**The Crisis of Fateh**

**أزمة فتح**

Speakers: Jamal Shobaki, Mohammed Al Hourani

**Dr Mahdi’s Introduction:**Fateh is considered the back bone of the Palestinian National Movement, as pioneers in the Revolution, Intifada and negotiations… most of the 8,000 Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli Jails are from the Cadre of Fateh. Today we are meeting to discuss the crises of Fateh in five major components of the movement: Vision, Info structure, governing body (after ten years of ruling as a PA) and a gap among generations in terms of ideology missions and positions of the hierarchy.

We are concerned with the future of the movement, the ‘cardinals’ of Fateh failed to reach an agreement and solve problems in Amman meeting last month, the same goes to the revolutionary council with the many unimplemented decisions.

Abbas Zaki and Hani al-Hassan accepted our invitation to participate in today’s meeting but are on another last minute mission abroad, they apologized for missing today’s meeting so we are here with what is referred to as a second school of thought in the movement with the absence of the invited members of the central committee of Fateh.

The questions of today’s session are:
What are the elements of the crisis in Fateh and is there a way to democratize the rules in the movement as a path to overcome it.
What is the future of Fateh?
What is the direction?
The civil society many concerns on security issues and elections
We hope that this meeting will enrich the Palestinian dialogue and open the door for other groups such as Hamas and opposition factions to participate.
Palestinian national vision is the topic
There is a bleak future with regard to Jerusalem, refugees and the future independent state regardless of the consciences of the world leaders on a two state solution.

**Interjection :** Fateh crisis should not be discussed in open meeting

**Dr Mahdi:**People wanted to participate and are interested, we are not trying to solve all the problems, we want to establish an open forum for dialogue and this is not the only place where we can discuss factions problems, I hope there will be open forums everywhere in the OPT for dialogue. Our discussion on Fateh crises can start on the “talk of the town” and it can be in what I personally use to call the Four Fs in the tribe of Fateh:

1. Falatan (No Security)
2. Fasad ( Corruption)
3. Fawda (Chaos)
4. Fetneh (Civil War)

**Jamal Shobaki:**Most people are Fateh cadres
Presence of Fateh Central Committee (CC) important in order to find solutions as Fateh future is of concern to many people
Fateh responsible for performance of PNA, when Fateh suffers problems everyone suffers
Difficult situation, new Jerusalem settlement disaster, Fateh needs to overcome difficulties in order to find way out of crisis
Where are the crises? The answer I would have hoped to get from CC members.
Revolutionary Council (RC) in homeland took great decisions, and CC was asked to implement them in order to get out of crisis
I prepared decisions but decisions were not met with answers
RC has strong voice demanding change, we feel frustrated, Fateh movement has structural crisis and a crisis terms of programme, internal bylaws and laws did not reflect new realities
Internal laws are used by certain people and not always adhered to
There is no unified rhetoric for the movement; if you talk with Fateh cadres in the field you see there are many cadres without leadership
We wait for miracles
Late president monopolized decision-making, now many decisions are blamed on the late president, many CC members rotate in the late president’s orbit, either because they were for so many years in the circle, or they are not true about reforms
RC’s position: Fateh is the faction for anyone without faction, extreme left to right represented
That is the movement, so it concerns everyone, however sometimes it seems academics are more concerned about the movement then its cadres
Gaza incidents increase the problems, Islamic camp respects democracy until they reach power, they do not believe in democracy
RC decisions: the general conference was decided but has not taken place yet, there is an urgent need for internal democracy, district conferences must be held before general conference, an organizing committee was planned but no action has been taken
If decisions RC decisions were implemented we were not in crisis

**Mohammad Hourani:**I prefer a dialogue but here is a brief summary of the situation:

* Dangerous policies like construction of the wall, Jerusalem, and settlement construction give society the feeling that changes are not possible
* Fateh is in crisis regarding its structure, organisational terms are not defined
* Hamas and PIJ mix ideology and politics, they do not make a distinction between politics and belief, this makes tasks of PNA difficult
* Fateh is a national issue, people want Fateh be backbone of Palestinian society
* There is not enough outside pressure on Israel
* The third party are the independent and leftist forces, they want see Fateh lead national movement

**Internal Crisis:**There is a clear political programme, but everyone interprets programme as he wishes, one of the reasons is the presence in the media
Young generation is more democratic, but it is not a crisis of generations, problem is between leadership style of some in CC and others in Fateh who want democratic changes, in both camps there are many overlaps between generations
Question: Is there a sufficient internal framework for mobility?
6 th conference: Many in CC prefer to avoid and delay it forever, there will be more tension if there are no channels, and many care more about themselves than the nation
Primaries: PLC elections are coming, if no primaries are held there is a real problem because too many people want to run as candidates, there is a need for internal selection and a need for the ground leadership in WB and Gaza to prepare this process

**Dr Mahdi:**Five dimensions of crisis:

1. Vision: Is the two-state solution still possible?
2. No clear distinction PLO-PNA-Fateh
3. Failure of CC and RC
4. Structure and hierarchy
5. Generation Gaps

Chronicle crisis? White coup inside possible, this means a need for an alliance between “some” PLC members, security forces, and PNA officially in order to implement changes through an emergency session for the sixth Fateh conference.

**Jamal Shobaki:**Two-state vision valid as long as PNA exists and institutions work and elections are held
Internal democracy problems will be solved if conference and primaries are held
Problematic role of CC can be solved through elections and a conference who elects a committee preparing internal elections, if conference is delayed; I support an emergency leadership taking over
All important members in PNA are CC members
There are many decisions addressing the crisis but there is a problem of implementation
No problem of inside and outside but the occupation makes situation difficult
CC made decision to get rid of Fateh Higher Committee (HC), HC served as a partial solution, HC is not represented in the committee which prepares conference, HC is important for dealing with prisoners

**Participant:**

* Problem of changing from revolution to state, outside and inside experiences are contradictory
* Legal, economic and political programme
* Where is the General Secretariat in order to follow up on decisions?
* PLC: military people sold out by certain laws which infringe on rights of security personnel

**Participant:**

* Fateh is sick, insiders had a big role in allowing CC to get away with delaying conference, why did RC not stand up?, there is a major responsibility for insiders

**Participant:**

* Any transition will be long-term, full generation was waiting for conference, now it is 16 years since 5 th conference
* Conference with shortcomings far better than no conference
* Lost chance to amend bylaws after Oslo and again before PNC meeting in Gaza

**Participant:**

* Options:
	+ Find remedy through elections
	+ Or split
* Basic challenges:
	+ PLC elections, Ahmed ad-Dik (?) wrote paper on primaries, another research center presented paper to Fateh how to select candidate
	+ Conference

**Participant:**

* Political vision of Fateh limited to Israeli-Palestinian conflict, no comprehensive vision, same goes for other factions
* Local factions and PLC should assume responsibilities
* Not Fateh alone is to blame
* Fateh does not define goals but it is not alone in this

**Participant:**

* Why did Fateh not succeed in building its own structure if it managed to build state structure?
* Fateh should be model to other Palestinian and Arab parties

**Participant:**

* We talk too much
* Many problems due to transition from movement to state and PNA
* If no conference there are other alternatives
* How can Fateh achieve revolution and end of occupation?
* What kind of Palestinian democracy do we want? Is there one approach of democracy that Fateh should adopt?
* How is change possible when external powers do not support change?
* No change of charter unless objectives are achieved

**Participant:**

* Conflict between leaders inside Fateh led to marginalisation of lower cadres

**Participant:**

* Changes of 5 th conference were not adopted
* Some members in PLC and RC re-aligned but CC did not change
* We want 6 th conference, the base always supports movement
* Relations to armed struggle? No Israeli changes of mentality, bylaws have to be changed to respect challenges

**Participant:**

* I propose to hold general council instead of conference

**Muhammad Hourani:**This time I a more specific:
Is there a deep crisis? Yes
Can it be solved on the condition of proper decisions? Yes
Who solves it? CC, RC, Tanzim, PLC members, if clear mechanisms are used (PLC elections next January),
RC needs to adopt paper on primaries, otherwise you have tribes and geographical groups that factionalize Fateh even more, danger of tribalism
Conference to be held on set date, need to create public opinion around it, present is as the peak of democratic process to tanzim and district level, people then will be responsible for Fateh, not for district
Crisis also related to conflict of interest between lower cadres
Conference must be in the context of a vision of regaining trust
Prisoners stood fast in prison due to hope, we need to have hope
Fateh talked not about organisation but of symbols, symbols are gone, now we have other challenges and talks, we are more realistic
In the absence of organisation there must be consensus on mechanism, need to create a lobby and work through media to expose those who oppose reform
Expulsion of the author Sadiq (?) is symbol of crisis
If the democratic process does not work there will be more fragmentation and increasingly weak performance until the movement collapses
There are efforts to create of third force, I would love to see such a new third force, maybe generated by elections to PLC and municipal elections

**Jamal Shobaki :**There is agreement between many people about the democratic way out of the crisis
Lack of democracy in all Palestinian factions, some fundamentalist movements demands Fateh to be democratic, but they are not democratic themselves, I want to see democracy in all Palestinian factions including Hamas and PIJ, they attempt to rearrange the Palestinian political map
I am distressed as a citizen that municipal councils interfere in public affairs, I want real political pluralism
I was secretary general of Fateh in Hebron and organized democratic conferences, the organizers were sent to jail, I accept organisational reform and want elections on all levels, I got my position through elections, some in Fateh were elected and others were not
We have to return to Palestinian democratic life, if conference is delayed there must be a committee, HC talked about fighting corruption already in 1997 and CC banned HC magazine from being published
Fateh one 1 year from now: some in CC delay things, there is chance with Abu Mazen to strengthen democracy and rule of law in all sectors, none can delay or stop democracy in the end
Bylaws: CC and Secretariat RC are responsible for decision, council is largely appointed, only a few elected
We need emergency leadership to run daily affairs, one in Gaza and WB each, they should report directly to CC on regular basis, this proposal was made to RC and a majority agreed

**Dr Mahdi:**Crisis in Fateh is internal but has huge impact on homeland. I want to invite international participants to ask.

**International Participants:**Why should I vote for Fateh in the coming elections?

**Jamal Shobaki:**The choice is between Fateh or Hamas, Fateh stands for two-state-solution

**Muhammad Hourani:**Discussing Fateh crisis is a sign of power and openness, the majority is represented by Fateh, Fateh has an achievable political programme, Fateh is the sole party that can lead Palestinian to political settlement, Fateh is socially plural and values freedom of speech which high compared to Arab world, social issues are extremely important to us

**Participant:**We are not in conflict with Hamas, Hamas is one of the forces of the Palestinian people, if they are elected let it be
Everything is blamed on CC, but where are the leaders of public opinion?
Those who criticize should raise their voice

**Participant:**There is a gap between academia and people like me who sit in the street, crisis of Fateh is very sensitive and should not be discussed with outsiders

**Dr. Mahdi:**Fateh is not a “Company” with share holders fighting among themselves in a closed room and should not be as such. All of you are citizens of Palestine with a national aspiration long… long before being a faction member or Fateh Cadre. You should thing of Palestine first and what you as citizens can do and maybe in a later stage in your organizational framework what should be done.

**Muhammad Hourani:**Elections in January, Fateh pushed for it although we might lose
Fateh is open so we discuss openly
Problem not only in CC, different conflicts

**Jamal Shobaki:**Elections will be positive for Fateh

**Dr. Mahdi:**I thank the two speakers and all the participants and looking forward meeting all of you at PASSIA next meeting.

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