

The Jordanian Disengagement Causes and Effects

By [Dr. Mahdi F. Abdul Hadi](#)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Jordanian Disengagement: Causes and Effects

- [Preparing for the Disengagement](#)
- [Procedures of the Disengagement](#)
 - 1) [Jordan's Motives](#)
 - 2) [Palestinian Factors](#)
 - 3) [Arab Factors](#)
 - 4) [Israeli Factors](#)
 - 5) [International Factors](#)

Effects of the Disengagement

- [The Supposed Political Vacuum](#)
- [Palestinians in the Jordanian State](#)
- [The Palestine Liberation Organization](#)

Israel Confronted with the Palestinian Option

- [Israel Confronted with the Palestinian Option](#)

This paper represents the free expression of its author and does not necessarily represent the judgement or opinions of PASSIA. The presentation of these articles, originally intended as lectures to be delivered on August 20, 1988, was banned by the authorities when all academic and cultural meetings in East Jerusalem were forbidden to take place.

Copyright (c) PASSIA
First Edition - September 1988
Second Edition - September 1995
PASSIA Publication

The Jordanian Disengagement: Causes and Effects

Preparing for the Disengagement

During the second half of the month of Ramadan (May) 1988, King Hussein held a series of open, popular meetings with professionals, trade union leaders and tribesman with the aim of preparing a decisive political move. In his public speeches, the king raised the issue of Jordanian-Palestinian unity, and reminded his audiences of the text of the unity accords, which state that it is a "restricted unity," according to the Jordanian Parliament's resolution of April 14, 1950. That resolution holds that the unity "must not undermine a final settlement of the Palestinian cause within the framework of Palestinian national aspirations, Arab cooperation and international legitimacy," and that it is a "temporary and conditional unity" in accordance with the decision of the Arab League's council of June 12, 1950. The decision stated that the "Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan declares that the annexation of the Palestinian section to it has been necessitated by practical needs and that Jordan will keep this territory in (custody) until the day when it is included in a final settlement when the rest of Palestine is liberated. Jordan will accept whatever the rest of the Arab League states decide regarding it."

The union is, therefore, according to the King speeches and according to the two above-mentioned resolutions, a restricted unity until a solution to the Palestinian problem is found, or until the Palestinian people are able to exercise their right to self-determination. It is a restricted unity in the sense that it cannot hamper a final settlement, and it is a temporary and not a permanent unity where "(Jordan) would keep this territory under its custody."

In his Ramadan meetings, King Hussein recalled that he had proposed back in March 1972 a plan to "reshape the Jordanian-Palestinian house" in an arrangement that would include every Palestinian all over the world in what was later known as the "United Arab Kingdom Plan". The Palestinians in Jordan and outside, along with the Arab countries, however, rejected that plan. At the Rabat Summit in 1974, the Arab states, in the presence of and with the agreement of

Jordan, confirmed the Palestinian people's right to self-determination without any outside intervention, including the right to independence and national sovereignty under the leadership of its sole legitimate representative the Palestine Liberation Organization. This was also endorsed by international will in the United Nations in November 1974 by two resolutions asserting the spirit and text of the Rabat resolutions.

All this, according to Jordan's readings, and as outlined by the preliminary speeches for disengagement, meant that the cards of the conditional, restricted, and temporary unity must be returned to their owners in compliance with Palestinian, Arab, and international demands.

Procedures of the Disengagement

Early in August 1988, the Jordanian government, acting on directions from King Hussein, took a series of measures which were later identified as "severing legal, administrative, and financial links with the West Bank. These included cancellation of the Jordanian Development Plan for the West Bank, replacing the Ministry of the Occupied Lands Affairs with a political department within the foreign ministry, and terminating the services of approximately 21,000 civil servants and employees, while "temporarily excluding" the Islamic Waqf (administration) department and the Islamic courts from these measures. Some members of the Jordanian Parliament's Upper House were also dismissed, and finally, Jordanian citizenship was withdrawn from West Bank and Gaza Strip residents. Their Jordanian passports were to become identification documents only, while the issuing of new passports or renewing of expired ones for West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians were suspended.

According to the advisors and advocates of the disengagement, it is a historic, strategic, and political coup d'etat that will not be repealed, and one that came after through discussion and objective analysis of the political formulae in the area. They also argue that the timing of the decision is a result of an intelligent and daring reading of the prospects for a more dangerous future. Jordan directly interned when it did to force the disengagement on all parties in the political equation, not only to assure recognition of the disengagement but also to force them to deal with it according to its principles and rules.

(1) Jordan's Motives

Jordan's interaction with the "national Intifada" is not a new, coincidental, or temporary matter. "Public opinion in Palestine and Transjordan are the same," wrote Prince Abdullah to Sir Arthur Wauchope on August 10, 1936 during the Palestinian revolt, warning of its impact. He added, "I am fully alert to the continuation of peace and stability in Transjordan to prevent the possible explosion which I feel might occur so long as the calamity in Palestine continues ..."

Prince Abdullah also disclosed the effects of the revolt at the time, saying, "... only God Knows the difficulties I have to bear for the sake of peace and stability in Transjordan, while the cries for help from Palestine shatter the hearing of the nation every day. The provocation letters fly out of Palestine and enthusiastic nationalists make serious efforts to move sectarian and racist feelings."

The "Palestinian Intifada" came to revive political schools of thought in Jordan, and to restore them as they were back in the 1930's. Three Jordanian schools of thought revived their ideologies and roles, and voices began exerting "pressure" towards talking "some kind of political decision."

FIRST SCHOOL: This was and still is the school of Arab unity. It aimed as it still does for equality, liberty, and democracy as the basis to formulate unity. Some of its advocates in Transjordan were Shafiq Irshaidat, Abd al-Halim al-Nimer, and Suleiman al-Nabulsi. In Palestine, its advocates were Abdallah Rashid Amro, Abdallah Na'was, Abdallah al-Rimawi, and Kamal Nasser.

Today, this school comprises professional unions, university faculties, and some notables including Hamad al-Farhan, Muhammad Odeh al-Qur'an, Suleiman al-Hadidi, and Najib Irshaidat, as well as the Palestinian personalities Ibrahim Bakr, Bahjat Abu Gharbiyeh, and Abd al-Majid Shouman.

This school's influence on the Jordanian monarch, however, is very limited, and its role on the political scene fragmented; thus this school remains captive to "romantic pan-Arabism".

SECOND SCHOOL: This was and still is the "Jordanization of the state." It involves ridding government offices of Palestinians, as well as removing the Palestinian Question from the country's foreign and domestic priorities.

In the past, this school had its own advocates: Sheikh Muhammad Amin al-Shanqiti in the 1950's, Hazza' al-Majali in the 1960's, Wasfi al-Tall in the 1970's, and Dr. Khalil al-Salem in the 1980's. Today, the advocates of this school are Dr. Abd al-Salam al-Majali, Dr. Said al-Tall, Imraiwed al-Tall, and Tareq Msarweh. This school is also deeply rooted in the powerful Cirassian communities in Jordan.

Its influence expanded to the Beduin tribes after the civil war in Jordan in the early 1970's. Ideas and activities of this school became front-page reports in the press, critical of those "foreigners" [Palestinians] who were enjoying the wealth of the country. They alleged that the economy, commerce, and finance were in their hands, that land and real estate, along with the Abdoon Palaces, were theirs, that they possessed the keys to hotels and held festive gatherings with their wives or mistresses. This school also criticized the rapid expansion of those "foreigners" in the banks, companies, and courts, alleging that a recommendation from one of them removes all obstacles, from contractors' deals to ministerial decisions.

The complaints increased against the authority of those "foreigners" in the country and with regard to their influence over the king. They argued that contrary to his promises to promote the Beduin, the monarch had been concentrating on issues pertaining to those "strangers" even after the PLO leaders were expelled from Amman and their offices closed in March 1986. The reading of this school added that the declining economic conditions (falling value of the dinar, the deteriorating economic infrastructure, etc.), the aggravating problems of jobless graduates and the other unemployed, and the new phenomenon of strikes by professionals and workers, as well as the increase in the crime rate, were basically the fault of those "foreigners".

In response to this reading of the situation, the advocates of a "Jordanisation of the State" sought to pursue two related strategies: (a) to act as a political opposition group, promoting a policy of reform in an attempt to limit the expanding role of those "strangers"; and (b) to try to change the situation by promoting "Jordanisation" in the social, economic, and commercial spheres. To these ends, demands were made in public for the establishment of political parties which would be used as forums for the establishment of political parties which would be used as forums for recruiting and organizing followers to this school in the hope of carrying out political reforms and implementing the necessary changes from a position of strength. Groups of Jordanian contractors, special clubs for Jordanians only, and banks and companies closed to any "foreigner" emerged with the aim of establishing a Jordanian economic, social, and financial structure capable of standing up to those "foreigners", should confrontation and challenges arise.

THIRD SCHOOL: This school was present within the Jordanian left, and among opponents of the regime. They argued that within three years the demographic future of Jordan would shift in favor of the "foreigners". As a result, a Palestinian majority, deprived of a homeland and self-rule, but possessing money, education, and skills, eventually would prevail. Consequently a new political formula was needed to take account of such a development. They called for a Palestinian democratic state on both banks of the river in which a Jordanian minority could participate, enjoying.

The only exception to the three schools was in the 1950's and again in the 1980's. Two schools of thought competed during these periods. The first one, known as the "Unity School", was led by King Abdullah and included Suleiman Abd al-Razeq Touqan, Ahmad al-Shaka'a, Muhammad Ali al-Ja'abari, Ragheb al-Nashashibi, Abd al-Latif Salah, Tawfiq Abu al-Huda, Samir al-Rifa'i, Said al-Mutfi, and Rawhi Abdul Hadi. It achieved its objectives when the West Bank was annexed to the Hashemite Kingdom.

The second school, known as "the exclusively Palestinian," was led by the grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini and included Ahmad Hilmi Abd Al-Baqi, Awni Abd al-Hadi, Jamal al-Husseini, and Anwar Nusseibeh. It formally achieved some of its objectives and established a legislative council and the All

Government of Palestine.

Some Palestinian individuals, foremost among them Mousa al-Alami, stayed away from either school for personal reasons and concealed aspirations, and instead channeled their efforts into economic, agricultural, and educational fields (medicine engineering, and law), awaiting solutions from outside to end the strife between the two schools. They worked to establish the "nucleus of the future" by keeping people on the land. The "Arab Development Project" in Jericho was an example of such an effort.

Yet, the monarch in Amman remained informed of these movements and, then as now, personally kept an eye on their philosophies, their men, their relations, and even their sources of finance, as well as ways to penetrate their ranks. And he was waiting for the right time to make the decisive move.

(2) Palestinian Factors

By December 1987, Amman had received three Palestinian messages from three Palestinian locations, all of which carried the same meaning. These messages revealed the declining and worsening relations, and all came to the same conclusions.

The First Message was the Intifada. It stated that if Jordan had once ruled in the West Bank, certainly there was no future for this rule, and that it would not be possible to "return" in any form to the pre-1967 situation. Also, while the Intifada initially was aimed solely against the Israeli military occupation, in the absence of any movement towards a political solution the Intifada would be exported beyond the boundaries of the occupied territories, west across the "green line" and east across the Jordan river. The effects of the Intifada were already evident in the Arab villages inside the "green line", as well as in the Palestinian camps, educational institutions, and mosques and churches in Amman.

The Second Message, which came from Palestinians in Jordan, stated that the "uprising" was a "second Arab awakening", and while it was basically a call for liberation and national independence on Palestinian soil, and a rejection of and resistance to repression, injustice, and military occupation, it was also a call to liberate Arab identity and thought from the repression and tyranny of the ruling Arab regimes. This interpretation of the essence of the Intifada started to spread through the Amman Arab media, the Friday sermons in the mosques, and the church sermons on Sunday, as well as in the discussions of the Palestinian intelligentsia.

The Third Message came from the PLO, the historic leadership of the Palestinian people. The PLO leadership turned down several official invitations to visit Amman, agreed to participate in a joint Palestinian-Egyptian delegation to an international conference, and refused Baghdad's efforts to reconcile with Amman. All this convinced Jordan that it was impossible to restore the minimum level of

relations agreed upon in the Amman Accords of February 1985.

The three Palestinian messages were clear and straightforward. They left the monarch in Amman with no option but to wait, hoping that the Palestinians would change. Otherwise, his only option would be to move ahead, contributing at least partially to this change.

(3) Arab Factors

King Hussein heard and witnessed the attitudes of the Arab leaders of the "Intifada Summit" in Algiers in June 1988. All the signs indicated that it was not possible to abort the Intifada, then in its eighth month; but it was also clear that the "labor pains" of the Intifada would continue beyond the ninth month, especially since US Secretary of State George Shultz failed to abort it in its initial stages. Even the occupation authorities had failed to deprive the Intifada of its sources of survival, despite attempts to strave the masses and despite the expulsion of its best men. The normal end was a natural delivery of a Palestinian state, on time, in its home, and in the presence of its legitimate father, the PLO.

Rabat was the first capital to call for and adopt the legitimate role of the PLO in 1974. Its calls spread to Tunis, Algiers, and Tripoli in the western part of the Arab world and to Kuwait and Riyadh and the rest of the Arab Guld capitals. Riyadh even declined to finance the 1987 Jordanian Development Plan for the occupied territories, opting to continue working through the Joint Committee. As for Baghdad and Cairo, and despite their close relations with Amman, they both publicly insisted on giving priority to dealing with the PLO when it came to Palestinian issues.

All this left Amman with no option but to retreat from its schemes and settle for coordination with Damascus in attempting to besiege the PLO, where both managed briefly to curtail the PLO in Lebanon and Jordan.

However, the general Arab message was to support the Intifada and its historic and sole legitimate leadership, the PLO, this soberting Jordan to the reality that it is not possible to compete with the PLO.

(4) Israeli Factors

Amman watched closely the scenarios of the current Israeli election campaign. Its reading of the situation was that the Likud and the Labor Alignment eventually would reach an understanding in order to impose a political, military, or demographic (transfer) solution on Amman by wooing or threats, or through American maneuvers.

Amman has had a 20-year history of dialogue, coordination, and even cooperation (power sharing) attempts with the Labor Party. But all that was

fruitless, and Shimon Peres failed to delivery any of his promises, thus making the "Jordanian option" more than an illusion.

Amman was also fully aware of the danger of Jobotinsky's old schemes and their renewal under Menachem Begin, Sharon, and the generals of the ruling Israeli military establishment. Amman was certain that it was impossible to communicate with this group, hence leaving Amman with the option of exploring, and eventually discovering the illusions of, the Labor Party. Faced with a greedy and expansionist Likud, and in the absence of the Israeli decision, the only option for Amman was to retreat from the Israeli arena: to withdraw politically and leave it to the Palestinians to face the Israelis ideologically and politically. Amman had to acknowledge the end of the Power Sharing Scheme, the Autonomy, and the Improving the Quality of Life Program, and finally announce the death of the Jordanian Option. Thus Jordan had to retreat to build a political and military defensive line to face the possible Israeli challenges of the "transfer", the "substitute homeland", and the "imposed negotiations" following a possible future military defeat.

(5) International Factors

After Washington and Moscow succeeded in establishing the basis for "international denete" in the fields of nuclear weapons and in the wake of the superpowers" agreements regarding regional conflict - such as those in Afghanistan, Namibia, Angola, and the Gulf - the Palestinian file is now on the agenda of the European, European-American, and American-Soviet summits. This, naturally, would marginalize Jordan's role. It is thus important for Jordan to reassess its calculations internally and externally, and rearrange its own house alone and in its own self-interest.

Likewise, monitoring the US election campaign gives a similar assessment to that of the international factor. The Democratic Party, for the first time in its history, debated the Palestinian people's right to self-determination at its national convention. Although the Democrats took no vote on the issue, the mere discussion of the Palestinian Question, and the increasing Arab-American calls for the establishment of an "independent Palestinian state" alongside Israel on the historic land of Palestine, had a special significance. It was becoming increasingly clear that normalization of US-Palestinian relations is a matter of time. This could be at the expense of US-Jordanian relations and not at the expense of US-Israeli relations, and therefore Amman could be used as a station to reach the Palestinians.

This assessment, naturally, compelled Amman to restate its position and role to Washington, making clear that it continued to be committed to a peaceful settlement in the region and to be a partner in this settlement, but that Jordan would not be the major partner, i.e. that it would not be a substitute for the Palestinian. Washington, therefore, must differentiate between the role of Amman and that of the Palestinians and must deal with the two parties separately. All these matters,

taken, together, forced the monarch in Amman not to put off his decisive move.

Effects of the Disengagement

(1) The Supposed Political Vacuum

Article 1 of the Jordanian Constitution, published in the Jordanian official paper No. (1093) on January 8, 1952, stated that "the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a sovereign Arab independent state and that its territory is indivisible and no part of it can be given up...". This article did not specify that the territory of the kingdom is the West Bank and the East Bank, even after a Palestinian-Jordanian legal committee amended the Jordanian Constitution after annexation.

The resolution of the Palestinian conferences which paved the way for the "annexation" of the West Bank to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, specifically the Jericho Conference of December 1, 1948, stated that the "conference regards Palestine as an indivisible unit and any solution that contradicts that does not count as a final solution".

Article II of the Jordanian Parliament's resolution on April 24, 1950 reaffirmed "maintaining all the Arab rights in (Palestine), defending these rights by all legitimate means and with all rights, and without hampering a final settlement of its just cause within the aspirations of the nation, Arab cooperation and international justice".

The resolutions of the political committee, approved by the council of the Arab League on June 12, 1950, also stated that "the Arab states had announced their adherence to maintain the Arab character of Palestine, its independence and the unity of its territory in compliance with the aspirations of its legitimate inhabitants. Therefore, they rejected any solution based on partitioning it, and added that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan announces that annexing the Palestinian section in trusteeship provided that it be part of the final settlement of the Palestinian Question ... and that it [Jordan] accepts whatever the rest of the Arab League states decide on ..." The Jordanian government, the, did not reject this resolution.

The "annexation" of the West Bank to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, therefore, was temporary, restricted, and not final, and thus does not mean that it became an inseparable part of the kingdom. In other words, the "annexation" gave the Hashemite Kingdom not the "right to ownership" of the territory of the West Bank, but rather the right to "political authority" to administer and govern it as "a trust under its supervision" to be part of a final settlement of the Palestinian Question.

Based on this, the disengagement decision is not a violation of the Jordanian constitution and cannot be considered as giving up parts of the property of the kingdom, as the West Bank is not part of the kingdom's territory but a part of the territory of Palestine.

The international community, on more than one occasion, had recognized that the West Bank is "occupied Palestinian territories", especially since the Intifada: UN Security Council resolutions 605, 607, and 608, all taken in 1988, acknowledge that the right to sovereignty on this territory is for the Palestinian people, half of whom live on their national soil.

The right and sovereignty is for the Palestinian people and not for the ruling authority, whether it was a legitimate authority or that of a military power, whether temporary, coincidental, or permanent.

The people do not possess the right to transfer or drop their sovereignty on their land, for it is part of their existence and continuity. It is also an inherited property and people practice their sovereignty on their land by actual existence on it and through the existence of individuals and their institutions on it.

The 'disengagement', therefore, did not leave any 'vacuum', but is rather a retreat and withdrawal of the Jordanian authority from "ruling and administering" the West Bank which it did directly at one point and indirectly at another.

As for the "tools" of Jordan's rule in the West Bank - the administrative, financial, and legal institutions - announcing withdrawing them would not impose a serious change in the daily life of the Palestinians under occupation.

- a) The Jordanian Development Plan: Palestinians rejected, opposed, and even resisted this plan not only because it fosters the "improvement of the quality of life" scheme when they are, in fact, seeking a "political solution", but also because it came as a result of a unilateral Jordanian decision without consultation with the Palestinian leadership, the PLO. Likewise, the "tools" that the government of Zeid al-Rifa'i produced to implement this scheme were - and continue to be - corrupted. Furthermore, the "plan" started out by establishing groups of economic self-interest from the agricultural, industrial, commercial, and financial sectors, and introducing them as an advanced Palestinian social strata working under the guise of defending the "economic interests" and protecting the developmental gains as a prelude to accepting "partial political settlements".

"Names and titles" of this social strata to appear on the invitation lists both of consulates and of the occupying military administration.

The municipalities, which are the outstanding national institutions through which most of the development plan was to be implemented, are staffed by employees imposed by the occupation authorities in coordination with Amman.

- b) The Jordanian Parliament: The dissolution of the Jordanian House of

Representatives will not affect the Palestinian society under occupation. As the Parliament did not adopt any strategic resolutions over the past twenty-one years of occupation which might have developed unity between the people of the east and west banks, its existence or absence is not materially important.

In spite of the fact that the legitimate PLO institutions, including the Executive Committee, the Central Council, and the Palestine National Council in its 16th, 17th, and 18th sessions adopted the "confederation" formula to develop and promote the distinct relationship between Jordan and Palestine, the Jordanian government, parliament, and even institutions in Jordan did not take any steps or issue any calls to adopt the "conferation" formula.

This is in addition to the fact that Palestinian members of the Jordanian Parliament were "employees" and not "partners" in the Jordanian policies. Their voices had not been heard throughout the years of occupation, a fact which further undermined their representative role, not to mention their personal credibility.

- c) The Ministry of Occupied Lands Affairs: Over the past two years, the ministry had adopted the policy of the "carrot and the stick" in dealing with people both inside and outside the occupied territories. On many occasions, the carrot was stolen, and on others the ministry invented "uncivilized" and "unacceptable" methods in applying the use of the Jordanian stick, starting with the arbitrary measures on the bridges (considering those crossing as unwanted persons) and ending with placing restrictions and conditions on Palestinians intending to reside, work, or travel in Jordan. All these measures undermined the role of this "shop" in the people's interest both inside and outside the occupied territories.
- d) Employee's Salaries: The dismissal of civil servants in the West Bank, and the cutting off of their salaries will not shake the foundations of the lives of the majority of those employees. The salaries were limited additions to their income and not the total income of their households. The fact that these salaries usually were not paid on time compelled people to take into consideration that the money might stop one day, and thus they were prepared to do without it. The employees, therefore, seeing their Jordanian salary as a supplement to their income, either saved it or spent it on secondary needs. The decision to cut these salaries now will not turn upside down the lives of most of these employees, while the minority who are wholly dependent upon them can manage for several months until new "Palestinian" arrangements are made.

In responding to the Jordanian disengagement, the West Bank, therefore, can be expected and actually required to maintain national consensus and to announce "accepting" the Jordanian disengagement and its administrative, legal, and financial measures. West Bank institutions must move also to "Palestinianize" their by-laws,

programs, and tools.

Palestinianization of institutions means building the "authority of the people" in implementing the political program of the Intifada, as stated in the leaflets of the Unified Leadership of the Uprising. What is required now is to work, quietly and without in-fighting, under the slogan "Let every hero stay where he is" for "cleaning the Palestinian house", for "self-sufficiency" and for forging harmony in the Palestinian people's aspirations and priorities.

The Palestinian institutions is for all people, and the responsibility of administering it is a collective one that must be conducted in a democratic, progressive, and just way. The call now is to continue the services and activities through the will and authority of the people, and if anyone wants to "retire", "retreat", or "wait", he has the right to do so now, but he has not right to hamper the march under any pretext. The Intifada is the message of independence and there is no retreat from it.

(2) Palestinians in the Jordanian State

The disengagement as an official political event, planned and executed by the Jordanian authorities, surprised people in Jordan. It could take some people a long time to understand its causes, goals, and effects.

The disengagement imposed on Palestinians in Jordan an official and direct challenge from the authorities. The challenge, from the start, was a social, economic, and even popular one.

The disengagement broke down all the facades and started distinguishing between people as Jordanians or Palestinians. It invalidated the gray theories and clarified the choice: either a Jordanian quffiyeh (headscarf) or a Palestinian one, but not both.

The disengagement also imposed one of two options: loyalty or disloyalty to the monarch as efforts proceed to get the "Palestinian Trojan Horse" out of the Jordanian "house". Palestinians in Jordan were faced with a choice of two options:

- to "work" to maintain their acquired rights in Jordan in accordance with the new formula of disengagement, or
- to cling to their accumulating and aggregate rights in Palestine in accordance with the PLO's policies.

The Palestinian communities in Jordan are expected to intervene in the new political, social, and economic scenario, not for the purpose of clashing with the disengagement on its territory or "resisting" it outside its boundaries, but rather to appease it and to buy time to allow the crystallization of a balanced formula which does not contradict the disengagement decisions. That formula would include the

execution of an interim and gradual program, allowing a Palestinian withdrawal from the Jordanian political and economic life, and a "return" to Palestine to proceed with the building of the institutions of the state. The Jordanians must also be assured that the Palestinian withdrawal is not intended to damage the economic structure in Jordan, but rather is for the purpose of preparing for an equal relationship between the two states, Palestine and Jordan, in a confederation based on equality, justice, and democracy in accordance with PNC resolutions.

One of the exceptions to this temporary formula could arise if a part of the Palestinian community in Jordan, seeking to maintain their acquired rights and interests, tried to "integrate" into the Jordanian identity and pledge allegiance to the regime instead of betting on an unknown future in Palestine. I do not believe that anyone will intervene to influence these groups, not only because Palestinians cling to the absolute right of free choice and democracy, but also because the difficulties that could arise from this integration will limit the number of people who would want to attempt it.

(3) The Palestine Liberation Organization

It could be said that the "disengagement" has come to put an end to the unstable Palestinian-Jordanian relations. It is also an acknowledgement of the futility of trying to defeat or compete with the PLO. The disengagement provided the PLO with the following options :

- 1) Accepting the disengagement. This would mean dealing with it according to its conditions and rules, or working to deal with it on a joint and equal basis, seeking to establish a confederation.
- 2) Rejecting the disengagement. This would mean confronting and resisting it in its own territory and challenging it both within and outside its geographic and demographic boundaries.
- 3) Appeasing the disengagement. The purpose of appeasing would be to insure minimum Palestinian losses both on Jordanian territory and outside, and, at the same time, to prevent it from stabbing the Intifada and its legitimate child, the independent Palestinian state.

The point at which the Palestinian and Jordanian leaderships are now, lead in two opposite directions. It is a point where neither party can stay for long, for staying there means death and both are fighting for survival.

This point could be called the "September Station", in which both leaderships faced each other in military confrontation for survival in September 1970. Today, in September 1988, they stand at the same station in a political confrontation for "continuity".

The Jordanian leadership decided the start of disengagement by turning "eastward" and returning to the Jordanian house to rearrange it for the sake of its inhabitants and visitors through putting all its keys in the hands of the monarch alone. The Jordanian leadership also openly asked its Palestinian counterparts to give up their share in the Jordanian house specifically since Jordan had given up its share in the Palestinian house unconditionally.

Jordan did just that in the face of the advances of the Intifada - the Palestinian movement for independence on the road to establishing a Palestinian state on Palestinian soil - to keep it within its geographic and demographic boundaries.

In addition to this, Jordan intended to place the positive or negative effects of the Intifada in the hands of the Palestinian leadership, the PLO, in order to keep the PLO from exercising its efforts in more than one place outside the original location of the Intifada. What, therefore, are the PLO's answers to the disengagement and its effects?

The priorities on the PLO agenda are:

First: To maintain Palestinian national unity, both inside and outside the occupied territories, behind the historic and sole legitimate leadership of the PLO.

Second: To appease the Jordanian political disengagement as a fait accompli, and not to confront it either in its territory or outside its boundaries; to try to coordinate to determine the geographic and demographic boundaries of the disengagement and to agree on a "transitional period" through which the transfer of administrative, legal, and financial responsibilities will take place from the official Jordanian side to the popular Palestinian side.

Third: To embark immediately upon the "Palestinianization" of the institutions in the occupied territories through drafting new by-laws and programs, appointing new administrators, and providing national finances without outside intervention from any Arab capital, regardless of the amount of its contributions, and restricting finances through Palestinian channels in order to maintain national unity.

Fourth: To convene the Palestine National Council and to issue the historic announcement, the declaration of independence of the occupied state of Palestine, within the boundaries of the Partition Resolution, issued by the United Nations on November 29, 1947, and to announce willingness and readiness to start negotiations to end the occupation.

Fifth: To form a provisional Palestinian government. It could be based temporarily in Cairo, and function as a political tool not only to negotiate in an international conference with full powers under United Nations auspices, but also to

take up its national duties of building the "Palestinian house" on the Palestinian level, and preparing for an "Arab confederation". The government could include the following :

- a) Members from the occupied territories.
- b) Members from the Palestinian communities in the Arab world, Europe, the United States, and elsewhere in the diaspora.
- c) Leaders of the Palestinian factions within the PLO.

Sixth: To adopt a political program for the provisional Palestinian government and to distribute responsibilities among the above-mentioned three components of the government in harmony, providing that their duties do not overlap and provided that the government returns, within a specific time span, to the Palestine National Council (the Parliament), the highest body of authority.

The political program could include:

- a) The political program of the Intifada.
- b) The Palestinian document known as the Abu Sharif paper.
- c) A plan to keep all the PLO institutions and infrastructure as they are, exactly like the Jewish Agency after the declaration of the Jewish state. The PLO could become the Palestinian International Agency to promote the Palestinian National Movement.

Yet, the challenges and responsibilities require men and women who possess historic vision, political courage, and responsible and committed national position to move towards crystallizing a courageous and historic initiative, not to "compete" with or "confront" the Jordanian political disengagement, but to go along with it to the end. It is also necessary to develop the Intifada as a national movement for independence and freedom in order to make more achievements on the local, regional, and international levels, on the road to establishing a national state led by the PLO, the historic legitimate leadership of the people of Palestine.

Israel confronted with the Palestinian Option

For the second time in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the first since the Arab Revolt of the 1930's, the Palestinians, the essential party in the struggle, have taken the lead in demanding a solution to the Palestinian question. In doing so, they have addressed the three elements of the question: their divided and occupied lands, their dispersed people, and their suspended rights.

Palestinians have intervened, with realistic options, not against the Jewish state of Israel - which has existed for forty years on the major part of Palestine - but against the Israeli military occupation in the lands which remained, namely the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Palestinian uprising is a normal reaction. It is a natural response to the accumulated oppression, suppression, and deprivation. It is not directed against the regional and international relationships of the Jewish state, but specifically against the military occupation's repressive practices which have persisted for the past 21 years. Regional and international opposition has not been a deterrent for Israel. Over the years, the occupation's practices have increased in number and worsened in content. Its overriding goal has been to eliminate Palestinian national identity through confiscations of land and water, the establishment of settler colonies, and many other flagrant violations of human and national rights.

The Palestinian uprising has its own language. The word Intifada was introduced into the lexicon of the conflict. Palestinians made it a political reality that cannot be ignored, bypassed, or abolished.

Palestinians have intervened with their cultural heritage. The Intifada was endowed with symbols deeply rooted in modern Arab and Islamic culture. The colors of the Palestinian flag, which was drawn up in 1917, decorate the embroidered dresses of women. The traditional keffiyeh covers the heads of men, and the stones of resistance are in the hands of young and old.

Palestinians intervened individually and collectively in an unarmed resistance movement - a 'white Intifada' - that is based on the ideas of national civil disobedience for freedom and independence. Its aim is a two-state solution on the land of Palestine.

The uprising started in December 1987 in the refugee camps of Gaza and Nablus and spread throughout the occupied territories. Its first stage signalled a change in Palestinian social behavior, marked by the disappearance of fear and the reawakening of Palestinian national identity, pride, and confidence.

The media rushed to cover the marketable action image created by the Intifada. International sympathy evoked by the uprising restored the PLO to its leading role in the Arab world. To the Israelis, the Intifada came as political and social shock. The closer they came to it, the more they felt its heat; but the further they retreated, the more they worried about its development.

The Intifada shattered the fantasies of those who expected the status quo to become permanent. It exacerbated political divisions among Israelis, and it forced George Shultz to come running to lessen the burden on the Israelis and to try to transfer it to the Arab capitals. But the deeply rooted Intifada stubbornly and confidently went on.

In the second stage of the uprising, the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising succeeded in both building national consensus and gaining legitimacy. People adhered to its calls issued periodically in appeals in the form of leaflets. In

the past 37 weeks, 25 appeals have been distributed. While the Palestinian house is being put in order, popular committees were formed to rebuild the Palestinian society on a solid national foundation.

The uprising illuminated the boundary line between Israel, the occupied territories, and Jordan. The message to the Israelis was that the occupation cannot continue and that there is not turning back. To Jordan, the message was that despite its rule on the West Bank before 1967, it had no future role.

Jordan understood the message, and so withdrew from Palestine and buried the 'Jordanian option'. But Israel refused to acknowledge the international changes, and obstinately continued its attempt to snuff out the uprising by its traditional repressive methods. The Israeli election campaign accelerated the oppression against Palestinians. More than 300 have been killed, thousands arrested, and hundreds deported; bones and limbs were broken, youths were buried alive, workers were burnt to death, houses were destroyed, institutions were closed, and the press was kept in the dark.

The third stage of the Intifada witnessed an active campaign of politicization. Practical stage were taken to promote and extend national civil disobedience. Self-reliance was encouraged in agriculture, health, and education. Israeli products were boycotted, and police, tax, and traffic employees resigned as part of the process of sweeping from the Palestinian house the remnants of the occupation. The popular committees, the instrument of the people's authority, were broadened. The Intifada became a way of life. Even the Israeli chief of staff said the uprising has become "deeply rooted in people's minds and there is no magic formula to end it."

The popular committees quickly became the target of the Israeli policy of repression. The committees were declared illegal, Palestinian charities were closed, academic and cultural meetings were banned, and over thirty people were deported despite local, European, and American opposition. Even prisoners were not immune. Some were liquidated in the torture chambers, others were shot in cold blood in the desert prison known as Ansar 3. The Israeli government continued deceiving its own public that the Intifada is a war and that a military victory is possible even "if it takes nine years", as Prime Minister Shamir stated.

The Intifada is now going strong in its ninth month. One-and-a-half-million Palestinians, not using weapons and not planning to kill any Israelis, have reached the stage of independence. Shultz failed to abort the uprising in its first trimester, the Israeli military apparatus failed in its efforts to stop the uprising's source of energy and finance by killing its spiritual father, Abu Kihad, on April 16 in Tunis. Israel failed politically to stop it by closing institutions and arresting intellectuals. Israel also failed in its attempts to force a premature cesarian birth when it leaked news of a draft Palestinian declaration of independence and provisional government.

Instead, the historical Palestinian leadership announced that the legitimate Palestinian home - the Palestine National Council - will house the natural birth of the state. The birth certificate might be issued in Strasbourg at the European Parliament or in New York at the United Nations, where Arafat, carrying the Palestinian olive branch, will announce the birth of the Palestinian state.

The PLO infrastructure will continue after the declaration of the provisional government as a "Palestinian International agency" in the same way that the Jewish agency continued in promoting the Zionist movement after Ben Gurion announced in 1948 the creation of the provisional government of the state of Israel. These winds of change within the PLO have been announced by no less an authority than Salah Khalaf, one of the senior PLO officials. He stated that the boundaries of the Palestinian state are not restricted to the Partition Plan of 1947, but that they will be decided in negotiations with Israelis. In principle, he said, the Palestinians will accept the West Bank and Gaza as the new state.

The Intifada has left the Israelis with only the Palestinian option. The facades on all other alternatives (such as annexation, transfer, etc.) have collapsed. What is wanted now, from friend and foe alike, especially from every friend of Israel and the Palestinians, is intervention locally, regionally, and internationally to save the region. Special attention is needed in the coming decisive nine weeks that culminate in the Israeli elections.

This intervention is need not because the conflict has proven during the past four decades that Palestinians cannot be liquidated or defeated; it is needed because the guarantee for Israeli security and stability is in the hands of Palestinians. The Palestinian peace is the only alternative to all the nightmares. And if the Palestinian peace is killed now, the entire region will be turned into an island of violence and chaos. Will Israelis accept the option of the Palestinian peace? It is the option of life. He who refuses life to himself and to others is sick and everyone must intervene to save him.