

3 April 2018, Legacy Hotel, Jerusalem

Topic: Israel Today: The Rise of the Right and its Implications

Speaker(s): Ayman Odeh, Member of the Knesset, Head of the Joint List; Anton Shalhat, Author, Researcher and Director of the Israel Unit at MADAR Center, Ramallah.

1) Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi:

Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Chairman of PASSIA, welcomed the speakers and attendees, emphasizing on the importance of maintaining communication between members of the civil society and institutions in Jerusalem through holding such periodical meetings. He said that engaging intellectuals with the needs and challenges of the society is a very different thing from employees “only” waiting for instructions and salaries.

Dr. Abdul Hadi said that today’s meeting was taking place in the midst of two events: the mourning over the martyrs from the March of Return in Gaza last Friday and the Easter holidays. He stressed that Palestinians believe in the Islamic and Christian faiths and stand by their shared identity, notwithstanding the unending conflict with the Zionist movement, the parting of their leaders, their internal disunity, and the daily loss of their people.

He then went on to say that today’s roundtable discussion on “the Rise of the Right and its Implications” needs to consider and analyze the larger context in which policies and events are presently unfolding:

The international scene: US President Donald Trump, and Vice-President Pence still ignore and deny the history of the Palestinian cause, the roots of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the legitimate decisions of international law and bodies, especially with regard to Jerusalem. They triggered a storm by recognizing Jerusalem as capital of Israel, although international rejection of this announcement was nearly unanimous and came with a call for the adherence to international law as well as the reaffirmation of Jerusalem as an occupied city.

The regional scene: Conflicts and discord in the Arab world continue and have sadly escalated in recent months with no end in sight. This includes the deplorable preemptive war between Saudi Arabia and Iran over Yemen, as much as the unprecedented bloodshed, destruction, and millions of deaths, casualties and refugees in Syria. While Libya and Iraq still lick their wounds and search for a better future, some Arab leaders more or less secretly normalize with Israel, albeit the public in those countries still stands with the Palestinians and their just cause.

The Palestinian scene: After five decades of Israeli occupation, attempts to manipulate and neglect the Palestinian narrative, misrepresent religious places, and enforce laws aiming at further Israelizing Palestine’s Arab character and legalizing the occupation continue unabated. Not only is the Judaization of Jerusalem being driven forward, Palestinians everywhere are subjected to Israel’s siege and closure policy, while witnessing the marginalization of the PLO and the sinking of the PA in administrative and services tasks.

Finally, the question is:

Within the borders of historical Palestine, the Palestinian and the Jewish populations are now largely the same, standing at approximately 6.5 million people each. In the absence of any prospects for reaching a political solution in the foreseeable future, the big question is: Where will Zionism take us with its ever-expanding racist and colonial ideology and an increasingly apartheid-like agenda, which is not only supported by the West since more than a century but nowadays also openly by most of the Arab states?

How do we break through the crisis of leadership in the absence of a clear vision and will in order to formulate our national agenda on our land?