those options.  We end up with a return of occupation that is sort of half on, half off.  In Hebron the local military commander of the IDF works out a deal with the local Hamas people, and this happens.  There will be people who will go on shooting.  In some areas it works, some areas it doesn’t, some areas go under curfew for a hundred days, others don’t, others have travel bans and trade bans, others don’t.  And, you have a situation that is very tense, that encourages ethno-national violence.  Palestinians will go on blowing themselves up, or stabbing Jews in West Jerusalem, as they used do years ago, and we have a situation that starts to get very unpleasant.  Settlers go on the rampage and evict fifteen families from a neighboring village.  The sort of scenario where basically Israel is neither able to ingest the occupied territories and the population into its own system, but at the same time is not willing to relinquish the territories and the population on reasonable and sustainable terms.  And, we have a situation again that is increasingly violent and unstable.  And finally, the international community starts to step in, late in the day, against its will, with a short term strategy, and trying to design an intervention with clear exits - which is now obviously the big lesson everyone has learned from all the previous interventions.  And we may, possibly, hopefully, then end up with Dayton Two.  Anyone who has looked at Dayton One and where Bosnia is today, probably doesn’t want Dayton Two if they have any sense.  Nor Kosova Two.  So I will leave you that.  **(end of lecture presentation)**  **PART TWO:  Discussion Following the Lecture**  **MAH** Thank you Yezid. Very depressing.  **YS** Oh I don’t know.  **MAH** Allow me to begin by picking one simple point from your lecture.  You said clearly that, concerning the current situation, the Palestinians are the only party that can influence Israeli public opinion and change things within Israel.  **YS** No.  I only said that the Palestinians held the key.  **MAH** I can identify two keys, and Israel is not using either one.  The first key was offered by the Arab countries during the recent Arab Summit in Beirut, inviting the Israelis to leave their ‘Ghetto of Fear’ and become citizens of the Middle East, on equal footing, and with full normalization, in exchange for ending the occupation and recognizing a Palestinian state.  Sharon turned it down and moreover, the very following day on 29 March 2002, implemented the Israeli military incursion into the West Bank.  The second key:  Every Palestinian you come across, including Hamas, is willing to accept a truce ending the military incursion, the killing, and the assassinations, and releasing the detainees, and then coming back to the negotiation table.  Today In Israel there is a public opinion of 75% if not 80% shielded by Sharon.  With anger, frustration, and hate, they want to crush as much as they can in Palestine, ignoring these two keys.  The Israelis are saying “Sorry, gradually we will have normalization.  We’ve already started with Jordan and Egypt.  Now the Saudis are removing themselves from the conflict.  Gradually, everyone will leave the conflict and the Palestinians will remain alone, isolated.”  The question is how to get the Israelis to recognizing and use these keys?  **YS** Well I take it for granted that Sharon is a bad guy and therefore if the Arabs do something great he is not going to turn around and suddenly change his spots.  I think I hardly need to debate with you over that.  The issue of what the Palestinians could have done, what their responsibility is, I think there are a couple of issues here.  One is that if Hamas suddenly says “Oh you know we’re willing to do this and that”  **MAH** They will say.  A truce, end the occupation now, and we will go back to the negotiating table.  **YS** This is very good of them.  This is very kind of them.  But it is 21 months of bombing and suddenly they realize that they are up to their neck and in deep trouble.  And maybe, they helped get us in this situation.  Just because suddenly they have woken up and are starting to be nice and offer truces and cease fires and this and that, and that they are willing to allow Israel to release detainees.  You know, this is a bit self-indulgent.  They all made choices.  If they chose targeting settlers and Israeli soldiers in the West Bank and Gaza, or if they chose bombings of discotheques, they all made choices. If you want to behave like a six-year-old kid who does something naughty, suddenly realizes what they have done and say “Oh please can I still have the ice cream after all...”  You know, if they want to behave like six-year-old children, they are going to get treated like that.  I find something in this argument that is deeply problematic.  It avoids the fact that for 21 months people have been doing things on both sides.  The Israelis bear responsibility for what they have done.  Palestinians bear responsibility for what they’ve done.  And I think that there were choices to be made.  Suicide bombings, bombing civilians in particular, was wrong and was stupid, and you pay a price.  What I said earlier on a different issue, that we were at the cross-roads two years ago.  It is not now that we are at the cross-roads.  We took a path two years ago. “We,” I don’t mean to place myself in this position.  The Palestinians, the leadership, the factions, two years ago went in a particular direction at Camp David, to Taba, and with the beginnings of the Intifada, and in that broad period there were cross-roads.  We’ve passed the crossroads.  Its not now we’re there.  We are already down the line.  But again, after all, we are talking about a situation in which a society on the Israeli side has enjoyed, at least partially, a colonial relationship with the Palestinians, which therefore entails arrogance, notions of superiority, the notions (among even Peres-etc.-the peace camp) that we want peace with the Palestinians to get rid of them, so that we can get free of them, what we give them is out of the generosity of our hearts, not because they are entitled to it.  There is all that there.  Of course.  But, as far as I am concerned, and I am not exonerating them, I think that it takes two to create a catastrophe, not just one.  Just because the Palestinians are the good guys or the victims, doesn’t mean that they don’t also make their own contribution and they have made one.  In the past 21 months they have chosen time and again, I think, at the end of the day, to take wrong choices.  They had the chance of the Clinton proposal to deal with it differently, they had the chance with the Mitchell Report to deal with it differently, they had the chance with September 11th to deal with it differently.  And at the end of the day, a combination of Arafat’s maneuvering in his manipulative politics along with Hamas’s approach and Fatehs support and internal politics etc. meant that each time we missed opportunities and they were important ones.  And I do feel that it may well be, that no matter what the Palestinians now do and say, and that is implicit in your question, and whether the Arabs come along and finally offer a genuine peace deal, and the Palestinians go along with it, and they crush all signs of violence, and they do all the rest, it may still be too late.  **MAH** We’ve lost the Israelis?  **YS** Well, I’m arguing that I am hoping we have not lost the Israelis.  I am saying, this is what we need to be doing to test our hypotheses.  I think that there are a few things that we can do to make sure that we change the situation.  I think we can have an impact on the Israelis.  Others can have an impact.  America can have a great impact on the cost and benefit calculations of the Israelis (and Palestinians).  I’m simply asking, “Do the Palestinians do the little bit that they can do?”   If they have a 5% impact, I don’t expect them to perform 6%.  But it is a crime if they only have a 2% impact.  **B. Yezid Sayigh’s Response to Questions from Participants**  **YS** There is a lot of material in the remarks made around the table, a lot of important comments and ideas.  I obviously don’t have the time to go through them one by one, but I think there are several main issues that seem to have arisen.  First, let me clear away some of the minor issues.  I am assuming that, in this audience, I don’t need to tell people what Israel has done wrong.  What more can I tell you about what Israel does that you don’t already know.  So, if all you want to hear is me reminding everyone, for the benefit of the few non-Palestinians in the room, how terrible Israel is, then I’ve not actually added anything and I’ve basically wasted your time by coming here.  So I don’t think that I need to get into that.  I also feel that a question like the first Participant’s starting remark that our choices as Palestinians are not the same as the Israeli’s needs to be answered.  I would like to ask this Participant to tell me what she thinks her choices are.  **PARTICIPANT #1** Honestly?  **YS** Yes  **PARTICIPANT #1** Actually?  **YS** Yes  **PARTICIPANT #1** My first choice is a one state solution.  **YS** I am asking about choices regarding what you would have done in the last 21 months.  **PARTICIPANT #1** My choice is to get rid of the occupation and then establish my state.  **YS** OK.  Well we are not in disagreement about that.  But how do you do that?  There are the issues that follow this choice.  **Participant #1** Well. the United Nations resolutions.  **YS** Yes, but these are not actually choices.  **Participant #1** No, you asked how to go about it and I am saying implement the United Nations resolutions.  **YS** But that is not a choice.  You know what you want, and I agree with you what it should be.  But what are you going to do?  What I want to hear at the end of this relates to another issue that was raised about what the intellectuals and business men do and so on, about the elections and the point made about political parties.  The issues - that there is injustice, that there is racism, that there is occupation - these are extremely important issues, absolutely.   And, that is why they need to be solved.  Moreover, I think that these are battles that need to be won.  I also think that it is extremely important for Palestinian intellectuals or political leaders or whatever they are, whatever their actual position is, whatever their ideology is, should be able to stand back from their righteous anger, from their sense of outrage in order to channel that towards specific programs of action - working out things that were mentioned around the table, saying that this is what we need to understand about the American presidency and the way politics work and what that will then imply for us in the next two or four years.  Whether it is Hamas or Arafat or you or I, we need to be thinking precisely.  Several of you have argued that surely they (the US, Israel, etc) have the responsibility.   Maybe, they are partners to the crime.  But, lets take note of that and work out what that implies for what we can do and how we do it.  Here you come back again to making choices.  If all you are going to do is be outraged, then at the end of the day you are not going to dictate terms, you are always going to be responding to whatever an issue it is that the Israelis take, and they have, time and again, played games.  They know that they can get us all busy for months.  They do one little thing here or there, they dig a trench, or throw out a fake diplomatic idea, and they have us scurrying around fighting with each other for the next five months about ‘you’re too moderate, you’re not moderate enough.’  And the question is, do we have an idea of what the factors are around us.  We are in a very tough position - all the more reason for some coherent thinking and for some strategizing and for making choices.  And yes, you talk about demonstrating, and yes I think demonstrating is important, but I wasn’t confining how to confront Israel to any one means.  I think I made that clear in a number of contexts.  I am someone who started my political life in Beirut 33 years ago when I first saw Mr. Arafat.  I have been working professionally on the reform issue for the last four years. I have been working on the negotiations for 11 years as an advisor, negotiator and consultant.  In other words, what I am saying to you is that I am not de-legitimizing any means of confrontation.  I am someone who believed in and has written about armed struggle.  But even in this, there are choices to be made.  And, at the end of the day, the real choice to be made is this: you either believe that you are helpless or you don’t.  The moment that you believe that you are not helpless then you are making choices from that point on.  If you are building up a demonstration against a tank, and people get shot the first day, this has to be repeated on the second day by an even bigger demonstration, and the third day, until the fourth day it finally becomes impossible for the Israelis to go on shooting.  Let me give you one example of that.  Look at what happened in Iran in 1979 when literally millions of people went out into the streets.  They got shot down.  But, they had enough faith and conviction in what they wanted, to get shot in the hundreds and finally the soldiers couldn’t stomach it.  Now, maybe that is waste.  Maybe it is better to shoot back.  But then I would like to see some intelligent shooting.  This is what I mean.  My starting point is that there are choices to be made and that they relate to a lot of issues.  That there are contexts with the USA, international community, Israel.  All of that, I confess, is truly important.  But, the Palestinians have to look out for their own selves.  And, they have to make appropriate choices, and they have to be consistent, and pursue them, and they have to pay a price.  Regarding the questions and comments on the reform issue, I am with you.  But, who judges reform?  I am concerned with Palestinians judging reform.  Not all Palestinians agree on what the reforms are.  Evidently, there is disagreement.    But, I am not promoting reform because the USA demands reform. In fact I am more concerned with the reforms that the USA hasn’t even spoken about.  All they want is to get rid of Yasser Arafat, and to deal with the finances that buy guns, and the security forces, and the rest of the system can go to hell.  Incidentally, that is why I believe that the elections again are a fake, whether they will return Arafat, and therefore strengthen him again against the reformers; or they bring the militants.  I want to focus on the system so that by the time we get to January so much power has been shifted that it doesn’t matter if Arafat is re-elected.  That is to give you one example.  To tie this in again to issue of intellectuals, people need to work, to state their beliefs, to speak out, to fight for them etc.  I think that what we are not accustomed to in our culture, although we have very good examples of it, is taking minority positions and pushing them.  We are not used to that.  We want consensus, or everyone already on board before we come out with a new initiative, program, or platform.  I would like to see people who would come out in Palestine, whether they are intellectuals or business men or political parties, and take views (this is partly what I feel I am doing with audience), and to actually realize that it is OK, that it is healthy, that it is a good thing for a few people to come out and say “I don’t agree with Mr. Arafat and this is why I disagree,” or “I don’t agree with suicide bombers,” or “I don’t agree with the peaceniks.”  To come out and state these positions.  Hamas is quite clear on what it doesn’t like about Oslo.  Why shouldn’t we also be clear about what we want, and state our positions.  To answer the question, which has arisen in various forms around this table, regarding who is my target audience, I think that this is apparent.  I have worked one on one with the Palestinian Authority and with the PLO on the reform issue, during many stages in my career.  Regarding some of the issues and objections that were raised concerning the current situation, I am talking about what brought us here in the first place.  We have been making choices.  For example, the reform agenda today suddenly becomes an issue being forced upon us because four years ago and six years ago when we should have been worrying about it and fighting for it we weren’t.  This issue could have been pursued without it being an American condition or an Israeli condition.  Now its an American condition and for all the wrong reasons.  And, we don’t like it and we don’t believe in it. We don’t trust it.  But, my question is why weren’t you paying attention four years ago or six years ago when these issues were being put together.  We are now dealing with consequences - something has blown up, something has fallen apart.  We have taken choices earlier along the line that explain why we are here today.  And so when you say “Ah yes but the Israelis should do this, they should do that, they should do the other,” that’s true.  And, you say that we can’t do this or that because the Israeli occupation is the primary problem.  It is of course a primary problem.  And from 1994 it should have been at the center of political mobilization so that when each settlement went up there was a response.  Let me ask you, was Salah Eddin Street closed down with a sit in strike one single morning since 1993?  Tell me.  You know, at a time when the Israelis couldn’t and wouldn’t have shot at you.  There is a legacy.  There is an accumulation.  We have taken things in a certain way for six years, and especially for the last two years.  And so, we are paying the price.  And now unfortunately, the objections, and they are true, they are valid, they are heartfelt, all the rest, but they overlook the fact that we have shared in getting ourselves here.  And therefore, when I focus on the Palestinian side it is partly because I don’t need to say so much about the Israeli side.  But also, I believe that the Palestinians can do something and that they need to do something and if they don’t like what is being done to them, then it is only them that can determine their agenda and work with it, and they may still fail.  Defeat is possible, it happens.  The final point on this issue, and I think I will probably stop there.  In a way, I am saying a lot of things out loud that I have heard from many Palestinians for the last two years.  There are criticisms that I put out in print that I heard from the highest people around Arafat that they themselves would never say publicly.  I may be exploiting my freedom, my protection. I am able to go around and say things.  Occasionally there will be people who will say “Yezid, if only you said it in Arabic,” but this just goes on, goes on.  My feeling is that we still seek to ‘keep it within the family’ and to secure the result before we get into it.  We face a terrible future if we don’t have people who will stand up and say things out loud which are outrageous at times, which may be wrong at times.  It is OK to be wrong.   We cannot all be right.  *(side comment from participant) Its very very difficult*  *YS You think what I say is to be sure that the next time I get to Ben Gurion airport they let me in? NO!*  *Participant: There is a price*  **YS** The point is, of course they are going to stand in your way.  But aren’t Palestinians going to stand up and voice views, have a debate and fight for things among each other? (I don’t mean fight physically.)  But I am saying that Palestinians need to bring these things out in the open, to have ideas, to push views, to deal with problems that they are now just suggesting.  So many of our intellectuals and the general public don’t talk about any of these issues, and neither has our PLC, the Legislative Council, or the political factions developed debates on these issues.  You wanted them to turn from guerilla groups to political parties.  I am not trapped there.  They want to categorize into whether one is ‘pro Oslo/anti Oslo’ basically.  Everything else is left out.  We didn’t discuss governance issues.  We didn’t discuss the economy we wanted.  Now partly this is because more and more we have remained under occupation, direct and indirect.  So, fair enough.  But, there is more to it than that. |