

Negotiations Support Unit
Key Actions PLO can take in wake of Gaza disaster

The war on Gaza marks a turning point. The PLO/PA can no longer remain silent to the Israeli war crimes against their own people. Ending the negotiations might be seen as a risk, but there is no other alternative should the PLO/PA wish to preserve the little legitimacy it has left and as it will not have to try to capitalize on it. The growing resentment against Abu Mazen and the PA/PLO in the Palestinian and Arab street is due to the leadership's failure to do the following: (1) take actions against the occupier (2) bring about national unity (3) bring about freedom to their people. To that end, the following actions are proposed:

1) Taking action against the occupier and saving Palestinian lives

a. End negotiations

The PA is advised to take a firm stand and to **officially end negotiations with Israel**. Grumblings along these lines have been heard, but the position is not clear. A statement addressing the suffering in Gaza would serve both reunification efforts and the BATNA. This should be along the lines of statements already made, e.g. *'As declared first on 27 Dec, the negotiations are over. They were over with the first Israeli strike that killed 243 people. We see now that the Annapolis process was used as cover to besiege our people in Gaza, and then to attack them. We are not interested in any such processes, they haven't worked'*. Please use language that the Palestinian side does not recognize that it has a partner for peace.

b. War crime prosecution and call for boycott

The leadership must capitalize on the growing awareness (even in the US) about the brutality of Israeli actions and the increasing calls for war crimes accountability and boycott, divestment campaigns. The leadership should take the lead in war crime prosecutions (as has been officially announced) and in calls for the isolation of Israel through boycott and divestment campaigns.

c. End negotiations

The PA is advised to take a firm stand and to **officially end negotiations with Israel**. Grumblings along these lines have been heard, but the position is not clear. A statement addressing the suffering in Gaza would serve both reunification efforts and the BATNA. This should be along the lines of statements already made, e.g. *'As declared first on 27 Dec, the negotiations are over. They were over with the first Israeli strike that killed 243 people. We see now that the Annapolis process was used as cover to besiege our people in Gaza, and then to attack them. We are not interested in any such processes, they haven't worked'*. Please use language that the Palestinian side does not recognize that it has a partner for peace.

Negotiations Support Unit
Key Actions PLO can take in wake of Gaza disaster

d. Israel to pay for the damage/re-building of Gaza

The leadership should be openly and publicly **demanding that Israel be held financially responsible** for all of the destruction of public institutions, infrastructure and private property in Gaza. This should be done in parallel with (and/or as part of) any legal actions being pursued. At the same time, since the donor countries are already “pissed off” at having to rebuild every time Israel goes on one of its death and destruction sprees, **the President and PM should be raising this issue from now in all their meetings with foreign officials, especially donor countries**, in order to get their support. There is also a financial interest for the PA here: considering the urgency of the situation in Gaza some funds may be re-allocated at the detriment of the financial support normally provided to the PA

e. Shelters for Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and Refugee Camps abroad

It is of utmost importance to secure the lives of the Palestinian people. One lesson learned is that Israel is conducting massacres every few years on Palestinian civilians (Sabra & Shatila, Beirut 82, Qana, Jenin, etc). The leadership is therefore strongly advised to consider **building shelters and stocking emergencies** for their people in the oPt and in refugee camps abroad.

d. Preserve/empower Palestinian individuals

As there does not seem to be any possible political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the near future, the PLO/PA should readjust its activities in accordingly: putting the individual at the center of this shift seems wise. Palestinians have paid extraordinary damage for the their longstanding fight for self-determination. Before all Palestinians turn into beggars or martyrs, it would be recommandable to concentrate on practical means which could help the enhancement of our people.

2) Bringing about national unity

- a. The PLO/PA's strategy cannot be based on the zero-sum proposition put forth by the US/Israel that seeks to “deny Hamas a political victory”, as this will only deepen the internal divide, as well as harm basic Palestinian interests. The fact of the matter is that Hamas's current demands (ending the attacks, withdrawal of the Israeli army, opening the borders, lifting the blockade, etc.) are all in the Palestinian national interest. Working against these goals necessarily means working against Palestinian interests, and most Palestinians.

Negotiations Support Unit
Key Actions PLO can take in wake of Gaza disaster

- b. Along the same lines, Abu Mazen must **take concrete steps toward reconciliation**. Most of what we've seen on Arabic TV by Hamas and Fateh officials is the same old accusations and counter-accusations. If Abu Mazen truly wants to be seen as the "president of all Palestinians", he needs to act like it. Contrary to what many Fateh people seem to think, the best thing Abu Mazen can do is to prevent a "political defeat" by Hamas, for the reasons described above. The best thing Abu Mazen can do, both to strengthen his own position and promote national unity, is to *prevent this very outcome from happening*. Otherwise, Abu Mazen and the leadership will continue to "get played" by Israel and the US in their "us vs. them" and "moderate vs. extremist" dichotomy, which necessarily comes at the expense of Palestinian national unity. This would also continue to lead to popular accusations of collaboration with Israel.
- c. The security apparatus should stop suppressing demonstrators and other parties' representatives, while disappearing when Israeli occupation forces invade Palestinian cities. It is highly recommended that the leadership **revise its huge security budget** (which accounts for around 35% of the total PA budget) and change the negative image of the security forces among the public which stand for nothing but a cover and protection of the occupier! This will help in achieving unity. The "(Israeli) security first" approach has proven to be unrealistic, and dangerous. PLO/PA challenge is to convince the international community that there security for Israel cannot be achieved as long as there is no Palestinian State.
- d. **PLO elections** are urgently needed. This way, any June 2007 -like event will be avoided in the future, simply because all political parties will be represented in the Palestinian National Council and decisions will be taken collectively, hence a consolidation of the unity.

3) Bringing about freedom to the Palestinian people

- a. Along with ending the negotiations, the leadership is advised **to strategize in a unified manner** in order to better serve the national interests of the Palestinians. The focus should be on rationalizing the resistance in a way to make it more productive and to maintain the moral integrity of the Palestinians as a people who struggle for freedom and independence. Therefore, the leadership should offer another option: that of popular resistance. There should be an official call for a popular resistance against the occupier. It is important that the leadership mobilizes the people and gets involved with the popular actions against the occupier. Examples of popular activities are boycott campaigns and peaceful demonstrations.
- b. **Advocacy** is another important element in the strategy. It is important to agree together on an advocacy/message/media strategy. For that purpose,

Negotiations Support Unit
Key Actions PLO can take in wake of Gaza disaster

it is also recommended that various Palestinian actors be involved in the decision making process: political parties, NGOs, the private sector, academics, and Diaspora Palestinians.

- c. **Call on the US administration and the EU** to put pressure on Israel to end its occupation of all the 1967 territory and to abide by international law. Address EU public opinions and explain to them that the taxes they pay serve a process of destruction- re-construction that is endless.
- d. **Networking with international bodies, including the Arab governments/Arab League** by encouraging and supporting all types of solidarity campaigns (such as the Gaza ship, demonstrations, boycott etc) and/or actions being taken by certain states such as Venezuela expelling the Israeli ambassador is another recommended action.

4) Emergency and Humanitarian Efforts

- a. Senior Level Palestinian Official Placed in Charge of PA Interventions in Gaza with temporary headquarters inside Egypt on Gaza border.
- b. Since much of the damage assessment and reconstruction efforts in Gaza will be impeded by the debris, PA needs to immediately negotiate with Egypt to remove debris to Sinai. There are significant environmental hazards associated with the solid waste remaining in Gaza which is already in a state of environmental catastrophe.

5) Reconstruction Efforts

- a. Leadership on this front will show actions not political statements.
- b. Etc etc etc.