

**The Experts' Opinions**

**The Palestinian Authority and the Deal of the Century:  
Possible Alternatives**

**Vision for Political Development**

**2020**

Title: The Palestinian Authority and the Deal of the Century

Sequence: The Experts' Opinions

Author: Vision for Political Development

Month/ Year: 10/2/2020

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## Introduction

In January 28<sup>th</sup>. 2020, the American president Donald Trump declared, in the presence of the Israeli president Benjamin Netanyahu, and a number of ambassadors, three of them are Arab ambassadors, his deal that he always promoting for, as the deal of the century. The international reactions towards this deal varied between supporting and opposing the deal, and other reactions are vibrating. The most distinguished about this context is the Palestinian common good on rejecting the deal, and voices rose for the necessity of the Palestinian union to face it.

There is nothing in the deal that makes the Palestinians accept it, or even deal with it in one way or another. It emphasizes that Jerusalem is the unified capital of the occupation state, ignores the Palestinian refugees and their return, lays the foundation the remaining of the Zionist settlements in the occupied territories, it is not against the occupation state annexation of some of the Palestinian lands, security is restricted in the hands of the occupation, calls for disarming the resistance, puts borders and crossing points under the occupation control, as well as the holy sites, and other points that only give Palestinians 11% of the historic Palestinian land.

And in order to go through the details of this deal and its reflections, and the available possibilities for Palestinians, Vision for Political Development created a poll to see the opinion of a number of the Palestinian political and academic elites, and their opinions about the general points of the deal, through their answers about the following questions: what are the offered alternatives provided for the Palestinian Authority to face the deal of the century on the national and international levels? What does the Palestinian president's speech mean about changing the role function of the Palestinian Authority? How strong is the Palestinian Authority in creating effective strategies to face the deal of the century? Will the Palestinian Authority lead peaceful demonstrations? Will the delegation to the Gaza Strip lay the foundation of destroying division and unifying the Palestinians? What is the situation of the other parties, what can they do, and is the Gaza Strip in charge of a certain role?

The opinions of the experts are summarized as follows:

1. The Palestinian people agreed on totally rejecting the deal of the century, calling for taking practical steps to support the rejecting of the deal, ending coordination with the occupation is a priority here, reconsidering the functional role of the Palestinian Authority, to be in accordant with the national project, not the previous agreements.
2. Calling for the arrangement of the Palestinian government as a mechanism to face the deal. This shall include agreed leadership among the secretary generals of the parties, setting a time for the legislative and presidential elections, forming a national, unified government, and activating the role of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.
3. Formulating a comprehensive vision, setting effective strategies to face the deal, on the national, Arab and international level, including promoting endurance on the land, activating the popular resistance and peaceful demonstrations, fostering the Arab World

governments and people, activating the positions of the international and regional organizations, and the friendly states and people, including supporting the international boycott of the occupation state.

### **Dr. Ayman Daraghmeh, A Deputy in the Palestinian Legislative Council**

I believe that the speech of the president Abu Mazen after the declaration of the deal of century is considered as a good initiative to lay the foundation of a Palestinian and national position. The speech in its signification is a declaration of start reforming the Palestinian home, especially after conducting a call after the speech between the president of the political office of Hamas Ismael Haniyeh and the president of Palestine Mr. Mahmoud Abbas. Moreover, the meeting between the political parties in Ramallah and the discussions conducted in the Headquarters (Al Muqata'a) was a message from the president for all parties that they will start a new page.

After the speech, we participated in meetings with members in the Central Committee of Fatah, and there was almost unanimity on how to be unified in rejecting the deal of the century. Nowadays, and if the delegation goes to the Gaza strip, it will be considered as a second stage that emphasizes the Palestinian unified position, as well as the Palestinian governmental unified position.

Above all there must be practical steps that shall be taken by the president, in order to prepare a plan and committee to follow-up with the files, as there is a possibility to wait for some time to face the deal of the century, and then start the next step, which is starting conducting the points of the signed agreements between the Palestinian parties in order to end the division.

The steps are presented in, firstly; creating a program and national vision, the perspective of which is the Document of National Accord (Prisoners' Document). It includes the minimum agreed points between all Palestinians to start conducting what has been agreed upon in Beirut in 2017 in order to reform the Palestinian Liberation Organization, create a new national council, and then to make the elections of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), to reactivate the national institutions, and declare the timing of the legislative and presidential elections.

On the international level, there must be a state of making the Arab countries raise, as some Arab and friend countries weren't having advanced positions in rejecting the deal. Moreover, the countries that attended the declaration shall be pressured to reject the deal, as there are previous Arab decisions emphasize on it. On the other hand, we can work on activating different aspects, such as non-aligned movement and the African Parliament. Therefore, it is supposed to be huge Palestinian diplomatic efforts to oppose the deal.

In addition, on the functional level of the Authority, this can be done through ending the security coordination; therefore, it is required to have a clear declaration and instructions by the president to the security services to stop the security coordination. This is what the people understand of changing the functional role of the Authority. On the other hand, the Palestinian Authority shall take back its role as an institution under the protection of the PLO. This requires restructuring of the organization.

On the level of creating effective strategies to face the deal of the century, the most important tool is not participating in any meeting with occupation that has to do with the negotiation because any negotiations in this period means accepting the application of the deal of the century. The second tool is continuing the internal reformation efforts and refilling the gap between the authority and the people, to make the gap that has been for years less, to let the people choose the resistance tools against the occupation without any obstacle.

The Authority is not required to make demonstrations, as this is a popular role and the role of the civil society, too. However, the most important for the Authority is not to prevent the public movement against the deal, to allow the political parties to work, and to allow the freedom for organizational work.

As for the heading of a delegation from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip, it is a very important step at all levels, as the period preceding the declaration of the deal of century included media escalation, arguments and distrust, therefore; the visit of the delegation to Gaza was presented as a declaration of a unified Palestinian political position. The biggest Palestinian parties Fatah(The Palestinian National Liberation Movement) and Hamas (The Islamic Resistance Movement) are responsible. Other parties' positions are in harmony with those biggest parties. Therefore, the national vision might be forced on the whole, if there is an agreement, from the perspective of the maintaining Palestine.

**Dr. Bakir Abu Bakir, the President of the Fatah Intellectual Academy ( Othman Abu Gharbiyeh Martyr Academy)**

There are three main points one shall focus on as available possibilities in the hand of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinians:

1. Promoting resistance in the land by all its means and forms, as resistance became an integral part of facing the occupation, and maintaining resistance means maintaining the existence of the Palestinians.
2. Achieving the Palestinian national unity through joint work strategy overcomes all justifications of diaspora, as it is dangerous for the Palestinian cause not to have unity.

3. Focusing on rebuilding the PLO, as it's an integral part of the wholeness of the Palestinians, regardless of the division of groups here because the world considers it the fundamental of the Palestinian essence.

As for the external choices, there must be a need to create a new narrative, that is based on Islam, Arabism, and resistance, but within perspectives that the new generations of Arabs and Muslims can interpret, taking into consideration the current changing in civilization, especially that the Palestinian cause is starting to lose its Arab and Islamic characteristics due to the Islamic and Arab internal issues.

In addition to the legal options, there has to be a medium to connect with entire world. This can be achieved by finding an Arab momentum, holding international conferences, developing new alliances, and recreating new interest in the Palestinian cause.

There is no doubt that the Palestinian authority is capable of finding effective strategies to fight back the deal of the century. However, applying them needs total change in visions and in the people who are capable of fulfilling this mission. It is a truism that Palestinian leadership had a history in resistance; yet, youth leaderships can only impact people's feelings. This should be taken as an advantage of in order to form the needed strategies; their impact should not be underestimated, for they are impactful tools to use.

The Palestinian authority should lead and support peaceful demonstrations, which is what the president of Palestine Mr. Mahmoud Abbas commended. Achieving this is hard because there is no direct contact of whatsoever with the leaders of these demonstrations. They should take place in wider locations in Palestine and include effective actions.

As for ending the political division, there is a true intention to end it; however, regional hubs do not desire this. They do not want achieve Palestinian national unity.

In other words, what we need is to follow the PLO, stop claiming that there is no political division while there is, and to hold the stick in the middle to avoid clashes and retain the PLO.

**Dr. Alaa abu-Amer, a researcher specialized in international relations and international laws**

Generally speaking, the Palestinian authority should have a plan b to face the deal of the century. This is because the plans or the strategies that we think can work before implementing the plan become of no worth when starting with the procedures of its implementation. Announcing the deal of the century revealed the hidden truth from people. Palestinians were blamed for the failure of peace talks previously, which is something the Palestinian authority should consider and take advantage of.

After announcing the deal of the century, applying the two-state solution in the light of “Israel” brutal actions becomes impossible. This leaves only one solution, which is a state only for Palestinians where they fully have their political and civil rights. Moreover, Palestinians can take advantage of the international solidarity and boycotting campaigns, such as: the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement.

As for International forums, Palestinians are supposed to win them at their side. One of the articles in the deal of the century states that “Israel” fears that international forums will abandon it in the future. That is why the later article states that if Palestine signed the agreement, it should not head to international forums. I believe that it is time to head for any of the international forums because it will badly affect “Israel” and increases the pressure on.

According to Mr. President Mahmoud Abbas, he states that the role which the Palestinian Authority plays varies depending on the agreement signed with “Israel”. For example, each signed agreement results in either an economic collapse or issues related to security coordination. This is when the Palestinian Authority starts playing its role to prevent such outcomes. This may result in increasing the pressure on it by the “Israel” and the United States (US). However, it will receive support by the Palestinian people. A fundamental question raises here, is the Palestinian Authority capable of formulating effective strategies to face the deal of the century? If it can, it will play more effective role than before. This will empower its steadfastness to endure financial burdens in cooperation with its political system.

Palestinians are no longer able to endure the Oslo Accords. They assured of the fact that it does not and will not solve anything; it will not bring a fair solution for the sake of the Palestinian cause or for the sake of reforming the PLO and the Authority's institutions.

The Palestinian Authority expressed its support for peaceful demonstrations; however, Palestinians can decide when to be peaceful and when not. This is the fate of this land as Palestinians will never ever hesitate to defend their land. What eases the intensity of these demonstrations is the Arab nation's reaction. If the Arab nation did not stand with Palestinians demonstrations, they will think of other ways of peaceful resistance/demonstrations.

Palestinian political parties can create the future of Palestine as their true intentions are clear to Palestinians. This is a crucial step towards ending the political division, and a chance for Hamas to carry the burden of resistance away from any support from external or international parties. The Gaza Strip cannot be separated from the Palestinian National Project because it is as important as Jerusalem. This is what Hamas should consider. I believe that the unity of political factions will end the issues caused by their division.

**Dr. Yousuf Irshid, Professor of International Relations at the Arab American University:**

The deal of the century is in a continued application since announcing it. the American Administration has moved its embassy to Jerusalem and officially considering it as the capital of "Israel". It encourages settling and provides support for the laws that joins the occupied lands together to create their so-called state of "Israel". However, they want Palestinians to sign an agreement that will guarantee our death and the end of the Palestinian cause. Palestinians will pay the price after signing this agreement; segregation, embargo, and more ...

On the domestic level, political division in Palestine has to end and to be unified. This is in order to face the dangers surrounding the Palestinian cause and to achieve national interests. Each political party should form a representative crew to formulate a strategy that can stand still in front of this international conspiracy.



On the international level, the Palestinian Authority should have depreciated between the friends and the enemies of the Palestinian cause long time ago. It is time now to head for the countries which support the Palestinian cause and stop appealing the support from the countries that are supporting “Israel”. All international resolutions state that Jerusalem, The Jordan valley, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip are all occupied and the Israeli forces must withdraw its troops from these areas. Some would think that such resolutions will have no impact in real life; however, “Israel” and the US must be internationally isolated.

One of the offered alternatives is to changing the role of the Palestinian Authority into an authority that provides services. President Mahmoud Abbas said that this does not mean tolerating or cooperating with the occupier; in accordance to Oslo Accords, its role is simply limited to carrying out self-government for a specific period of time before establishing the Palestinian state. Therefore, abolishing the role of the Palestinian Authority means the cancellation of Oslo Accords. If this is what is going on, then a clear clarification must be presented because almost everything in our life is subjected under the mercy of the occupier, even crossing points and seaports.

Despite the fact that it is for sure a difficult task for the Palestinian Authority to formulate a strong strategy to face the deal of the century, I believe that all options are available and possible, such as: demonstrations, protests, shifting public opinion, and resistance. For this reason, lights have to be shed again on the Palestinian people who have been not included in the Oslo Accords for so long. Although I’m not that optimistic when I think about ending the division between Palestinian political parties, I still believe that there is still a glimpse of hope. It is going to take time because each political party has its power and control over several spheres of the society.

The attitude of political parties is for sure rejecting the deal of the century. This could lead to the escalation of resistance against the Israeli occupation. These parties have a rich previous knowledge and background about resistance, for which political parties should unit with each other and take advantage of.

The deal of the century included articles which states that: disarming resistance movements, offering beneficial economic plans, financial aids from the Gulf, and supports from the United

Nations (UN). “Israel” is trying to take advantage of the poverty and seizure of the Gaza Strip to turn the Palestinian cause into a humane case. This restricts the solutions to only economic and humane ones, which gives “Israel” the chance to violate Palestinians human rights. In spite of that, I believe that the Palestinian people will never ever give up and never surrender.

**Samer Anabtawi, Writer and Political Analyst, a member of the leading body of the Palestine National Initiative**

In spite of the political division, the loss of Arab nations supports, and the changes occurring in the region, the elements of power that are concerned with reforming national strategies to end the political division, building a unified national project, developing a national economy, and reforming the national unity to face the Israeli occupation. This is in order to redefine the duties of the Palestinian Authority and to end all of the agreements signed with the occupier.

Changing the role of the Palestinian Authority is politically and civilly demanded. It can be achieved by ending the direct connection between the Palestinian Authority and the Israel, and to direct it to the national project.

As for the effective strategies, choosing them is correlated with finding a safe regional level, achieving administrative streamlining, reforming national economy, separating from the Israeli economy, planning to make Palestinians abroad to return to Palestine especially rich ones. This is in order to achieve economic recovery.

The Palestinian Authority does not contact the political party that is behind organizing any peaceful demonstration. However, this will change after changing the roles and duties of the it in order to make more representatives of the Palestine. This will probably strengthen the bonds between Palestinians and the political parties.

As for delegation travelling all the way from the West Bank to the Gaza Strip, it should be done only in the case of complementing the political discussion of a specific case. This is in order to establish the rules of political unity, which will form a lethal weapon to defeat the deal of the century. Palestinian political parties should include the Palestinian people and its national powers when expressing each parties’ attitude towards the actions or the agreements against the

Palestinian cause. This will help forming the national project, reforming the PLO based on democratic values, supporting Palestinian steadfastness, raising awareness on the upcoming dangers after announcing the plan, and cooperating with each other to build a cohesive and strongly bonded society.