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A blow to Egyptians, Jordanians

Arab world sees visa denial as most alarming signal yet

PLO says its plans will not be affected by U.S., Israel

By M. Kay Siblani
Editor, Sada Alwatan

DEARBORN — The Palestine National Council meeting in Algiers, during which the PLO declared the independent state of Palestine, also resulted in a permanent political agenda not subject to change in response to the actions or inactions of others, including the United States. That according to Bassam Abu Sharif, chief political advisor to PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, who voiced quiet confidence that the Palestinians and their leadership know exactly what they want and exactly how to get it in an exclusive

telephone interview here with Sada Alwatan. Following are

excerpts from the interview:

Q: Why do you think the United States denied a visa to the PLO Chairman?

A: This question should be directed to the American Administration and to Mr. Shultz in particular, because he's the one who rejected granting the visa to Chairman Arafat. As far as we are concerned, the rejection was not a formality, it was a political stand, embodied in his decision, that is quite antagonistic to the interests of the Palestinian people, to the PLO and to our right of self-determination. The world body, cumulatively, has given a clear-cut answer that their condemnation of the Shultz rejection is also not a formality. The decision embodies a political stand. The rejection of the United Nations General Assembly to

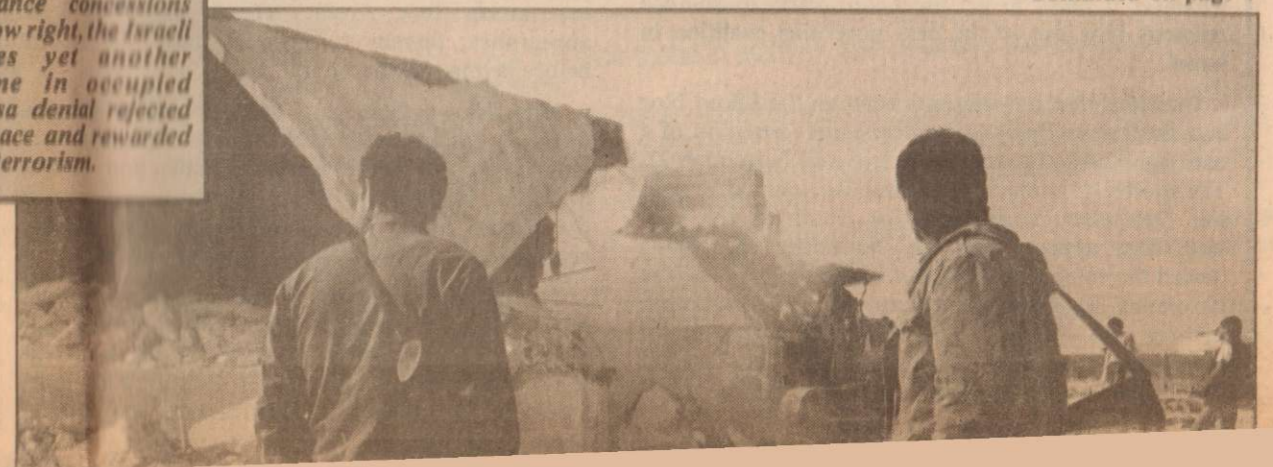
his decision, as well, is not a formality, it embodies a political stand, which is support for the Palestinian right to self-determination and establishment of an independent state. The vote count has established, beyond a doubt, that the world is supportive of an independent Palestinian state.

Q: What effect, if any, do you think this move will have on the PLO's Declaration of Independence and on the eventual on-the-ground creation of an independent state?

A: The PLO political line adopted by the PNC in Algiers is not one that is temporary or that depends on whether the United States will deal with it or reject dealing with it. It is a serious, committed stand to put all effort toward a real and a just peace

Continued on page 4

Above left, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat addresses the Algiers PNC meeting the night Palestinian independence was declared and the PLO made advance concessions toward peace. Below right, the Israeli army demolishes yet another Palestinian home in occupied Palestine. The visa denial rejected PLO moves to peace and rewarded continued Israeli terrorism.



Of American bias in Mideast

Arabs hope for better policy from new Administration

By Lamis K. Andoni
Special to Sada Alwatan

AMMAN — The U.S. decision to bar PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat from entering New York to address the United Nations has unified Arab ranks behind the organization and further eroded American credibility in the region.

From North Africa to the Gulf, Arab states have severely criticized the U.S. move describing it as "unjustifiable and a sheer violation of the Headquarters Treaty Agreement." The Foreign Ministers of Iraq, Egypt and Saudi Arabia did not go to New York to take part in the United Nations General Assembly's deliberations, while Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali delayed a scheduled trip there. The Arab states initiated a campaign within the U.N. to move discussions on the Palestinian issue, scheduled to begin Nov. 29, to the U.N.'s Geneva headquarters, while Libya's Colonel Qaddafi went a step further by calling for the removal of U.N. headquarters from the U.S. to another country.

Regardless of the success or the failure of the Arab efforts, the U.S. move has undermined American credibility as a mediator in the Middle East conflict. Although the U.S. image in the Arab world has suffered greatly over the last few years anyway, this last move was seen here as the most alarming signal so far of complete American bias in favor of Israel for the following reasons:

First, the step came immediately after the PLO's endorsement of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242/338 as part of the basis for convening an international peace conference and denouncing terrorism. By doing so the PLO had presumed fulfilled two of the American preconditions set by consecutive American administrations before they would recognize the organization. But instead of starting a dialogue with the PLO, the U.S. opted to bar the Palestinian leader from talking to the U.N. General Assembly.

Second, the American move constituted a deliberate denial and rejection of the Palestinian people's will which has been eloquently voiced by the near-one-year-old intifadeh, in which unequivocal support for the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people has been reinforced.

Thirdly, the American decision was interpreted here as giving a green light to the Israeli government to maintain its intransigent position of rejecting the peace option and escalating its arbitrary and repressive measures to crush the intifadeh. Furthermore, the American government seemed to be trying to lessen growing international pressure on Israel to change its policies. Evidently Israel understood the message, for in the words of its hawkish Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, the American decision "...had important political meanings".

But if the American move was "a farewell gift" (again in the words of Shamir) to Israel, it was definitely a stab in the back of America's "moderate" friends in the Arab world, especially Jordan and Egypt.

Jordan not only expressed its shock and anger but

started an Arab campaign to back the PLO position and pressure the Americans to reverse the measure following deliberations with Arafat, who arrived in Amman the day the American move was announced. The King flew to North Yemen and to Egypt to coordinate efforts. The American move was a real blow to both Hussein and Mubarak, especially since both leaders had pressured the PLO to accept the two Security Council resolutions for at least the last five years. The PLO's rejection to endorse the two resolutions in 1986 had prompted the King to suspend political coordination with the organization, blame the failure on the PLO and close a large number of its offices in Amman. The PLO's rejection of the two resolutions is also believed to have been one of the main triggers of the tragic clash between Palestinian commandoes and the Jordanian army in 1970.

But now, when the Palestinian uprising and King Hussein's severance of legal ties with the West Bank has made it possible for the PLO to accept 242/338 as part of a Palestinian peace initiative which also includes the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, the U.S. not only dishonors its previous pledges to talk to the PLO, it steps up its war against the organization.

As seen here, the American move aimed at increasing pressure on the PLO to make further concessions, if not to opt out altogether and relinquish its right to represent the Palestinian people and their demand for an independent Palestinian state. The move, however, was badly timed, just as the PLO had successfully gained international support and sympathy for its plight and its positions. If the next Administration learns anything from the uproar that followed Shultz's move, it should be that similar policies, unlike in the past, will not prompt any Arab government to put pressure on the PLO to extract further concessions.

On the contrary, the PLO is bound to gain in terms of international support for its drive to further isolate the Israeli position and to end the Israeli occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories. What the PLO would need, however, is substantial, effective and practical Arab backing. In a press interview last week Fatah Central Committee member Salah Khalaf, (Abu Iyad), said that the Arab reaction has so far fallen short in standing up to the American challenge. He reminded everybody that none of the Arab states has yet fulfilled its financial commitments pledged during the Algiers Arab Summit last June.

Meanwhile, most of the Arab governments, the PLO included, are still trying to avoid a confrontation with the U.S. pending the change in the Administration. Some of them still hope that President-elect George Bush will learn from the experience and take a different position.

Despite the prevailing anger, the PLO is unlikely to abandon its political offensive endorsed in Algiers last month, especially since the blame and the pressure have been shifted to Washington. Instead it will continue its original plan to step up the intifadeh to the stage of civil disobedience to force both Tel Aviv and Washington to come to terms with Palestinian rights.

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U.S. government with the irrational policy of trying to
make peace in the Middle East while committed to not
dealing with the most directly affected and involved
party to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinians. It has
pushed through Congress laws prohibiting contacts with

Shultz was committed to making America so involved
with Israel that a future U.S. Administration less
sympathetic to Israel would not be able to extricate itself
from the present entanglement with Israel. This policy is

Dr. Muhammad Hallaj is Director of the Palestine
Research and Educational Center in Fairfax, Va. and
Editor of *Palestine Perspectives* magazine.

WE ARE AMERICANS AND JEWS AND WE ARE PROUD TO RECOGNIZE THE NEW STATE OF PALESTINE. AT THIS HISTORIC TIME PLEASE JOIN US.

This historic statement from the JEWISH COMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST has already been endorsed by more than thousand American Jews including Jewish Professors at over 100 Universities. Whether you are Jewish or not please join and support this vital effort.

We are Americans and Jews and we come together at this time publicly to express our strong desire to see the United States take meaningful steps to dissociate our country from the policies of Israel and to support mutual recognition between Israel and the new State of Palestine.

For some years we have witnessed Israel increasingly deviating from political policies that we find acceptable and from moral values that we hold dear. These developments are not the responsibility of any particular political party in Israel but rather stem, in our judgement, from a tragically misguided approach toward the Arab world in which Israel is located, a racist ideology and a growing militancy. We can no longer condone or be associated with such Israeli behavior, nor, do we believe, should our country.

In recent years Israel has twisted away from basic commitments made at Camp David in 1978; annexed further territories, including East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, while continuing to expand settlements in all the occupied territories; and grotesquely invaded Lebanon, resulting in the death of tens of thousands of Lebanese and Palestinians as well as hundreds of Israelis and Americans, and the taking as hostages of others.

Furthermore, Israeli policies and attitudes toward the Palestinian people have made it evident that only major changes in Israel's basic posture will allow for a peaceful political settlement with the Palestinians.

Israeli complicity in Irangate and Conragate coupled with Israel's employment of American Jews as spies against our country further underscore the growing dangers inherent in the current U.S.-Israeli relationship. The close identification in the public mind between Israel and Jews - an equation vigorously fostered by both the Zionist movement and the American Jewish lobby, which has come under its control - threatens to stigmatize Jews everywhere.

The recent acts of killings, beatings, curfews, expulsions and house arrests - all against unarmed Palestinians living in areas Israel has occupied for 20 years - further demonstrate that Israel has become a badly divided country with many unfortunate similarities to the situation that prevails in South Africa.

Our ancestors came to the United States because, as a result of their Jewishness, they were discriminated against and abused. The European experience culminated in the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust. How tragic that in our own time the very State established by Jews in the aftermath of this evil has become a place where racialism, religious discrimination, militarism and injustice prevail; and that Israel itself has become a pariah state within the world community. Events taking place today are all too reminiscent of the pogroms from which our own forefathers fled two and three

generations ago - but this time those in authority are Jews and the victims are Moslem and Christian Palestinians.

We believe that Israel's course could not be maintained but for the continuing financial, political, military and covert support of the U.S. government. And we fear that unless firm steps of disengagement from Israel are taken now our country might get dragged into a major war for which preparations are under way.

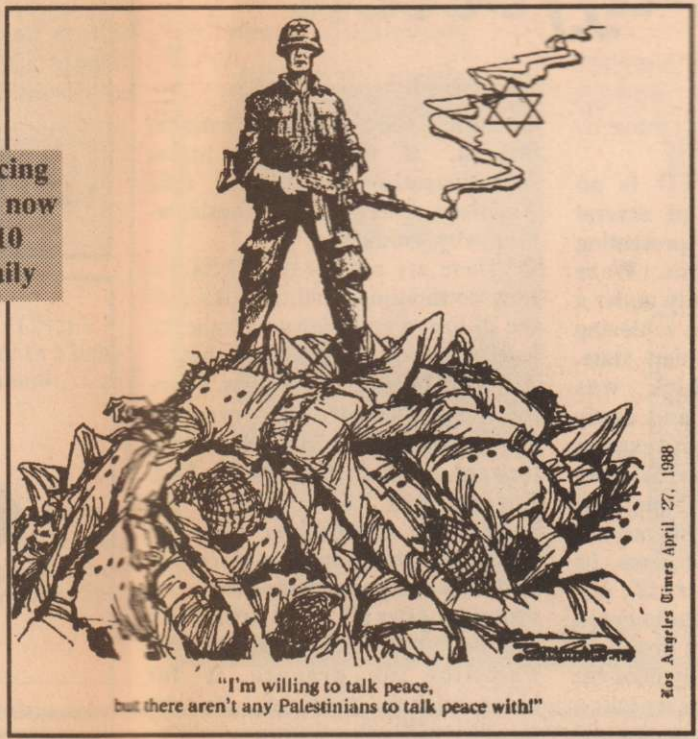
In addition, we believe that unless the United States takes serious steps to distance itself from Israel the Israelis will mistakenly continue to think that the course they are on is acceptable to the American people.

For all these reasons we believe the time has come to *normalize* the U.S. relationship with Israel. A complete re-evaluation of what has become since 1967 the American sponsorship of Israel is required. The unprecedented amounts of economic aid should be cut back over the next two to three years to much smaller levels. Furthermore, the considerable military and intelligence assistance should also be radically reduced.

Unfortunately, in recent years much the opposite course has been followed, and Israel has practically become a ward of the United States. We urge an urgent and open debate about the serious problems and dangers which have resulted from the current structure of U.S.-Israeli relations. Few foreign policy issues are of such importance to our country. Consequently, we urge everyone, including our elected public officials, to resist the widespread inhibitions from speaking up about Israel, inhibitions which result from the severe financial, political and ideological pressures often brought to bear against those who do.

We further believe that the time is overdue for negotiations between the Israeli government and the PLO, which is quite clearly the chosen representative for the great majority of Palestinians - negotiations that should quickly lead to full recognition of the Palestinian State in today's occupied territories and reasonable security guarantees for all parties. In the security guarantees we think our country should participate; but no longer in the financing and supporting of the kinds of policies Israel has been pursuing. The continual oppression and denial of Palestinians of their right to self-determination is an injustice which has become intolerable not only to those demonstrating for their freedom in Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and throughout Israel itself.

The citizens of Israel, of course, will ultimately choose their own country's destiny. But at the very least the citizens of the United States should stop financing and supporting policies that are contrary to the principles and values we hold precious as Americans and Jews.



U.S. Financing for Israel is now nearly \$10 million daily

For updated information or requests call (202) 362-5266 at any time

This important Statement of principles has been published in recent months in *The Nation*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Progressive* and *The Congressional Record*. It is now being published in *Sada Alwatan* by concerned Arab Americans who urge you to support JCOME.

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