

# Palestine 2030

A Decade of Clarity and Renewal

Mapping the Transformations in the Three Spheres of Influence: Israel, the Region, and the International

Palestine Strategy Group

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 **MADAR**

  
THE REPRESENTATIVE OFFICE OF NORWAY  
TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

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This version of the report has been translated from Arabic to English.

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## Executive Summary:

### Palestine 2030 – A Decade of Clarity and Renewal

This is not the first report from the Palestine Strategy Group. For over a decade, we have convened Palestinians from all walks of our fragmented reality—in Palestine (West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip), in Israel, in our refugeedom, and our diaspora. Over the years, we explored in our research, confirmed in our conversations, and reported in our previous reports major milestones that were to befall the Palestinian struggle for freedom and independence.

We previously reported of the utter failure of the U.S. monopolized Oslo Accords' "peace" process long before it was buried. We reported on the need for the Palestinian cause to be returned to the United Nations, its origins, to finally hold Israel accountable, as well as to hold nation-states to their obligations under the rules-based world order they created. We also reported on how Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line are engaged, each in their way, facing the same oppressive state of Israel.

This report is the culmination of three years of effort, from 2017-2020, a period throughout which all the parts of the conflict were in motion. These moving targets and their impact on Palestine are what this report attempts to analyze. The three spheres we focus on are Israel, the region, and the international community. The research that informed this effort was based on professionally commissioned research papers. Each paper was vigorously debated in a context that included Palestinians from all their geographic locations—Palestine, Israel, refugeedom, and the diaspora.

#### 1. Structural Changes

The year 2020 started with the White House announcing its vision for the future of Palestine and Israel: *“Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People”*. This so-called “Deal of the Century” was a much-anticipated event that required a sober reflection of its details and implications. The Palestine Strategy Group (PSG) views the “deal” as clear evidence of long-standing Israeli plans, in absolute collusion with their U.S. ally, but lacking international support, except for a few marginal international political right-wing governments.

The US “deal” is an existential threat to the Palestinian national project. It threatens to eliminate it. The expectation of those who produced the US document is that, despite initial protests, the international community will acquiesce in this plan, and that Palestinians will accept political defeat in exchange for economic gain.

The Palestinian strategic response in this “Palestine 2030” report is to reject the US “deal” in its entirety.

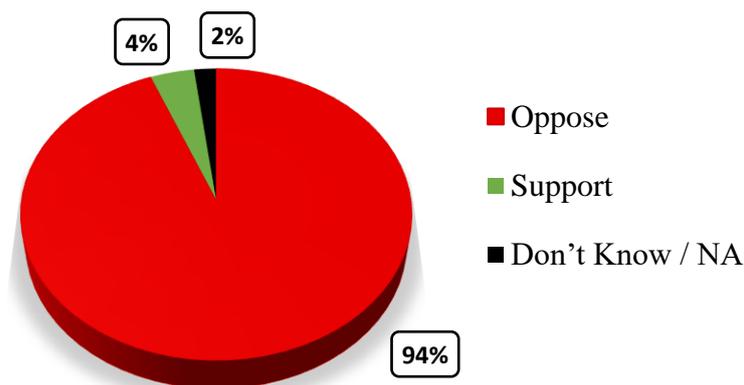
In light of all that has befallen the Palestinian people since 1948, culminating in this latest U.S.-Israeli aggression against Palestine and Palestinians wherever they reside, the Palestine

*The announcement of the “deal”, while meant to completely tip the balance towards the Israeli side... returned Palestine to the top of the list of global priorities.*

Strategy Group believes that this coming decade is one of clarity for all stakeholders and engaged parties, and renewal for Palestine, its people, and its struggle.

We, as Palestinians, can view the details that were announced and the fanfare accompanying the “deal’s” announcement as another attempt to liquidate the Palestinian national project. It is a grand political and media attempt to damage the faith of our people in the justice of our cause and the possibility of obtaining our rights, rights that we have made great sacrifices for. With this, we recommend that we view this recent flurry of political activity as an opportunity to actively draw on our historical experience of steadfastness and resilience and restore the national well-being and international energy around Palestine on the regional and global stages. The announcement of the “deal”, while meant to completely tip the balance towards the Israeli side, and to provide electoral support to the Trump administration and the Israeli right, returned Palestine to the top of the list of global priorities.

**Do Palestinians, together in the West Bank and Gaza, support or oppose the Trump Plan?**



*Source: Poll taken from 5-8 February 2020 by Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research*

The conclusion from these efforts is that given the current balance of power there is a lack of effective venues to immediately realize national independence, the State of Palestine based on the 1967 borders and a just resolution to the issue of refugees as defined in UN resolutions. The effort concluded that, in light of developments in Israel, the region, and the wider world, the next decade will leverage the clarity that has come to the surface from all stakeholders while pressing forward for: **first**, independence and freedom, **second**, realistically unifying and renewing the Palestinian national polity, in all its forms, to collectively define the way forward. These strategies put together have the potential to dramatically redefine Palestinian self-determination, as well as dramatically revisit the entire military occupation paradigm as the framing of our struggle.

*...realistically unifying and renewing the Palestinian national polity, in all its forms, to collectively define the way forward.*

**1949-1967  
de facto borders**



**2020 US Administration's  
“Deal of the Century”**



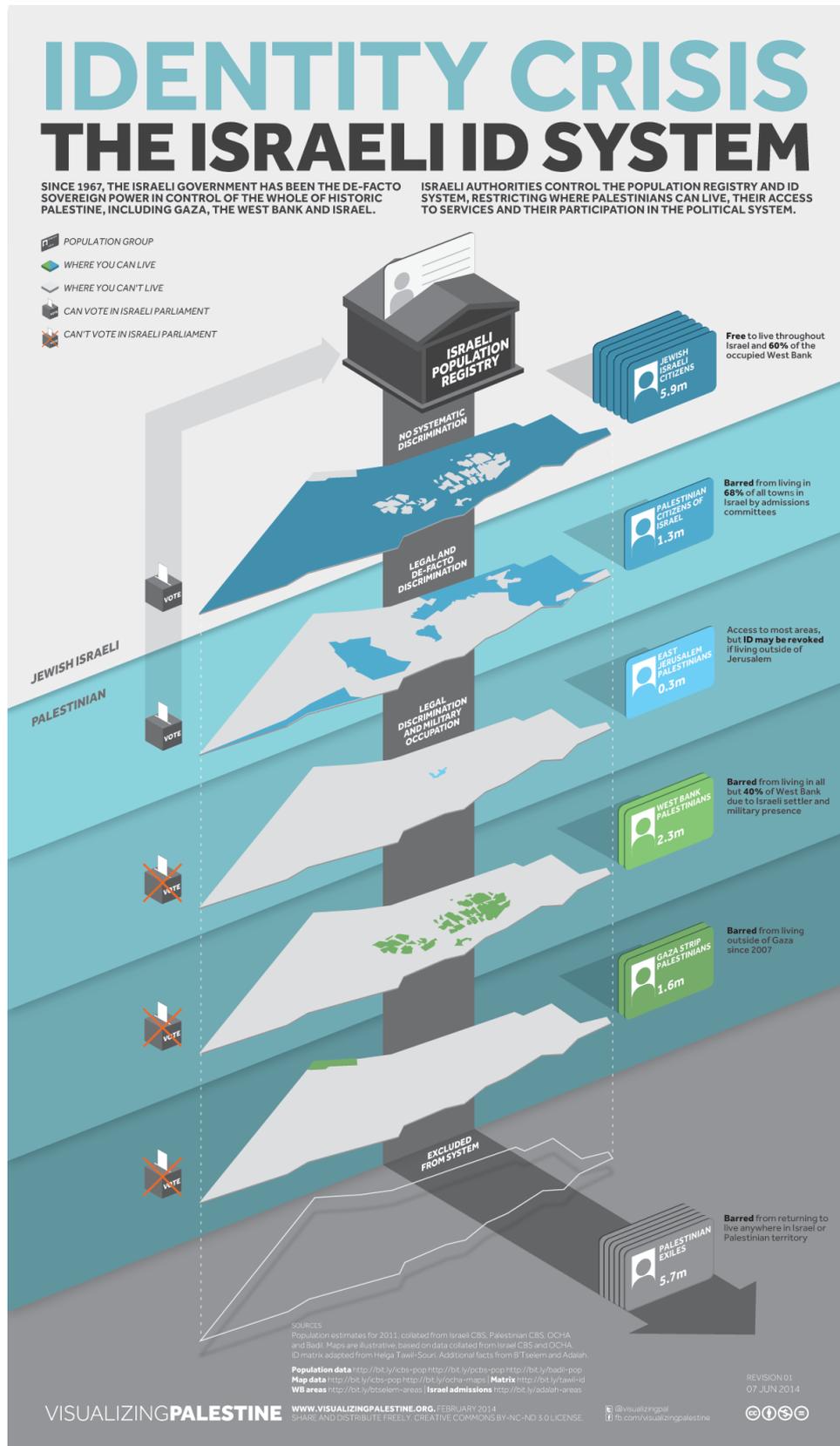
The following are the most important conclusions of the discussions and strategic thinking regarding the three spheres under study:

**Palestine and Israel**

The Israeli side has made up its mind on laying the foundation for the status quo in historical Palestine between the river and the sea, making the situation permanent and deepening its colonization, control and acquisition of territory by force. This was embodied in the Israeli “National Unity” government that was sworn in during May 2020. This new Israeli government was brought together on a political platform which includes provisions to annex additional lands of the occupied West Bank and impose Israeli sovereignty so that the Jordan River becomes the eastern border of Israel. All of this is happening with the backdrop of the continuing Israeli policy of besieging and trapping Palestinians in their ghettos, building more walls, and dividing and dismembering Palestinian land and society.

At the end of 2018, the Israeli Knesset passed the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People. This law states that “the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is unique to the Jewish people.” The law grants advantages and privileges uniquely to Jews within the areas of Israeli sovereignty and where Israeli law is applied over any other population groups, no matter their number. In the foreseeable future, this law may

be the precursor to further lowering the formal status of Palestinian citizens in Israel, from the ostensible status of citizens with full rights and equality to the position of Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip – merely subjects under Israeli colonial rule and sovereignty. As such, Israel is installing and finally legislating in broad daylight a political system based on blatant discrimination and racial segregation.



Inherent in these significant developments are two transformations happening in Israel: 1) Israel is withdrawing from a liberal ideology and from a Jewish ethnic democracy, which seemingly guaranteed citizenship to a part of the Palestinian people who remained in their homeland after the Nakba, with the political, social, and economic rights that these entail. The result of such transformations is that Israel moves steadily toward a nationalistic and extreme Jewish fortress that survives based on its animosity towards its regional environment and its rejection of understanding or dialogue with it, in any form; and 2) Israel is withdrawing from the Oslo Accords and the understandings that were produced by the negotiations track since the beginning of the 1990s until today. The U.S. “Deal of the Century” openly affirms

*...fragmenting the putative Palestinian State, leaving it without substance, and disposing of the Palestinian civilians in the Triangle area from Israel by unilaterally shifting the land border.*

Israel’s unilateral abandonment of the principle of dividing the land within the scope of a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians, as endorsed by the United Nations in its Partition Plan for Palestine in 1947. It also signals Israel’s shift to unilaterally imposing sovereignty, without negotiation, over historical Palestine from the river to the sea. These transformations place Israel at odds, not just with Palestine, but with the Arab World as a whole.

The Palestine Strategy Group foresaw, in its previous discussions and reports, these transformations at the geographic, demographic, and political levels. We painfully watched, day in and day out, Israel’s hollowing out of East Jerusalem while tearing apart Palestinian Jerusalemites’ social fabric. Likewise, the strangulation of Gaza has been unrelenting, undertaken in broad daylight for all to see, reaching a point that a UN agency has deemed 2020 the year Gaza will be “unliveable.” Today, these transformations are articulated through policies that call for the annexation of more Palestinian land, centred on what was known as “Area C” in the Oslo Accords, fragmenting the putative Palestinian State, leaving it without substance, and disposing of the Palestinian civilians in the Triangle area from Israel by unilaterally shifting the land border.

## **Palestine and the Region**

The Middle East region is characterized as being extremely fluid and has been since the beginning of the Arab Spring. This fluidity has destroyed or weakened the Arab power centres surrounding Palestine, with serious implications for its strategic depth and sources of support. It has also undermined the Palestinian cause due to rounds of destructive violence erupting throughout Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen, leaving Palestine alone in the face of a comfortable Israel. Regional interests align or conflict with international interests, which has created a regional system that is difficult for Palestine to operate within.

*Palestine cannot rely on the support of the region, due to its cause only being as important as its service to a certain axis*

The region is preoccupied with itself and its conflicts. Consequently and politically, it could turn into a region that becomes unfriendly towards Palestine, which would add a burden to the Palestinian reality. Thus, Palestine cannot rely on the support of the region, due to its

cause only being as important as its service to a certain axis, conflict, or area. On the other hand, Palestine must take into account the potential for the development of the region's conflicts, where they are headed, and possible scenarios of what could happen, thereby developing its capacity and preparedness to deal with this future. Despite the above, the Arab people's second wave of 'spring' in Lebanon and Iraq, for example, and the beginning of stability in Tunisia, have given hope in Palestine. It is this hope that will help nurture the region until it grows, and Palestine grows with it.

## Palestine and the World

The international system seems similar to the regional one, in that it is extremely fluid as a result of rapidly progressing developments, which have completely scrambled the map of interests, resources, and geo-strategic considerations, especially with regards to the main axes of influence. Since the end of the Cold War there has been an increase in the prominence of neoliberal capitalism, which has become, over time, more brutal. This new reality has caused real damage to the idea of democracy and national economies, especially in countries where natural resources are plenty, but power centres are weak. The same happened with regards to the distribution of wealth within states and between them, and this has become very clear with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has spread worldwide and has caused extreme tension in international relations, which could lead to further conflict.

The COVID-19 crisis adds, in turn, other possibilities to the international system, especially since it has started new debates or conflicts, or at the very least uncovered them. The most prominent of these is the US President and his administration taking advantage of the crisis to carry out frequent media attacks on China, the World Health Organization (WHO), and various American media outlets, in an attempt to avoid blame for his mishandling of the pandemic. In this vast space, the feuding within the allied axes is active, with their interests aligning or clashing with the regional axes, postponing issues that are not, in their opinion, ones that might boil over, like Palestine, for instance. Instead, they are focusing primarily on the issues that are more of a priority for their interests, like Iraq, one of the most important sources of fuel, and Syria and Libya, or focusing on "accomplishments" on larger issues related to their direct interests.

On another level, international legitimacy, as a system of restraints, customs, agreements, and international laws, has seen a decrease in influence. After World War II, the international community created many conventions, treaties, and agreements that affected all aspects of international relations during times of peace and war. Yet, it seems like the powers in control, which are returning to conflicts and are attempting to reposition themselves, have put off using these restraints and have started to evade their responsibilities. They have moved towards a looser and more extreme interpretation of the activities of the impulsive market forces. These, in turn, are damaging, and in some cases destroying, everything in their path, especially weaker entities, and the rights and vital interests of people when these interests

*...international legitimacy, as a system of restraints, customs, agreements, and international laws, has seen a decrease in influence.*

clash with what these forces see as their own interests. A compelling example is the "Deal of the Century" which views the Palestine issue as one of power balances, without at all taking into consideration the people impacted by this plan, whose national rights are once again subjected to injustice.

## 2. Nurturing hope and creating change

To adhere to the pressure of these Israeli, regional, and international systems, and the way they are trending, is to give in to despair, and surrender. This despair is being intensified by internal Palestinian divisions and the interference of regional axes to strengthen the status quo in Palestine. Additionally, there are daily attacks by Israel against the national rights of Palestinians. The "Deal of the Century" attempted, as one of its objectives, to damage Palestinian's belief in their inalienable right to self-determination and sovereignty, as well as to hinder their confidence in their ability to be resilient, aiming to instil in their collective consciousness the idea that they are going to lose in any case.

Given the impasse in achieving national independence and securing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people through the negotiation process, it is important to maintain and strengthen the centralized and legitimate representation of the Palestinian people and their just cause (represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization). This needs to be in conjunction with the utilisation of international law as a political and legal reference. Elements of all three scenarios may be strategically necessary at various points in the ongoing struggle for the realization of Palestinian national rights, depending on opportunities and circumstances. Palestinians are not giving up any of their lawful individual and collective rights. Nor do they accept that they have to choose between them at this stage.

The three potential scenarios are:

**First: Reciprocity: A matching response** – Returning to what came before the Oslo Accords. This return would start with an announcement of immediate withdrawal from the Oslo agreements and subsequent obligations, as a result of the Israeli withdrawal from them, with structural implications on the immediate termination of security coordination with Israel. It would also include stopping the implementation of the Paris Protocol and its amendments, ending all relations with the Israeli side, withdrawing the Arab Peace Initiative, and suspending the recognition of Israel. The processes might need to include the dissolving of the Palestinian National Authority, considering that it is a result of the Oslo process, whereupon the Palestinian political system could be rebuilt so that the Palestine Liberation Organization would reaffirm its national and political role as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people wherever they may be, and based on democratic renewal and rejuvenation of the leadership. This, in addition to other steps in this direction, would place on Israel once again – and not the national authority – the full responsibility for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as was the case before Oslo,

*...would place on Israel once again – and not the national authority – the full responsibility for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as was the case before Oslo*

in its role as the occupying state. At the time of the writing of this report, developments have already started in this direction.

**Second: Renewal: Build capacity and impose national independence** – This is based on a strategic doctrine that states that national independence can be achieved and embodies the right to self-determination and return outside the scope of a negotiated political settlement process. Through an accumulated process on the ground and in foreign policy, it would aim to curb Israel’s colonial expansion and impose a Palestinian presence and sovereignty in innovative ways. This would necessitate rebuilding the political system and formal, national, and popular Palestinian institutions so that they can escape the impasse of the requirements and obligations of the past two decades, which has become a part of sustaining the status quo instead of imposing independence and national rights.

*...rebuilding the political system and formal, national, and popular Palestinian institutions so that they can escape the impasse of the requirements and obligations of the past two decades*

**Third: Full Circle: One de-colonized state** – The one-state solution became prominent during several stages in the history of the Palestinian struggle. It now returns in numerous iterations that take into account geographic and demographic developments, culminating in a struggle for one state, from the river to the sea, that embodies the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people based on absolute equality between all citizens. The state would be civil and democratic so that it is devoid of its colonial tendency and aims to implement the principle of transitional and historical justice to ensure compensation to the Palestinian people and an equitable solution to the issue of refugees based on the right to property, the right to compensation, and the right of return.

### 3. Everything Starts with the Palestinian People

Against the physical, psychological and rhetorical aggression against Palestine, which has reached a new peak during the “Deal of the Century” and the language and discussions that it promoted, our people are standing with their historical experience and their inalienable rights. This once again proves its great capacity and ability to withstand any crisis or difficulty. Our people have proven, with their awareness and experience, a supreme ability to refuse plans to subjugate and marginalize them, and they have ensured the failure of these plans no matter who was implementing them.

All options available to Palestinians would restore vitality to Palestine as the cause of a people and a nation, making it more able to produce, nurture, and export hope to its people, its allies, and all those concerned with Palestine. A renewed and clear Palestinian will, one that is embodied in a spirit of all forms of effective resistance and nation-building, is necessary to build upon in Arab and foreign societies and countries. By this, we mean that during this stage the Palestinian collective will must be formed by strengthening it and practicing it. The Palestinian collective will is one of the most important characteristics of the Palestinian

people and provides the foundation for their strategies to oppose the new project to liquidate and subjugate them and their cause.

Although the Palestinian people and struggle are at a serious fork in their road to emancipation, we are confident that our just struggle will forge new paths forward to achieve their freedom and independence. A prerequisite to maintaining our struggle will be the unifying of the home front and genuine acceptance of plurality in the Palestinian political system.

We have absolute confidence in the long-term success of the liberation struggle, the universally recognised justice of the national cause, and the indomitable resilience and resolve of the Palestinian people. “Palestine 2030” looks forward with hope by humbly contributing this report to inform our struggle moving forward.

## Section One: Palestine and Israel

### 1. Introduction to the Current Israel

It is true that Israel, more than 70 years after it was established, has strategic superiority on numerous levels compared to the Arab Palestinians. However, their superiority has not granted them absolute legitimacy or a stable internal situation. This is evidenced by the crisis over rule and the internal system. Due to the circumstances of its establishment, it will continue to try to gain legitimacy from the people whose homeland has been robbed and have been displaced. At the same time as these regional efforts to gain legitimacy, it works on maintaining the international legitimacy that it has acquired from the United Nations, through the Palestine partition resolution and vote. The most prominent mechanism that Palestine can use to deal with these Israeli efforts might be to reaffirm the Palestinian vision of the conflict as one between a colonial and replacing power, embodied by official Israel, and a people who are striving to practice their right to self-determination, even in just a part of historical Palestine, whilst securing the return of the refugees who were displaced during and after the Nakba. This remains consistent with the belief that the issue of Palestine and the Palestinian people is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and that resolving this conflict starts with a political settlement of this issue.

The four papers commissioned on the Israeli heartland clearly show that there are deep changes taking place and are not fleeting, even if they are not final. Due to this, these transformations can be changed, challenged, or eroded, especially since they are in the fields of demography, the economy, method of authority, and the partisan and ideological system. There is a possibility that these transformations are fed from the outside, or by international or regional transformations, but we must delve into these because they shape the current situation in Israel. This has a clear impact on the Palestinian situation, or at least imposes new challenges for it. The research clearly shows that the combined changes have led to a society where the majority support the policies of the right, namely with the withdrawal from the negotiations track and solidification of annexation, occupation, and control.

### 2. Economic Neoliberalism as the Driver of the Forces of the Political Right

The economic composition in Israel, which is based on an unbridled free market and the principles of neoliberalism, is the infrastructure for the changes that we witness in the general political mood and in the alignment of their forces. After surviving the world economic crisis in 2008, Israeli economic recovery, achievements and good results during the rule of the current elites further supports these elites and grants them political legitimacy, helping them to survive longer. The general feeling in Israel is that the state is prosperous and able to implement national, country-wide projects, including infrastructure such as a road network, crossings, expansion of the railroad and establishment of a light express train system in numerous cities. Despite this, the fact remains that the distribution of resources and wealth is not just, with clear prejudice against the downtrodden in poor neighbourhoods and towns. These segments of society protested in the summer of 2011, which shook the economic system, but did not lead to any noticeable changes. On the other hand, the state has

continued to maintain forms of a welfare state that deals with segments of society that support it, like the religious Haredim, various associations, religious schools of the Shas movement, and the settlers. For example, taxes are lowered for settlers and direct government support is allocated to them or the settlement economies. As for the increased income that the state has gained from taxes, it is used to finance what the government provides in the economic areas mentioned above, thereby guaranteeing that this government and its political projects will continue to receive support.

Based on its interests, neoliberalism aims to dismember society and divide it into segments that it will either gain from or marginalize, which hinders the development of a collective struggle for change, such as solidarity and assistance. This makes it easier to “buy” whole segments and integrate them into economic and social processes that are in line with the interests of the wealthy. Due to the nature and condition in Israel, those in power benefit from this situation. As a result of this overlap, they are able to produce rhetoric, a general mood, and an intellectual and ideological Israeli state that protects the occupation, reconciling itself with it and aligning with the colonial and expansion-driven tendencies of the Israeli elite.

*...neoliberalism aims to dismember society and divide it into segments that it will either gain from or marginalize, which hinders the development of a collective struggle for change, such as solidarity and assistance.*

What is remarkable here is the large amount of influence that Jewish communities and wealthy Jewish individuals have around the world on conditions in Israel, especially those residing in the United States.

These groups are the main sources of funding for the right-wing elites that are in power. They are concurrently looking for a foothold in the Israeli economic cycle and seek to make profits in numerous sectors through the government and its leadership. Consequently, the groups have been financing projects of right-wing civil society, popularizing the tendencies of these leaders. These are non-governmental means of strengthening the settlement economy, solidifying its foundation, and marketing it globally. This means that Israeli openness to foreign investment brings political investment in the right-wing doctrine, pushing it to the forefront. The above developments are occurring at a time when traditional centrist groups have formed the critical movement in Israeli society.

### 3. Right-Wing Bloc Captures the State

In Israel, the alignment of political forces has resulted in the “dominant right-wing bloc”, which controls decision-making, policies and ideas, especially the potential annexation of the West Bank and formal expansion of the Israeli state into the Jordan Valley.

Moreover, these include managing the conflict without resolving it, achieving “economic peace”, and raising the possibility of reaching a settlement on the Palestinian issue through strategic regional projects, such as an alliance with the Gulf states against Iran. Lately, these efforts are alongside the “Deal of the Century” and the return to the “Jordan Option”, with the subsequent pressure that either option would have on the Kingdom of Jordan. These

options, to various degrees, would mean geographically transferring the Palestinian issue to the eastern part of the river.

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify what we mean by the right-wing bloc. These constitute right-wing parties that are able to form successive governments without the need for any centrist or left-wing parties, according to the Israeli definition. The opposite is not true, however, as a centre-left government can't be formed without relying on a right-wing party. Understanding this, the Israeli right-wing has invested in this situation. Ongoing opinion polls and deeper studies that are conducted annually by academic research centres not affiliated with the right wing confirm this position. This is certainly the case with the current government, which is the most right-wing government in Israeli politics in the past few decades.

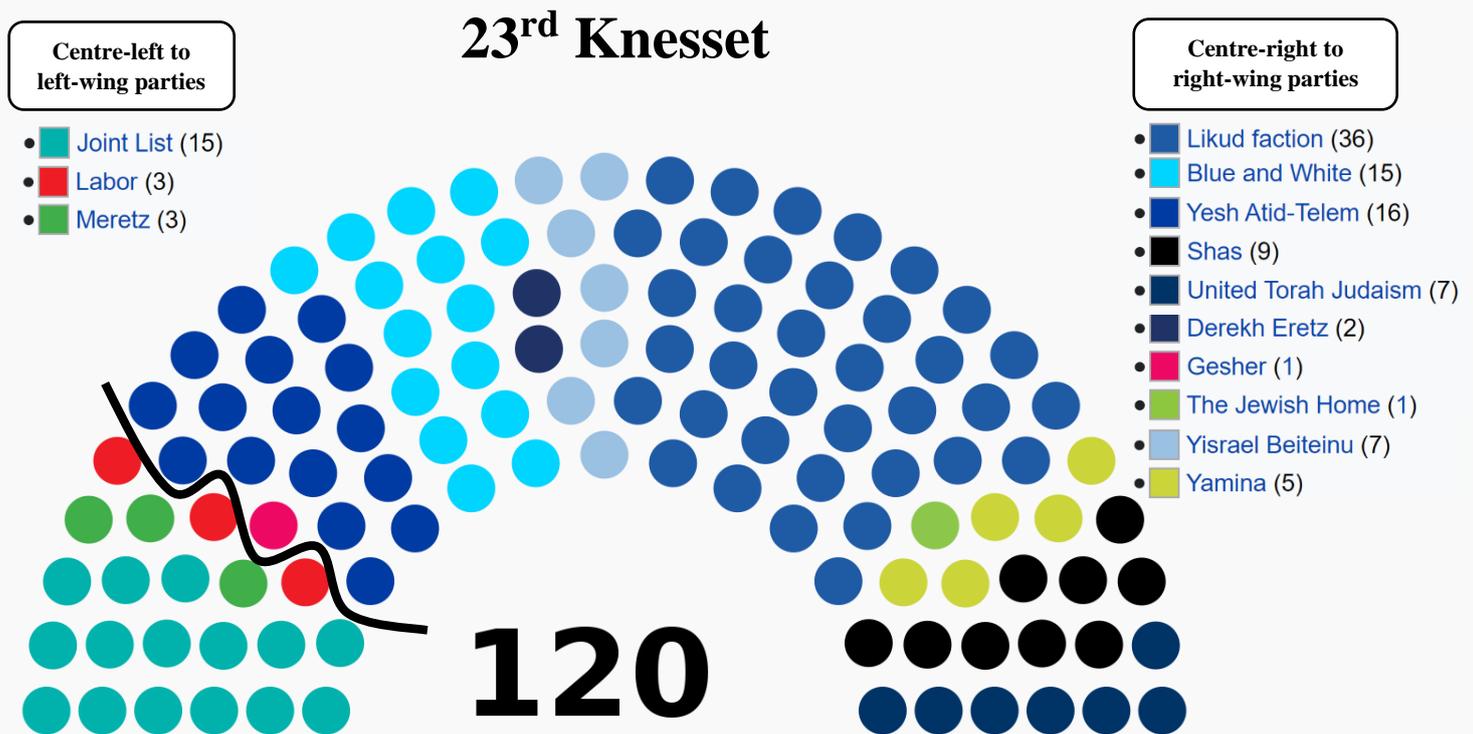
Additionally, moderate political and social movements that tend to prefer settlement of the conflict have realised the reality stated above. We have witnessed these same movements aligning themselves not only under the banners of the dominant bloc, but also accepting their ideological instructions, especially those relating to the concept of "the Land of Israel" and the Palestinian issue.

There would not be a dominant bloc, however, without the Likud Party. A large party that features heavily within this bloc, right-wing parties work to ensure that the Likud Party remains a powerful entity so it can push the bloc forward, impose its right-wing agenda and implement it on the ground. In a situation such as this, all partners in a bloc need to maintain their presence and ensure the achievement of shared partisan, economic, and political interests. This is what is happening in Israel.

Among the results of this transformation is that the dominant bloc has become a benchmark, even for the forces that oppose them. For instance, these parties started using parallel rhetoric that is more right-wing in its ideas and substance. An example of this is the Blue and White Party. Formed on the eve of the first elections in 2019, they competed against the Likud Party, yet used the language of this dominant bloc and did not have a political and social platform that was different or challenged it.

On the contrary, we see that it has included among its leaders four generals who were, in the past, Chiefs of the General Staff of the Israeli army. They constituted a right-wing "team" that opposed the right-wing policies of Likud and the surrounding movements. This also applies to the Yesh Atid ("There Is a Future") party, a right-wing party in the guise of one that is centrist. These two parties unified during the elections in September 2019 to compete against Likud and its dominant bloc, without presenting a serious alternative. They then separated after the Blue and White Party decided to enter into a government allied with the Likud Party, under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu.

*... competed against the Likud Party, yet used the language of this dominant bloc and did not have a political and social platform that was different or challenged it.*



Other results include the growth of what can be described as a historical settlement between Israeli society, its centrist and the extremist religious movements, as well as the settlement project. Even if there is Israeli rhetoric to end the occupation, the notion that they will remain continues to comfort the settlements, no matter the eventual settlement! We have even seen that the extremist religious movements, which had been historic opponents of secular Zionism until the recently, have now reconciled with the state and entered into agreements with the dominant bloc, taking a right-wing ideological stance. This has led to these groups receiving their share of public resources.

Lastly, we must consider the growth and impact of the dominant right-wing bloc on Palestinians in Israel. An Israeli political mood has developed that states that in the legislative elections, it is possible to withdraw the participation of Palestinians in Israel. Even the Israeli forces that have historically seen a strategic self-serving interest in ensuring this and for Israel's legitimacy on the international stage, have expressed positions that dispense with this participation. It has reached the point where the former head of the Labor Party, Avi Gabay, said that he had recommended an Arab member of the Knesset in his party to resign. Worth mentioning is that the Israeli elites during the early decades of Israel, until Rabin's assassination in 1995, saw this participation and integration of Palestinians into public life and the political sphere of greater interest to them. This could in turn strengthen Israel's legitimacy and/or as a process that would Israelize Palestinians, decrease tensions and mend the gap between them. It reached a point where the Israeli elites considered them Palestinians, to a certain extent, who participate in the Israeli political game, so that it could obtain legitimacy for Israel's project and policies.

As for the current elites, they have ensured that Palestinians are marginalised and incited against, whilst adopting an Israeli political identity that views them as internal enemies and a security and demographic threat. The situation has exceeded the level of political rhetoric and has developed into a series of laws that make them the enemies and marginalise them. This shows that the dominant right-wing political elites want them outside of Israeli politics, relegating their status as citizens. The Israeli elites have expressed their movement in this direction in the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, when it lowered their status as citizens and erased the official status of the Arabic language. This is in despite of language being the most prominent cultural right of national minorities.

#### 4. “The Deep State” Under the Control of the Israeli Right-Wing

The leaders of the dominant bloc in Israel understand their historic moment of superiority over their political opponents and capitalise on this by enacting a series of laws, measures, and policies. They are relying on the state of Arab weakness in the region, the strength of the Israeli economy and a parliamentary majority both now and in the foreseeable future, to push through projects that change the core of the Israeli political system to stop any future transfer of power, or delay this as much as possible.

It seems as if the right-wing in Israel is capturing the state for itself and is aiming to remove all of the mechanisms of the political system established by the generation of founders and old elites. Their attacks on the judicial system is one example of this. Seen as a last serious bastion against the monopoly of the state by the right-wing ideological aspect of the Zionist project, these attacks could weaken this position and, if realised, could stop any possibility of negotiations or settlement with the Palestinians, the native inhabitants of the land.

On the Israeli political map, there is no longer any real “threat” to the dominant right-wing bloc. We see that their leaders are carrying out attack after attack on critical journalism, such as the liberal Haaretz newspaper, the judicial system, human rights organizations, critical academic groups, and any entity that expresses their opposition or objection to the direction of this bloc, even if they are a security institution, such as the general security agency or the military.

Not satisfied with just the offensive rhetoric, the leadership of this bloc are also working on new legislation to control the whole state. It can then invest this control in its absolute domination and political projects, such as the legislation linked to limiting the rights of civil society organizations, particularly those focusing on rights.

The dominant bloc – or the government – has recently undertaken a decision to circumvent the Israeli Supreme Court in an attempt to repeal laws, in violation of the constitutional laws. An example of this is the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty. Likewise, these also pertain to laws regulating the relationship between the ruling institutions and the independence of the judicial system from the legislative and executive systems. The decision regarding the basic law states that the paragraphs that cannot be amended, will in fact be changed. This step was the culmination of a sustained right-wing campaign over decades that aimed to stop

the Supreme Court using constitutional laws to nullify decisions enacted by legislative and executive authorities, or repealing laws defined by the court as being in violation of constitutional laws. The Supreme Court was established, and its position strengthened, based on the assumption of a Jewish and democratic state at its core, which leads to tension with the dominating right-wing bloc. This bloc does not conceal its desire for the Supreme Court and the judicial system to reflect clear right-wing and illiberal tendencies, mirroring the bloc itself.

## 5. Demographics as a Playing Card

In many cases, Israeli institutions started religious schools in the middle of Arab neighbourhoods in mixed cities, such as Acre and Jaffa. In others, these institutions brought extremist religious populations and housed them in eight colonial settlements, the most prominent of which are Beitar Illit and Modi'in Illit. These institutions brought settlers, middle classes, and Jewish settlements that seek better quality of life outside of the main cities and placed them near the large Palestinian towns to stop their expansion and to surround them. This means that Israeli institutions used civilians and their need for a source of income, housing, and a better quality of life to change the demographics on the ground. This occurs especially in the areas where there are large Palestinian gatherings and when trying to replace the displaced Palestinian population. During the first stage, the settlement map relied on a strategic vision that locates these settlements in key locations, such as those that block the movement of the Palestinian population, or strategic military positions. This means that the distribution of the population was always controlled by demographic fears among the Israeli leaders about the Palestinians, or indeed the Jewish populations themselves. These were carried out with the vision of using population to Judaize these areas.

The increase in the number of ultra-orthodox and religious nationalists, in addition to the migration from Russia during the 1990s, has changed the alignment of political forces within Israeli society. There are those that consider the one million Russians who arrived in Israel in the 1990s as the ones who changed the face of Israeli politics and drove it towards the right. This is because these people joined Israeli life through the right-wing and were part of economic migration, rather than ideological. The million believed that it was better to work through the right-wing and take advantage of their opportunities. Additionally, this is due to the link between these migrants and the advances of the state, as well as their desire to change and influence it. As for the ultra-orthodox Jewish populations, their increasing numbers have been invested towards advancing their political influence and their ability to allocate public funds for their particular demography.

The growth of the Israeli economy and associated interests are other issues that brought together the ultra-orthodox Jews and right-wing government. Here, the government intervened to attract the ultra-orthodox to the labour market and to participate in the economic life cycle outside the walls of their religious schools. Many government programmes have contributed (budgets and financial transfers) in this direction, in order to bring these masses closer to the movement of the right-wing. The government did this

*Data shows the high natural reproduction rates among the ultra-orthodox groups, and their expanding younger age groups, indicates that they will play a larger political role as time goes on.*

knowing that these groups are not Zionists or nationalists and had usually taken moderate positions with regards to the Palestinian issue.

The project of the first Israeli government was the creation of a new Jewish individual, an alternative to that of the diaspora. This was conducted through what was called the “melting pot”. The project concluded, however, with limited results. The

Israeli right-wing project aims to produce Zionist Israelis and to pull the population groups in the state – not just the Jewish ones – towards the ideology of the right. This is done by saying that people of the Jewish faith have a right over all of the land of Israel and that they can deal with the Palestinian issue in any way to ensure the full sovereignty of Israel between the sea and the river. Until now, it seems like the system of the dominant bloc has achieved moderate successes in this direction, particularly as the state is economically stronger than it was in the first decades.

Data shows the high natural reproduction rates among the ultra-orthodox groups, and their expanding younger age groups, indicates that they will play a larger political role as time goes on. It is, however, not expected that the current ideology and trends that feed into the right-wing will change. Furthermore, these groups also have large interests in the right-wing political camp. They completely agree with the right on the importance of curbing the intervention of the Supreme Court in public life. These are primarily regarding the relations between the religious and the secular, as well as the relationship between religion and the state in Israeli society. Over time, liberal and civil considerations have won out over religious coercion, and this relationship has put the government and the ultra-orthodox religious groups at odds. If these groups believe that the time is right, they will strengthen their alliance with the right to bypass the Supreme Court and reduce its influence over public life in Israel.

There is also another ongoing debate that is no less important between the ultra-orthodox religious groups, Israeli society, and the state. This issue surrounds compulsory military service. Liberal and secular communities are trying to impose this on the religious Haredim who had been, up until recently, exempt from this due to an old understanding between them and the Zionist leaders who established the state of Israel. In recent years, the conscription of a number of Haredim started partially based on the decisions of the Supreme Court and a new law, which forms a source of tension that should not be taken lightly between their communities, and the army and the state. It should be noted that despite this tension, these groups have not grown distant and neither have the Haredim withdrawn from being partners in the political game with the right-wing, which leans towards liberating them from the burden of military service. This is within the old understanding, as mentioned previously, and adherence to this system, which states that they have the right to choose religious schools, instead of serving in the army.

Outlined in the section above, the reconciliation that is taking place in Israeli society is an ongoing process. Namely, this is between the new centrist groups and the settlement project, and between the ultra-orthodox religious groups, the state, and the Zionist project. Combined

with the neoliberal economy that is led by an extreme nationalistic ideology, it becomes increasingly difficult to rely on traditional discourse within Israeli society.

## 6. From Waiting for the Right Moment to Taking Advantage of It

Based on what was stated above, official Israel has stopped looking for the right moment and has instead moved to take advantage of the present. This development has occurred over the past few years, especially since 2011 where the large Arab collapse began in parallel with a Israeli rise in the region. These are surmised in two concurrent developments: the end of the existential threats to Israel (even if there remain some strategic threats); and the structural transformations that are happening inside Israel (which we have mentioned above). These give official Israel more space to implement its projects, namely regarding the Palestinian issue. According to its policies (either announced or implemented), it is working towards implementing a form of apartheid. At the same time as trying to erase the Green Line, there are efforts to end mechanisms that control, monitor, and curb the annexation of the areas occupied in 1967 and the West Bank specifically. Official Israel considers the latter a strategic space, vital economic area, and an important source of groundwater.

We are stating this at the time when Palestinian awareness that the current relationship between official Israel and Palestine on both sides of the Green Line is a form of apartheid, as we have mentioned previously. Given the varying political and livelihood conditions between these groups, only a smarter form of apartheid invests in these differences and disparities to ensure the sustainability of Israeli control and to entrench the desired results. These differences allow it to start, through apartheid, to take control of historical Palestine, or at least the main areas. This is conducted without paying a large price in terms of its international position and relationship with the world.

We can see the Oslo Accords and the negotiations process, until the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, as an attempt with limited horizons and one that the Palestinians differed over. These, therefore, expanded the conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians.

These agreements, and the discourse it generated in Israel itself, could have turned into a process of decolonizing the Israeli society and the beginning of normalizing its relationships with the native Palestinian society. This would then lead to a historical settlement with the Palestinian people. To complete these readings, we can see what has happened since the failure of Oslo as a resumption of Israeli colonialism, which has a new and growing expansion project in historical Palestine, at the expense of the people of Palestine and their rights.

This project totally and completely refuses the idea of negotiations with the Palestinians and the idea of dividing the land. Instead, it aims to achieve complete domination of historical Palestine. We would like to point out the significant efforts conducted, after the assassination of Rabin and the right taking power, by official Israel to try and put the responsibility on the Palestinians themselves for the failure of the Oslo track. This is mainly since the departed Yasser Arafat rejected the impositions of the Second Camp David Negotiations with Prime

Minister Ehud Barak. Within Israeli hasbara (public diplomacy), these efforts have succeeded in painting the Palestinians as wasting another opportunity to achieve a settlement.

## 7. Between Two Systems of Apartheid

There is nothing now, or in the foreseeable future, that would stop the current spiral in Israel towards imposing Israeli sovereignty by force over all of the areas of Palestine, from the river to the sea. This leads to a high possibility of the establishment of a pronounced and clear apartheid system. By necessity, this is led by the demographic balance between Jewish populations and Palestinians in the areas mentioned above. In this situation, and based on what is happening on all levels, Israel might resort to two potential forms of apartheid: soft or hard.

These are two scenarios that might occur. If they do happen on the ground, we will try to follow up with this process. It should be highlighted, however, that there is evidence that shows that they will. These have been listed below:

*There is nothing now, or in the foreseeable future, that would stop the current spiral in Israel towards imposing Israeli sovereignty by force over all of the areas of Palestine*

1. In the West Bank, there is a separate street network: one for Palestinians, and one for settlers and Israelis.
2. There are walls dividing the towns of the two peoples inside Israel.
3. There is a wall dividing and separating large Palestinian and Israeli populations.
4. There is the ghetto of Gaza, which is surrounded, and where movement to and from this area is controlled.
5. There is a curfew and siege system on Jewish holidays and Israeli national days, on which Palestinians are closed in and not allowed free movement.
6. The Palestinian economy is almost completely reliant on the Israeli economy, with nearly total control over the movement of goods, labourers, and money.
7. There is the displacement/transfer of 300,000 Palestinians, because of the building of the Separation Wall and due to them being cut off from their communities, families, and land.
8. There is a complete system of barriers, visas, and permits that do not allow the freedom of movement of Palestinians to and from the West Bank/Jerusalem/Gaza Strip.
9. There are daily Israeli actions and policies to take control and get their hands on, through ownership and annexation, private and public Palestinians land and real estate.

10. There are daily actions and policies to arrest, detain, and imprison Palestinians with charges pending investigations, or for administrative detention. This is done arbitrarily for the purpose of frustrating all forms of organization and struggle, especially in the contact sites, such as Ni'lin, Nabi Salih, Arab al Jahalin, and other areas.
11. It has almost reached the point where not a day goes by that the occupation does not kill a Palestinian boy, girl, worker, or activist at the wall surrounding the Gaza ghetto. The killing is escalated from time to time by airstrikes in neighbourhoods and centres populated by civilians in Gaza and its countryside.
12. The Israeli judiciary creates a clear difference between Palestinians and the state and its objectives. It is an institution that is rarely just towards Palestinians, including the protection of them and their rights. For instance, ownership and movement rights and basic freedoms.

All of those outlined above, among others, are a clear result of the idea of separation between Jewish populations and Palestinians. As part of the idea of geographic divisions, official Israel is working on this in the racial sense, not one of self-determination. In reality, it is doing this to try and control the land, and the Palestinian population, through clear systems of apartheid, as we have clarified.

We estimate that these applications will become deeper and more expansive the further along official Israel is in their annexation process. This matter will require it to increase the policy of control and command in Palestinian areas, as well as the population. Motivated by an ideology of acquisition, this contact must lead to deepening Israeli procedures to take control, and thereby impose a reality of apartheid. If it imposes its sovereignty on historical

Palestine, and wants with all its strength to impose the higher national and racial status of the people of the Jewish faith, then this will lead to an Israeli version of the apartheid system.

*Palestinians might find themselves facing a reality of apartheid that is different, in its nature and tendencies, than the reality of occupation.*

At the end of the matter, Palestinians might find themselves facing a reality of apartheid that is different, in its nature and tendencies, than the reality of occupation.

It is true that commonalities between them are forceful

Israeli control of the land and the Palestinian population, but even with that, they are distinct in nature. This means that the occupation is on its way out, but not because it is ending or due to Israeli forces withdrawing to the June 4th lines, or any amended versions. It is instead making way for a deeper and more permanent system, from the Israeli perspective.

At its core is the imposition of Israeli sovereignty, not as a civilian administration or communication centre, but as a state with institutions and laws, which aims to annex the Palestinian areas by force to control the fates of their population – the Palestinian people.

### 7.1. The Soft Apartheid System

This is the gradual development of current Israeli control in historical Palestine through varying treatment of the Palestinian communities on the ground. Israeli Unilateral Disengagement from the Gaza Strip is part of the motivation to create variance in the condition of Palestinians. Israel presented this as its desire to “end the occupation and control of a million Palestinians”, leaving them to themselves. However, it continued to exert its control over the Gaza Strip using less costly methods, such as through the economy and crossings. The latter of which includes complete Israeli security supervision over them, including the Rafah Border Crossing. Israel controls the entry of basic goods and sources of electricity, in addition to the other manifestations of isolation. Similarly, there is the effort to sustain the special case of Palestinians in Israel compared to other Palestinian communities in the West Bank, for example. Namely, this relates to cutting off political and social ties between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, deepening the idea that the two sites are two different and separate entities. Official Israel accepted the presence of a Palestinian National Authority that is responsible for some of the livelihood affairs in its areas, carries some of the burdens of control, and administers the affairs of the population. The current situation, therefore, can continue with smart efforts to gradually deepen the system of racial segregation with the higher status of the Jewish populations, supported by the military superiority and the political authority on the ground. These institutions on the ground would always support the image of Israel as a country that seeks to guarantee its security and defend itself. This was the case with the launch of the peaceful return marches and the attempts to suppress them in Gaza ghetto. The wider political and historical significance should be considered too, as well as the issues raised during these marches. A number of these points, such as the issue of refugees and their right of return, were thought by official Israel to be over and abandoned by the Palestinians. Those Israeli groups that are in power present the idea of annexing Area “C” first, then extend Israeli law on the settlements. These steps are an attempt to avoid conflict based on the population balance, at least during this period.

This means that they are planning to implement the annexation enterprise and achieve its objectives, but with the least amount of friction or confrontation possible. Reasons for this approach stem from the understanding that things might not go according to these plans if the Palestinians in charge decide to oppose these efforts with calculated steps, through strategic thinking or formulation of a “new national Palestinian project”.

### 7.2. The Hard Apartheid System

Based on an correct Israeli belief, it could follow that Palestinians have become an easy target, that no one is standing with them, and that they have become too divided and separated to have any collective administration or unified national project. Such a belief could push Israeli forces in power to speed up the process of taking control of every part of historical Palestine and antagonizing Palestinians with dramatic measures, including wide scale confiscation of lands or carrying out limited transfers in some parts of Palestine. When challenged by Palestinians, this could even lead to a development from a soft apartheid into a vicious system

that aims to use absolute power and violence to subjugate Palestinians. In this regard, there may be possibilities of escalation through future Israeli initiatives. These have occurred in the past after: the stoppage of weekly airstrikes against the Gaza ghetto, the headquarters of the Palestinian National Authority (Al-Moqat'ah) after the failure of the second Camp David negotiations, and the refusal of the departed President Yasser Arafat to accept the dictates of the American administration and Israel at the time. These are scenarios that are being discussed by influential and politically strong Israeli forces, as well as those that are accepted by a wide range of the Israeli public.

*When challenged by Palestinians, this could even lead to a development from a soft apartheid into a vicious system that aims to use absolute power and violence to subjugate Palestinians.*

These are fed by the international climate, which has returned to scenes of atrocities, like in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Chechnya, Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Libya, and other areas. This means that there are, around the Palestinians and the world generally, “encouraging” examples for the Israelis that they can also implement their plan. A scenario like this automatically generates a new generation of refugees and displaced Palestinians. Also, it would result in the destruction of Palestinian cities and towns for the second time in the West Bank and Gaza. Oppressive Israeli procedures will affect all Palestinians between the river and sea, including those on the coast, in Galilee, and in Negev. The idea of a transfer in Israel might too be strengthened and attempted in limited forms, in parallel with expanding Israeli racism and colonial conflicts.

It is worth mentioning that a scenario such as this one could come at the expense of the Kingdom of Jordan. As stated previously, Jordan could be named as an alternative homeland for Palestine as a part of the infamous “Jordan is Palestine” option that has been presented numerous times by the Israeli side. With this idea resurfacing and in a situation such as this, Jordan will face a new reality that it has historically rejected, based on the right of the Palestinians to determine their fate on their own land: historical Palestine.

## 8. Israel Action and the Palestinian Challenge

Israeli groups on the right do not try to hide their ideas regarding transfers. There are some that state that this is inevitable to decrease Palestinian presence in an area. There are also those who whitewash the transfer by talking about an exchange of areas and an exchange of populations. For instance, the idea of expanding the Gaza Strip into parts of the Egyptian Sinai as compensation for the annexation of areas in the West Bank by Israel. On the Israeli side there is, at a minimum, a unanimous agreement on the importance of maintaining the large settlement outposts in the West Bank. There are frantic efforts by the Israelis to grant legitimacy to all of the Israeli settlement outposts in the West Bank, even those that were established in violation of the occupation law itself.

This is an indicator of the real Israeli intentions. There is an assumption that there is now a golden opportunity to achieve the dreams of the Israeli right. The opportunity has presented

itself due to the general Arab weakness, large issues and problems preoccupying the world, extreme fluidity in the Middle East, and Israeli superiority.

Even if we assume that this will progress slowly from the current situation, the lead up to these transformations will deepen the conditions of racial segregation. This is the only possibility that official Israel has to take control of the Palestinian areas and the residing population.

We assume that control will only be achieved by subjugating Palestinians, “imprisoning them”, and “paralyzing” their abilities through isolating them in closed off areas of various sizes. This can be achieved through varying levels of violent Israeli actions and policies. These are the only practical results of taking control and imposing sovereignty without granting Palestinians in the West Bank full citizenship rights. We mention this whilst being fully aware of the limitations on the citizenship rights of Palestinians in Israel itself. In addition to the attempts to end their political participation in parliamentary elections, which is currently under discussion, there are laws that antagonize them and make them the enemy, taking away not only their political legitimacy, but also their legitimacy as citizens.

This is a development that will adhere to the apartheid tendencies in Israeli politics. The expected result of developments like this is that the Palestinians currently in Israel will have to choose between submission or Israelization (with what that means to the right-wing), or turning into a “population” in Israel (living in suspended time without a national collective identity), or joining their Palestinian brothers and sisters in the West Bank after the erasure of the Green Line and the imposition of Israeli sovereignty on all Palestinian areas.

*The opportunity has presented itself due to the general Arab weakness, large issues and problems preoccupying the world, extreme fluidity in the Middle East, and Israeli superiority.*

## 9. Multiple Objection Projects

In a sense, the Israeli apartheid project that is rapidly forming and solidifying in front of our eyes leaves Palestinians facing dual challenges. The first of which is clarifying the Palestinian project that can oppose and object the Israeli settler-colonial project, including its tools of Israeli apartheid. The second challenge is whether the Palestinian leadership and elites surrounding them will be unified on the issue of the erasure of the Green Line by the Israeli side. This would be done to deal with the apartheid as a part of a single national project. It should be noted that until now, it seems like the Palestinian side is holding on this. There are those that merge these two challenges into a single point, refusing all divisions between brothers and sisters on both sides of the Green Line. Nevertheless, our political practicality makes us completely aware of the primary current difference and in the differing visions of the Palestinian leadership and the elites in the two areas, especially regarding the horizons of the conflict and solutions.

Caused by the establishment of Israel, we assume that the division between these two Palestinian groups will remain impactful and present in the foreseeable future. This was the conclusion of a strategic paper on this issue that was prepared by the Palestine Strategy Group in 2017. This paper was prepared based on interviews with Palestinian leaders in Israel and by collecting the opinions of Palestinian researchers and intellectuals on both sides of the Green Line. It concluded that a unified Palestinian interest requires integration between Palestinian populations as they are. What this meant was that each group operates where it

*...a unified Palestinian interest requires integration between Palestinian populations as they are... each group operates where it is, based on its own conditions and specificities to serve the national project*

is, based on its own conditions and specificities to serve the national project and contribute its share to achieve it. Therefore, the desired relationship between the group is one of complementary will, which requires a level of coordination and understanding.

To do this, awareness must be raised regarding the styles and formats of thinking on the Palestinian issue. For example, the approaches cannot remain with the two-state solution or the division of land due to the high level of Israeli momentum towards annexing the Palestinian areas

in the West Bank, at least Area "C". We also cannot remain with the assumption that the Palestinian issue is one of statelessness, as Palestinians in Israel are currently liberated of these questions because they are citizens of Israel. But their citizenship is still under question and is being systematically decreased to the point where it no longer has its core substance.

The Israeli right, and some of the centrists groups too, are urgently pushing forward. We expect that they will try to move forward more and more to achieve their annexation enterprise in either a limited or comprehensive form. These might manifest themselves in four ways: part of the land and the population; all of the land and the population; all of the land without the population; or all of the land with a small part of the population. We must be quicker in drafting an opposing enterprise by considering this as the biggest challenge in the foreseeable future.

## Section Two: Palestine and the Region

### 1. Introduction

During the second half of 2019, the most prominent events in the region were the continued impacts of the Arab Spring and what can be described as its second wave, namely occurring in Lebanon, Iraq, Tunisia, Algeria, and Sudan. On the one hand, this is a welcome development, embodying the will and capability of the people. This also reflects onto Palestine as a people and a cause. There are, however, other sides of this regional fluidity that bring threats to Palestine, such as the brutality that is used against the people and their will, for instance in Syria. Atrocities and destruction are perpetrated against any gathering or area that expresses any opposition to the projects and policies of the region (more about this is written later in the report). Moreover, there is also the excessive force used by the authorities in Iraq against the popular movement there.

This is not all, there are frantic efforts by regional and international actors in the region to destroy this second wave of the Arab Spring and to abort the movement of the people. Before there is any stability, these axes ensure their influence and minimal interests are met. Pressure from these actors ensure that there is no stability, opening more opportunities and extending the period in which to achieve their interests, as is happening in Syria, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, and Lebanon.

It should be noted that the counter-revolutions are not only formed by external powers or their militias, as is the case in some of the aforementioned countries, but also by “national” forces that are only trying to achieve their own interests with the absence of sound political and civilian systems. Also included are ideological groups that do not believe in freedom and democracy. We are just over a hundred years removed from the Sykes–Picot Agreement (1916). We find ourselves in front of the balance of powers that are pushing and pulling one another, whilst also taking us into new arrangements and similar agreements that looks to continue into the future. These same understandings and agreements are used by the forces in power to divide influence, interests, and resources between them, at the expense of the people and their rights.

It is likely that an agreement like this, or a regional understanding of this size, would not avoid Palestine. This demonstrates the importance of the Palestinian presence and their cause in the region. Once again, the efforts are formed by forces that are not including Palestine on their agendas, or in their maps of interests. It could, however, be quite the opposite, with some or one of these forces maybe viewing Palestine only as an instrument to achieving their interests, or as an obstacle to their objectives.

Fluidity in the region is the characteristic of this stage. Fluidity is the instability of political matters, inside states and between them. The absence of stability also results from internal and transnational conflicts that reach a high level of destruction and violence erupting. In this situation, there could be an opportunity for Palestine to have a strong presence once again, but this also carries threats of Palestine disappearing and drowning in that same regional

fluidity. This section of the report aims to explore this in more detail, as well as the threats and opportunities that it brings in the short- and long-term.

Like other research, however, it is directed to what Palestinian power centres must or must not do to ensure their interests and rights, despite delving deep into the details.

## 2. Arab Power Centers Surrounding Palestine and Their Transformations

The fluidity that we mentioned before does not just mean transformations in politics, realities, and balances of powers on the ground in the region. This is also at the strategic level.

The events of the Arab Spring have uncovered a strategy that is based on the faltering Arab power centres surrounding Palestine, or their weakness to the point of incapacitation. This is the faltering of countries, capitals, and groups, such as what happened in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, and Lebanon. All Arab societies have become preoccupied with the escalation and collapses that have afflicted them, in both theory and in practice. These have impacted both states and societies, so that just mentioning Palestine only becomes routine for the purpose of remaining relevant.

These changes have led to the drastic decrease or elimination of the involvement of Arab power centres in the conflict with Israel and in the Palestinian cause, which in turn led to the marginalization of and drastic decrease in the centrality of the Palestinian cause at the

regional level. The Arab nations in the region have contracted in on themselves and they are no longer able to form a national, cohesive, and interactive network on specific objectives, such as Palestine.

*The Arab nations in the region have contracted in on themselves and they are no longer able to form a national, cohesive, and interactive network on specific objectives, such as Palestine.*

The Israeli side has also benefitted from the historical transformations that have occurred. It has reduced the severe strategic burdens that it long carried and has achieved unprecedented strategic superiority. This strategic superiority has

not occurred since the establishment of Israel. They have invested this in removing the requirement to negotiate with the Palestinian side and the agreements that were signed as a result. It has now moved to enacting the annexation of the West Bank, isolating Gaza, and liquidating the rights of Palestinians under Israeli sovereignty (with Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People).

The neutralisation of Egypt from the strategic equation since the beginning of the 1980s with the signing of a peace agreement, the destruction of Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen, and continued exhaustion of the “Arab body”, has given Israel a historical opportunity to undermine the “two-state” enterprise. It has allowed it to move forward and manage the affairs of Palestinians under its own sovereignty, make efforts towards the erasure of the Green Line and to extend different forms of its sovereignty to the entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan River, as well as beginning to talk about annexing the Occupied Territories.

Having stated this, however, there are events in the region that provide the Palestinians with hope and the notion that the Arab region could rise once again, in turn becoming an incubator for another Palestinian rise. These include Tunisia gaining its relative balance (after legislative and presidential elections), and the beginning of another wave of the Arab Spring through popular uprisings in Sudan, Lebanon, and Iraq. With developments like these, it could be tempting to start once again to rebuild with the Arab brothers and sisters, especially those that can overcome the current stage and recover. This could then develop a new understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict during this stage and awareness of Israeli policies.

This has to be done whilst also considering the internal changes that have happened in Israel (see the Section One for further details). With all of this, the strategic situation remains to the benefit of Israel, with the continued bleeding in Damascus, Baghdad, Beirut, Sana'a, and Tripoli, leaving Jordan alone in the face of Israeli manoeuvres and pressure.

### 3. They Were Present and Palestine Was Absent

There have been conflicts and tension in the region that have become prominent at the expense of Palestine, among other strategic regional changes.

The popular revolutions highlighted issues within states and societies, postponing Palestine indefinitely. The transformation of these revolutions into civil wars, proxy wars, and battlegrounds for regional and international powers has removed the issue of Palestine, or weakened it, as a source of momentum that had recharged the region for decades.

In addition to the collapse and conflicts within countries and societies, there are three large issues that have made absent the issue of Palestine, or shown it as a secondary issue. The first is the clash between the Iranian axis and other axes that are active in the region, including the American axis that is allied with Israel, the Saudi Arabian axis, and international powers like Europe. This is in addition to the Turkish axis that is allied with the Muslim Brotherhood movement, which is searching for a role and position for itself within the region. The second is the emergence of ISIS. As soon as it appeared, it was categorized as a regional and international terrorist movement that the whole world would need to mobilize in order to repel it. Its emergence was considered by the West – and by many in the region – as a radical continuation of political Islam that must be surrounded and curbed. The third is the open conflict between regional and international powers over underground resources, such as oil and gas in Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Yemen. This is also the case with the gas in the Eastern Mediterranean and the shipping lanes and ports in the Gulf and Red Sea.

These are three issues that have become prominent in the region, at the expense of Palestine and its people. Not only have these issues arisen on the region's agenda, but have strategic significance too, representing a threat to Palestine.

The Iranian policies in the region, along with the appearance of ISIS and its movement in Iraq and the Levant, has led to a change in the strategic position of Israel in the global and regional contexts.

Israel is considered a natural partner for any international or regional activity that aims to oppose the Iranian project on the one hand and repel ISIS on the other. This situation has brought Israel further and further into regional and international relations as a fully legitimate actor, despite its continuing occupation and crimes.

*This situation has brought Israel further and further into regional and international relations as a fully legitimate actor, despite its continuing occupation and crimes.*

In exchange, some Palestinian groups have seen fit to stand, as an ideological action or in protest, with ISIS or with radical political Islam and the formations that have been created through its operations. This has hindered the development of a Palestinian spirit of struggle, which saw that its horizons were blocked and that it would be considered, in the strategic sense, as being with ISIS and Iran.

Years before this, there was the activity of Al-Qaeda groups, which were considered at the international level to be nihilistic and terrorist groups. Although they had a just cause, Palestinians had to think about decreasing their form of struggle so that they would not be considered a part of the wave of Islamist extremism and terrorism that was occurring throughout the world at the time.

It should be mentioned here that Palestine, and at its centre the National Authority, have been able to separate itself and radical political Islam, as well as the formations it created to threaten the West, despite Israeli efforts to link them together. It was successful in disassociating itself and keeping Palestine separate from these groups, even if at the cost of decreasing Palestinian momentum. This was despite the links, at various levels, between Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip with Iran and its projects in the region.

No matter their nature, conflicts in the region have drained the energy of the people and the elites. This has removed a strategic level for Palestine, one that is embodied in a supporting Arab network. Consequently, Palestine has remained almost alone during this stage.

#### 4. Axes in the Region – Power Centers and Actors

A network of axes in the region is certainly not new. What is new, however, is the change happening to them, their activities and policies. Following up on these developments is vital and, more importantly, the actual policies implemented on the ground to achieve their interests. An axis is usually either made up of a power centre that other parties revolve around, or it is a line between two power centres on which parties are positioned.

It should be noted here that the axes are not just between the states of the region. They constitute numerous iterations, such as regional and international states, or between states and organizations, political movements, or paramilitary groups. For example this latter option would include those axes that include the Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements – which are important for Palestine – and those that include Hezbollah, or paramilitary groups in Syria. In the end, the axes produce balances of power that culminate in events, realities, factors, and

conditions that some parties benefit from and others are harmed by. They are used to achieve certain interests at the expenses of others.

We must start from a working hypothesis that states that it is impossible to predict everything. Instead, we can explore the paths of the axes and their overarching objectives. In any case, strategic thinking requires having the ability to deal with these axes and the political changes that they cause. This is especially crucial when the fluidity of the situation extends to the fluidity in the objectives, aims, and interests of these axes. This does not automatically mean that it is possible to avoid their harms or benefit from their expansion, as they are always directed towards the achievement of their own objectives.

#### 4.1. The Israeli Axis

Due to some of the results of Iranian politics and confrontational activities in the region, is that they have pushed Saudi Arabia and Israel closer together than they otherwise appear. Israeli sources talk about an unannounced alliance between Israel and the Gulf (led by Saudi Arabia) that was meant to confront Iranian policies. Some of the news in Israel discussed Israel being a partner with Saudi Arabia in its war in Yemen. Other news mentioned about advanced Saudi-Israeli projects to strike at Iran or its interests. Despite its depth, this convergence will make the Palestinians easy prey in the region, with regional actors no longer having time for Palestine due to their preoccupation with other serious issues. This includes the wider Iranian project and the need to oppose it on various fronts that it is active, through local proxies or mercenaries that are brought in from the poor areas of its influence, as is happening in Syria or Iraq.

It is true that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, over the decades, has shown a commitment to the Palestinian cause, but the changes in the region are preoccupying it with issues that it believes are more important and of greater significance such as its conflict with the Iranian axis. When we talk about Saudi Arabia, we are mentioning a Saudi-Gulf axis that sees its interests as aligned with Saudi Arabia and is prepared to go with it wherever it goes, including unwritten agreements with Israel. It is true that it is difficult for Saudi Arabia to announce open relations with Israel at any level, but countries that are considered a part of this axis have, as we have seen. At its core, economic, commercial and strategic relations make it difficult to deal with Israel as a state as it is occupying, oppressing, persecuting, and looting more Palestinian Arab lands. Despite the daily manifestations and reality of the Israeli, these kinds of partnerships with Israel only give it freer rein and will not deter it. It has become the habit of the right-wing in Israel, especially the Prime Minister, to boast that Israel is starting relations with moderate Arab states and that peace and economic are close between Israel and Gulf countries.

If this development becomes deeper, this will impact the activities of this axis on the issue of Palestine. We already see it taking a softer position towards the American administration project titled the “Deal of the Century”. This could take the form of openly supporting a settlement as a part of this project and pressurising the Palestinians to accept. It could also lower the ceiling for dealing with Israeli and its policies. For instance, they could consider this to be an internal Israeli issue, not an Arab-Israeli conflict and one of a struggle for a right to

self-determination for a displaced people who have been trying to establish an independent state.

Another risk that might come out of a Saudi-Israeli understating regarding Iran and other strategic matters, is that an explicit or implicit alliance will remove the label of “enemy” designated to Israel in Saudi and non-Saudi policies. This means that, if Saudi Arabia wanted to deal with the conflict, it will not deal with it on the basis of Israel being the occupying enemy, but one that is a partner on one issue and with whom they differ on another. In this case, it is expected that the role of Saudi Arabia will be as a mediator and not as an Arab state completely in support of Palestine. This is what is happening in other Arab areas and is instead of them continuing to stand with Palestine and the Palestinian cause. We must acknowledge that trends such as this one started with the Camp David agreement between Egypt and Israel

in the beginning of the 1980s, and continued with the Oslo Accords with the Palestinians and the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan in the middle of the 1990s.

*... if Saudi Arabia wanted to deal with the conflict, it will not deal with it on the basis of Israel being the occupying enemy, but one that is a partner on one issue and with whom they differ on another.*

From here, the important part that remains in the Israeli enterprise is direct or indirect domination of the largest possible area in the region. This is done quietly, but steadily. It is a project where all possible tools and strategies are used, including military, diplomatic, and economic. We have seen this in the first Camp David agreement, which aimed to neutralize Egypt, then the peace agreement with

Jordan, the contribution to fragmenting Iraq and its military, and the same strategy in Syria. This reflects the core of the Israeli project in the region, in which Palestine represents the first Arab line of confrontation. From here, the relationship of Arabs with Palestine is not one of feelings and sympathy, but of fate and joint strategic interests. Based on this, Palestine was and is the core of the Israeli-Arab conflict and it must remain so.

Israel tries to achieve its enterprise through confrontation against two other axes: the Turkish Axis and Iranian Axis. These axes are in competition and might face off at one level or another, but are careful not to clash with each other face-to-face, or for things to reach the point of “breaking bones”. They might face off through proxies, but agree to achieve their interests in the Arab region without paying the price of a violent clash. Adding to this are the shared strategic interests, such as Iran and Turkey stopping the rise of a Kurdish entity.

#### 4.2. The Turkish Axis

The particular axis revolves around Turkey and its policies in the region. We can say that Qatar and the Muslim Brotherhood in the region, as well as political Islamist groups in Palestine, are part of this axis. At the time of writing, Turkey is preoccupied with imposing stability in the areas that it has conquered in Syria, especially those that it had taken from Kurdish forces after October 2019. The Turkish enterprise in Syria is taking most of its regional political attention. However, there are other matters in the region that Turkey is also focusing on, the most prominent of which is Libya. Turkey is striving to ensure that it has access to natural gas and oil there through preparations to send its military to this state, where the international

UN-recognized government is fighting with General Haftar's forces. Similarly, there is a similar issue in the form of the Israeli-Greek-Cypriot attempt to distance it from access to gas in the Eastern Mediterranean. The combination of these serious challenges and issues have meant that other regional problems on the Turkish agenda have been withdrawn.

As for Palestine, it is important for Erdogan's policies as it serves his project in the region, as it can be invested against Israel and used in political manoeuvres. This is not the final form of the policies of this axis, however, as these could return to the forefront. These include, for example, Muslim Brotherhood movement, especially in Egypt, which has not been stable ever since the elected president, Mohamed Morsi, was overthrown. Ultimately, the situation invites the possibilities for change. The Turkish invasion of northern Syria and the position of its military, however, shows how this axis operates. When confronted with a "higher national interest", this is when the axes are prepared to create deep changes through military action. For instance, trying to stop the establishment of a future Kurdish entity on the border of Kurdish areas in eastern and southern Turkey, or to turn the Syrian refugees in Turkey into human shields in the occupied strip. When it wanted to have a presence in the Gulf, Turkey sent units from its army to be positioned there, based on a request from its ally, Qatar, one of the biggest gas producers in the world. The move was a signal to all parties, especially Saudi Arabia, which leads the axis opposing Qatar and its role. Its mere presence there supports attempted Turkish domination in the region and grants it a visibility.

*As for Palestine, it is important for Erdogan's policies as it serves his project in the region, as it can be invested against Israel and used in political manoeuvres.*

It is important that we examine the relationship of this axis with Israel. Qatar, a partner in this axis, has a stable understanding with official Israel, which seems likely to continue. Namely since Qatar plays mediating role between Israel and the Hamas movement in Gaza. It has unannounced roles in Israel's Gulf policy and economy. Turkey has a tense relationship with Israel, in the sense of statements and exchange of words (as happened with the invasion of areas under Kurdish control in Syria), but continues cooperating economically.

What is happening does not hide a serious and inherent crack deep within this relationship. There is a real collision in their projects, even if we have seen understandings on the tactical level. Turkey is an effective military, economic, and political power, and is working to strengthen and expand its influence. Seeking to control parts of the region that sometimes puts it on a collision course with similar or competing Israeli project. While Turkey believes it has more of a right to a Muslim region that can become a comfortable space for its presence, Israel believes that this is a threat to its interests. For instance, we can see this in the proposed option that Turkey establish a port on the Gaza coast, discussed recently as a part of talks about a long-term de-escalation between Israel and Hamas. At the tactical level, Israel has no problem with Turkey being positioned in northern Syria because that would be an obstacle to Iranian expansion in that area and an authority that subjects a large part of Syria to its rule, based on the interests of the state and its considerations. Turkey's presence in that area weakens Iran's grip on the country.

Additionally, we have seen tension between Turkey and Israel in the eastern Mediterranean basin. Israel has established a strategic relationship with Greece and Cyprus, taking advantage of the historical conflicts between them and Turkey. They have reached agreements to export gas produced by Israel from complexes in the eastern Mediterranean Sea to the two states and to hold joint military exercises between the Israeli military, Greek and Cypriot forces.

As for the relationship with political Islam in Palestine, Turkey forms an axis that these formations revolve around, including the Islamic movement. The Justice and Development Party is a political model for this movement and is, at the same time, a supporter and incubator. An example of this are the positions of these groups regarding the Turkish invasion of northern Syria. These are groups that have supported the efforts of the Syrian people to change the Assad regime, whereas now they have found themselves defending invasion and finding excuses for it. This case shows us the potential dangers of depending on a regional axis and moving further from the “national centre”.

*The situation seems positive and can be invested in for the international mobilization for Palestine. But, there needs to also be caution as this support is serving the Turkish project, not necessarily Palestine's.*

During this period, the Turkish axis is continuing to work on its relations with Israel, even if it appears committed to the Palestinian cause and is prepared to support it in international events/bodies. The situation seems positive and can be invested in for the international mobilization for Palestine. But, there needs to also be caution as this support is serving the Turkish project, not necessarily Palestine's.

#### 4.3. The Iranian Axis

More effective and active than the Turkish axis, the Iranian axis is expanding inside and out of the region, in both its actions and preparedness to collide with powers that object to its projects. In addition to its nuclear project, which is aimed at the region and the international spheres, there is its wider project in the region. The project can be categorised into two parts: one that is focused on particular projects, such as guaranteeing a port for Iran on the Mediterranean Sea; whilst others are more regional and wide-reaching in nature, such as gaining a key position overlooking shipping lanes, especially regarding oil and gas supply lines in the Arabian Gulf and in the southern part of the Red Sea. On both of these levels, this axis is keen to have a military presence and resorts to direct military force, colliding with the peoples of the region whose countries it has entered, including Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen and Gaza.

The totalitarian nature of the regime has created this collision tendency with the outside and is relying on local proxies close to the Shiite sect, as in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and Bahrain. In Bahrain, the Iran axis wanted to escalate the situation, but was repelled by Saudi-Gulf intervention. This movement tries to align its wider interests with its specific ones, investing its achievements in one area to gain success in others. The control of Hezbollah and its weight in Lebanon is used to pressure Israel and strengthen its position in Syria. Its entrenchment in

Syria is being invested to set up a link with its presence in Iraq. All of this is being used to pressure on other frontlines, like those in Yemen, the Gulf, and the Red Sea against the Saudi Axis, and in Gaza against Israel and Egypt.

Encompassing organizations, movements, and minorities in the region, this axis is prepared to increase tensions and clashes on a number of frontlines at the same time, such as in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and Gaza. For Iran, these are limited proxy wars that help to achieve its strategic objectives. It requires its proxies, who are linked to the axis, to be almost completely subject to it. Iran allows them room to manoeuvre in their areas, but not far from its overall plans and the wider scope of its project.

With regards to the issue of Palestine, the Iranian position relies heavily on rhetoric and a low level of practice. They pull both the Islamic Jihad and Hamas towards its project and away from the other Palestinian groups, the Palestinian Authority, and the efforts for Palestinian reconciliation and de-escalation. Within the parameters of the Iranian project, Palestine is mostly used as a trump card and does not stand on its own. It is subject and required to serve the goals of the Iranian project and its purposes. This is where its media rhetoric regarding “the liberation of Jerusalem” emanates from.

*Within the parameters of the Iranian project, Palestine is mostly used as a trump card and does not stand on its own.*

In terms of regional alignment and political rhetoric, it is clear that Iran is benefiting from Israeli aggression and right-wing nationalistic rhetoric, just as Israeli governments are benefitting from the Iranian rhetorical, practical tension and the talk of “eradicating Israel”. It has the status of an external enemy that is used to mobilize the Israeli public with its rhetoric, especially when it threatens to erase Israel off the map.

Regarding Palestine, we must focus on there being a tendency among the Palestinian population to support this kind of rhetoric, which is used in the war of words between Israel and Palestine. What is more dangerous, however, is that Palestinian groups like Hamas and the Islamic Jihad continue to be hostages of this axis and its objectives, which are not in line with Palestine or its national project.

#### 4.4. The Saudi Axis

Unlike Iran, this particular axis is led by Saudi Arabia and is Western-oriented. Through this axis, it aims to increase the Kingdom’s ability and influence, particularly economically and politically. These aims are also intended to confront Iranian policies in order to secure the movement of oil tankers and commercial ships in the Arabian Gulf and the Red Sea. Linked to this point, it aims to protect the oil facilities and their vital components in Gulf countries from current or potential Iranian pressure. Saudi Arabia has always strived, more through diplomacy and money, to develop a network of proxies throughout the region, from Lebanon in the west to Yemen in the south, even reaching Sudan and Egypt. It is clear, however, that this axis is affected by the actions of the three axes mentioned above.

Within the context of the confrontation with the Iranian axis, there are economic interests linked to oil, including the amount produced, the control of its sources, process of trading, and interests linked to Saudi national security. Much like Iran, there are Saudi attempts to mobilize based on a sectarian background through a Sunni axis opposed to the Shiite axis. They are ensuring that there are proxies for this axis, starting from Pakistan in the east to Morocco in the West, through Palestine, Jordan, and Egypt. Iran and their proxies are becoming involved in a tense situation across the Yemeni border with Saudi Arabia, providing a great concern for the Saudi axis, upsetting this axis and trying take on new positions towards Iran around the world. These events also force them to improve its performance and image by its citizens, part of measures that it has taken to accommodate what could be a part of Iranian escalation against Saudi Arabia.

As with other tensions in the region, this escalation is not good for Palestine, only delaying or weakening the prominence of the cause. This is also in light of the increasing Israeli understanding and openness with Arab parties, liberating it (Israel) from the question of Palestine and overall decreasing the pressure.

*... the increasing Israeli understanding and openness with the Arab parties, liberating it from the question of Palestine.*

This axis is characterized by tense and unbalanced reactions in dealing with the challenges imposed by Iran, such as the conflict in Yemen. The situation provides several incentives to the United States during Trump's reign, with the goal of changing their position towards Iran and the nuclear agreement, whilst concurrently achieving this objective alignment. The incentives for the US include a fantastical arms deal and a soft position towards the "Deal of the Century".

#### 4.5. The Egyptian and Jordanian Axis ("The Ring Countries")

Although not an axis, these two states are interacting and have an understanding on many issues relating to the region. This includes Palestine, which they are both linked to in their borders and history. Similar to the rest of the region, Egypt and Jordan are very preoccupied with their internal issues, due to the implications of the collapses and tensions in the region. Egypt has yet to emerge from its own internal tensions, proven by the instability of the regime. Jordan is living under internal economic pressure and external pressure to accept a settlement on Palestine, that of the "Deal of the Century".

In the Palestinian context, Egypt is busy with the besieged Gaza Strip and it is trying to ensure that the Strip does not spread its security, humanitarian, and political problems to it. It, therefore, plays the role of a firefighter whenever there are fires, understanding the Israeli plan that aims to return Gaza to Egypt and/or turn it into an independent entity. On the other hand, Jordan is working as hard as it can to settle the Palestinian issue based on a two-state solution so it can maintain its stability and viability.

The two states could reach the conclusion that it is impossible to support Palestine until it establishes an independent state. Then, they will accept other settlements, as long as these

settlements do not threaten their own interests. Both states are in a position of weakness. The Egyptian regime, under the command of el-Sisi, will remain in need of foreign support – both from the international community and the region – as long as it is not completely stable internally. Due to the Kingdom of Jordan’s need for stability, it could make concessions on the Palestinian front. What should be noted is that the issues for Jordan are more complicated. Based on the current strategic doctrine, Jordan’s stability is linked to a reasonable solution of the Palestinian issue, or at least a solution that the Palestinians are satisfied with.

*Based on the current strategic doctrine, Jordan’s stability is linked to a reasonable solution of the Palestinian issue, or at least a solution that the Palestinians are satisfied with.*

It is worth mentioning that the failure of the two-state solution automatically means going back to the “Jordanian Option”, as a solution to the Palestine issue among the groups in power in Israel and the United States. This could come in the following form: Jordan becomes the homeland of the Palestinians, and that areas in the West Bank are included in Jordan, where it manages them in a Palestinian-Jordanian federation. This is what Jordan has been fearing over the past few years and has expressed, privately and in public, that they are not only uncomfortable at all with the Israeli projects and policies, but that Jordan will not accept them.

## 5. The Variable of Awareness and Rhetoric

During this period, this variable is very influential on the fabric of the region, including Palestine. It is the psychological and mental state of the region which directs positions and beliefs, whilst also designing awareness and political behaviour. By awareness, we mean the beliefs, ideas, or tendencies that were produced by the events in the region that were mentioned above, especially the increasing atrocities that have reached horrifying heights in Syria and Iraq. The other side of these atrocities are the millions of victims that have been killed, injured, displaced, or forced to become refugees. The number of Arabs who have been forcibly displaced from their homes, ethnically cleansed or because of the pressure of wars are around 20 million people in seven years. A large part of Syria has been destroyed, including cities, rural areas, among others infrastructure. This is also the case in other countries where there were popular revolutions that the military or regime responded to. No less influential on the consciousness are the tools and methods that were used in the conflicts and wars, such as the Syrian regime’s use of airplanes, missiles, excessive firepower, chemical weapons, and ethnic cleansing in its war against the opposition. This includes the horror movies produces by ISIS of mass executions that greatly damaged and burned into the collective consciousness images that are difficult to forget. Lastly, this includes the targeting of civilians and the violations of their dignity and humanity, removed from any form of opposition or protest.

Another side to this is the recording of precedents and the track linked to the settlement of conflicts. Regarding Israeli rhetoric, we have clearly seen how this has been impacted by the

scenes of violence created by Arabs against Arabs, Arab regimes against civilians, and by majorities against minorities. Israeli rhetoric has become more violent and criminal when discussing the settlement of the conflict with Palestine. These have included a population transfer and/or by cancelling their citizenships in Israel (the nationality law) or destroying them as is being done in Gaza. This means that the Israeli side might increase their oppression and antagonism as a reaction to the regional context, which to an extent allows this.

Regarding the number of refugees in the region, the situation is such that the Israeli side might be thinking about an idea of adding an additional 3 to 4 million Palestinians to these figures. The question becomes: who will do anything about this when the region is as fluid as it is, and as all of its power centres are busy with their own burdens and pressing issues? It could be said that the region has provided Israel with ideas, justifications, and excuses for the root solutions that it will undertake in Palestine. Israeli entities are thinking about these solutions aloud. The idea of a transfer is no longer just among the Israeli political parties, but has come to the centre. This is especially since the Israeli side feels like it has won the moral, military and rhetoric battles with the viciousness of the Arab side. We must pay attention to the awareness and rhetoric in the region and that it provided Israel with justifications for additional brutality that it might resort to and occupation crimes that will never end.

*... the Israeli side feels like it has won the moral, military and rhetoric battles with the viciousness of the Arab side.*

However, the victory of the second wave of the Arab Spring might influence the rhetoric to the opposite direction than the one mentioned above. If this occurs, it will shine a new beam of hope and confidence in the ability to successfully rise once again, despite the violence and foreign interventions in Arab societies. Among this rise, the status of Palestine could be strengthened, considering that it comes at the core of the Israeli-Arab conflict. As we have stated previously, Israel is expending serious efforts to make the conflict an Israeli-Palestinian conflict and is trying to make the conflict not one over self-determination, but over the right to services and needs.

## 6. Possible Scenarios in the Region

The scenarios that we are going to discuss below are those that are linked to the geo-strategic situation in the region.

### 6.1. Widespread Confrontation Between Israel and Iran

The tension on the frontlines between Iran and Israel could lead to widespread clashes, such as those that are in agreement with Iran. For instance, in Gaza ( Hamas and the Islamic Jihad), in Lebanon ( Hezbollah), or in Syria ( Iranian militias). The crisis of the Iranian axis in Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran itself could push towards this scenario, which Israel is not discounting. It seems like Israel is prepared for this option, especially due to the unprecedented support from the United States and the current Trump administration (recently, it conducted tests of long-range ballistic missiles).

As for Israel's unannounced alliance with Saudi Arabia and its similar interests with the Saudi axis, this could encourage it to enter widespread confrontations in partnership with this axis, the United States, and any other partners.

In the background, there is an announced desire to deliver a strike to Iran. After the changes that have occurred in the highest levels of power in the Kingdom, Saudi Arabia have called for this. To this end, they have used hawkish and offensive policies with regards to Iran. This was due to the pressure exerted by Iran in a number of areas, including Syria, Lebanon, Gaza,

*...the more the confrontations expand and the higher the number of participants, the smaller the issue of Palestine and its geographic area will become.*

Yemen, the Horn of Africa, the Arabian Gulf, and the Bab El Mandeb Strait. Over a relatively wide geographic area, Saudi Arabia can no longer ignore this.

This pressure could expand the size of the clashes within the above locations. Further compounded by the number of entities and how the above harms the

interests of these groups. All of this will remain, as always, subject to the internal policies of the axis. This includes, for example, the presidential elections in the United States and the continuing governing crisis in Israel, among other factors. Nevertheless, the more the confrontations expand and the higher the number of participants, the smaller the issue of Palestine and its geographic area will become.

A scenario like this one, especially if Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in Gaza join, will also cause great damage to the Palestinian cause. It will be postponed at the beginning and then be settled quickly, in accordance with a three-sided axis and its dictates. There is a possibility of the Palestinian cause becoming lost, relegated to a secondary issue in the region or a victim of this three-sided axis.

## 6.2. Success of the Third Wave of the Arab Spring

Here, we mean the success of the people of Lebanon and Iraq, similar to Tunisia and Sudan. The latter of which returning to legislative and presidential elections as part of rebuilding their society, the state, and its institutions with a civilian and democratic spirit (not being sectarian, racial, or based on a group). This spirit is based on an open social contract that has its foundation in justice, freedom, social rights, political pluralism, and supporting vulnerable groups. If it is successful, Arab peoples and other power centres such as Syria will be affected, and they will start going down the same road. These will be propelled forward by the heavy sacrifices that were made and associated pressure this has on people, in order to build a sovereign state for all groups and citizens. As soon as the new Tunisian President, Kais Saied, took over the functions of his position, he announced a clear stance towards Palestine and corrected the position of his country and his people, refusing any form of normalization with Israel. This was an important sign in this hazy regional situation.

*This spirit is based on an open social contract that has its foundation in justice, freedom, social rights, political pluralism, and supporting vulnerable groups.*

If a success such as this is achieved and strengthened in the three countries (Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq), this will mean the Iranian axis will have a limited ability to influence other entities, including Palestine. A reduction in Iranian influence will decrease the pressure on Palestine and allow it to move in the direction of building its collective will and unified national project, once again bringing together Gaza and the West Bank. These will be based on their own power centres and experiences, not on regional projects.

### 6.3. The Scenario of Continued Fluidity

Regional fluidity could continue between the various axes and with pressure from international axes, to the point where the region is not stable. On the other hand, it could stabilize in one matter and be destabilized in another. The state of fluidity is not good or bad for Palestine, but its nature limits the level of influence in one direction or another. Continued fluidity in the direction of increasing waves of violence and destruction, producing further displaced people and refugees, will make Palestine absent. If this situation happens, there will be burning areas of tension that the region and the world will be busy dealing with. There could also be, at the expense of Palestine, continued military confrontations between Hamas and the Islamic Jihad on the one side, with Iranian support, and Israel on the other. Likewise, the Syrian bloodshed could continue and escalate, or in Yemen or Libya. Protracted fluidity means continued bloodshed and exhaustion of energy that could otherwise be used to support Palestine. Lastly, there could be another postponement of Palestine, giving the occupation another opportunity to advance.

## 7. The Region – Jumping Off the Ledge

Events in the region have cast a heavy shadow and had a significant impact on Palestine, as it is less able and less influential. It also lost dimensions of its strategic depth: the supporting Arab power centres. The process of inspiration, hope, and vigour have all been reduced, while outside provision of these has decreased. That is not all, the extreme fluidity in the situation and the power centres' preoccupation with their own affairs turns the region into an open chasm with Palestine standing on the edge, alone to a certain extent.

From this chasm, Palestine can move forward with partnerships in any of the wider scenarios, in a form that is completely different from what was assumed by the Palestinian struggle. This is based on the demand for the right to self-determination within an independent state on the borders before June 1967. The scenarios of open conflict are between larger axis and will undoubtedly impact this. Palestine can advance from the ledge into the chasm. This chasm we mentioned earlier could remain open for a while due to the extreme differences and lack of agreement regarding the mapping of interests in the regions, at least for now. For example, we must remember that the Kurdish issue has been unable to establish a foothold on the ground, despite its absence in the chasm of regional fluidity and even though the Kurds are

*...the extreme fluidity in the situation and the power centres' preoccupation with their own affairs turns the region into an open chasm with Palestine standing on the edge, alone to a certain extent.*

much more in number than the Palestinians. The fluidity can swallow the Palestinian issue. Distributed over different geographic areas, it leaves it unable to form a single body because the regional power centres do not assume responsibility for this, or does not harm them if Palestine remains fragmented.

Here, it is important to be honest with oneself and expose the impact of the events in the region on its current and future state, in order to show opportunities or deadlocks:

### 7.1. What Blocks Prospects

What has happened in the region leads to either surrender or giving in to despair, due to the impact on awareness of, and the rhetoric on, Palestine.

- ❖ The strategic depth of the conflict with Israel has become limited to the point where it has decayed. This is due to the absence of Arab capitals that would pressure Israel, even if they were not in complete agreement with Palestine.
- ❖ Arab power centres no longer consider Israel to be the enemy, and they deal with it as a strategic partner. We are primarily referring to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar.
- ❖ The Turkey and Iran axes opposed to Israel do not care about Palestine, except to the extent that it serves their projects, interests, and security. This is also considering the disparity between the Turkish and Iranian axes.
- ❖ The countries that are committed to the issue of Palestine could find themselves forced to withdraw for their own safety, security, and stability. It would leave Palestine alone, even if these same countries face of pressure from regional or international axes, such as the “Deal of the Century”.
- ❖ Palestine is no longer at the top of the list of priorities for the region, even though this differs from one country to another and is no longer based on the benchmark of positions and policies in the region. There are now those that say it has become a burden compared to the opportunities that had been opened for these power centres by the events in the region.
- ❖ Potential friends in the regional map are there, but are delayed in two forms. They are either on the losing side (until now) and are unable to support Palestine, or they are among the power centres preoccupied with themselves and cannot translate their friendship into practical policies that support and strengthen Palestine.
- ❖ The closure of spaces and freedom of expression for Arab populaces and parties that support Palestine due to the dictatorships involved in the axes above. This includes the absence of democracy and due to the extreme confusion on how to announce their support for Palestine, whose project has become confused after the failure of the Oslo system.

## 7.2. What Opens Prospects

- ❖ The events in the region have once again rekindled the issue of the Palestinian refugees, especially after the bombing of the Yarmouk refugee camp in Syria, which is the capital of Palestinian refugees, as well as a centre for the protection of the right of return in Iraq. This development led to the catastrophe of the destruction of the Yarmouk camp, whilst displacing the refugees residing there for the second or third time. This will invigorate the issue once more, namely in the diaspora and in the new places of asylum in Europe. What happened can also be considered another painful assault on the Palestinian diaspora that weakens it and its role in supporting Palestine. As stated previously, it does provide the momentum regarding the camps and highlights the right of return, keeping it at the forefront.
- ...events in the region have once again rekindled the issue of the Palestinian refugees*
- ❖ The success of the second wave of the popular Arab Spring could put these nations, and the resulting systems, on a new path in support of Palestine and thereby open new horizons against the Israeli side.
  - ❖ The weakness of the axes and their pressure, and Palestine's liberation from the "crushing love" of the Arab neighbours who are now no longer provide that love, could become an opportunity for Palestine to create itself by itself. This is far from any regional ideologies or projects that were in the past a burden and constraint, limiting its movement to support Palestine.
  - ❖ The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has discovered, in the past three years, that it cannot rely on the American Administration under Trump because he does not have a clear doctrine. They also realized that they cannot rely on official Israel either. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been subject to Iranian military pressure from the south in Yemen, and across the sea. This is whilst its oil facilities have been attacked by Iran, or at the behest of Iran, without the United States or Israel doing anything . This will force the Saudis to review their expectations from these two powers.
  - ❖ What is happening in the region has now deepened the growing Palestinian belief that only the Palestinians want to, or can, do work on their behalf. They can rely on a network of allies, friends, and supporters, but the initiative, capability, and action must all be carried out by Palestinians.
  - ❖ The events in the region deepen the Palestinian feeling of a need to build a national project once again in a form that imposes itself on the region, or one that is present in the fluidity of the region without disappearing.
  - ❖ It is important to give special attention to what is being done by the generations of youth Palestinian (the third generation after the Nakba) and the hotspots of activity that are being established in many locations, whether in Palestine or in the diaspora. These activities are creating a new generation with new capacities and forms of

struggle, including in the context of social media, communication, campaigns, and pressure. Each of the forms keep Palestine in people's memories and hearts, in daily behaviours, and most importantly, in the international online sphere.

- ❖ It is important during this stage that Palestine works on networking with Arab nations as a part of preparations for a Palestinian project and to build a new network of allies. This requires investing energy in popular mobilization and capacity building in cities, rural areas, and in the diaspora, as well as networking with popular and civil initiatives in the region more generally.

## Section Three: Palestine and the World

### 1. Introduction

An observer of the international system will feel like the world is “slipping out of its agreements” established after the Second World War. These agreements were part of the lessons learnt from the catastrophes and disasters of that war. Among the signs of this “liberation” is that international forces are prepared to transform their conflicts from the diplomatic to the military level through direct warfare or proxy wars. There are those that say that the source of this is globalization, that weaken states and make the strong more powerful and the vulnerable even weaker. Alongside this is the free capitalist movement, involving stock markets, goods, the destruction of national welfare systems, and the increased movement of humans and labourers in legal and illegal migration.

It also includes the movement of ideas, patterns, and values through the communication revolution. There are some who have considered this a great victory for capitalism over the Soviet-style socialism. A victory that won the Cold War and launched the process of globalization in a new dash that made the whole world (communities, states, and concepts) all subject to the assault of market forces. These forces aim to make a profit from everything, including states, society, politics, and centres of strength and weakness. We will assume that it is US-dominated globalization and all that it means that has undermined human society and highlighted its limitations, which had come to the surface during and after the two World Wars and the phenomena that came with them, including killing, destruction, and crimes against humanity.

After the Second World War, humanity welcomed international efforts within and between states to regulate human, national, and international dealings on a legal basis. Thus, international law and a never-ending series of conventions, treaties, and agreements were established to end the colonization of several countries. This was a development that contributed, in a tangible manner, to bringing about relative stability and control within and between states. These regulated the state as the main unit of international dealings and the world as a large group of states, as well as the complex multi-level relationships that are governed by customs, legal texts, conventions, and agreed upon arrangements.

Humanity worked on drafting texts that maintained the balance of power, organized them, and managed them in an agreed upon manner. For instance, conflicts through the International Tribunal in the Hague or the bodies of the United Nations, such as the Security Council and the committees and delegations, to the International Criminal Court (ICC), whose statutes came into effect a few years ago. This was not all, the conventions and agreements touched upon contentious subjects all over the world, such as environmental issues, greenhouse gas emissions, the impact that it had on the human environment, pollution of the sources of life such as air and water, and threats impacting the environment and its resources.

What is remarkable is that most of the countries of the world (although not all of them) have signed and approved the conventions and agreements concerning the rights of native populations and minorities, as well as the human rights of groups, children, and women, and

on war, conflict, among other areas. This means that the world worked to accept, even if just as an announcement of intentions, the new world order based on conventions and agreements that regulate human interaction towards settlement and intervention in areas of conflict, without causing human losses and catastrophes that human society had long suffered from. While this was the case, we need to consider that these agreements, arrangements, and governing texts remained subject to international balances of powers and their transformations, and were not adhered to completely. Ultimately, there were peoples who remained oppressed, including the Palestinian people. Maybe the establishment of a bipolar international system, including the Cold War and its balances, contributed to decreasing conflicts or in controlling and limiting them when they did erupt.

During the Cold War, this tendency was the basis of international relations, which continued from the end of the Second World War until the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist system at the end of the 1980s. The international system was influenced by the balances of powers mentioned above and continued down that path. Rhetoric around the world was characterized by the language of the conventions and customs that were agreed upon and the “language of the United Nations”, which was produced by the United Nations, its statutes, and its narratives during times of peace, as well as those of war and conflict.

*During this period, the concept of “international legitimacy” and the international politics that emerged were strengthened*

During this period, the concept of “international legitimacy” and the international politics that emerged were strengthened. An “international language” was also used during peace and war. Parties to conflicts and mediators would utilise it. This was a language that bound or specified positions and regulated relationships between states on the broad guidelines of the international system, even if the impact from before and during the war remained clear in international relationships.

The rulings of “international legitimacy” remained a reference for the positions and demands of the oppressed and those affected by imbalances. In this context, we need to mention what was gained by Palestine and its cause, from the period after the end of colonialism and emergence of rhetoric regarding the right to self-determination for nations, until the end of the Cold War. The Palestinian leadership was able, during this time, to manoeuvre and gain support for the Palestinian national project. The strategies of the Palestinian cause was aligned, in its substance and slogans, with causes of the rights of nations, human rights, and the ideologies of liberation movements around the world, as well as in international forms and global ideologies.

The world, however, seems like it is slipping out of this system and these statutes due to deep-rooted transformations at their core:

- Greater clarity on processes of globalization, that involve quick transportation of goods, production lines, and waves of labour and illegal migration, as well as the movement of ideas and standards that represent the influence and dominance of the powerful and hegemonic force. This came at the expense of the concepts of the

welfare state, national sovereignty, “the right to self-determination”, and national policies, including decision-making, implementation, and the acts of war and peace.

- The communication revolution, including mediums and networks that surround the world and link its populations as if it is a “small village”. This revolution has sped up the movement of ideas, pictures, ideologies, and standards between and within human society to a great extent. The virtual world has become a central ground for the awareness of individuals and groups, in term determining their behaviour. The swiftness of visual, written, and audio communication has created a new condition that has enabled groups to have “a presence”, as well as to organize and act. This is a capability that was invested in by states and international economic forces to impact this awareness in the fields of commercial and information consumption, or elections. Furthermore, this includes social communication networks are blocked from certain people, or adding fabricated news to networks in order to pervert the concerns of the people and instead misguide them. Researchers in this field point to the reality that governments, or the hidden “forces” concerned, are better able to impact people’s awareness and direct them. This was stated by linguistic philosophers regarding how the capacity of “authority” creates a reality and is able to design awareness through speech. Networks and modern technological mediums have played an important role in Arab revolutions and the Arab Spring, a role they are still playing today. However, they can concurrently be used in counterrevolutions, as we have seen. No group, struggle, or community can live without these mediums and this open space.
- The expansion of the European Union as an independent economic and monetary unit with immense power, with its own institutions and interests that could align or clash with the policies of central international actors, namely the United States. Independent of the American power centre, the European tendency to develop its own visions became apparent. Recent events should be considered though and have had impacts on political and economic trends. The European Union has been subject to harsh shockwaves recently with the exit of the United Kingdom (Brexit) and the absence of collective politics in light of the differences between the member states. These include the demands for reforms in the European Union’s charter and the absence of collective policies to counter the COVID-19 pandemic.
- China has become prominent as the world’s second largest economy, with record-breaking growth rates during a relatively short period, alongside the Chinese expansion around the world to compete in markets or over sites and resources. This puts it in direct confrontation with the larger economic force, the United States. The latter has begun to take

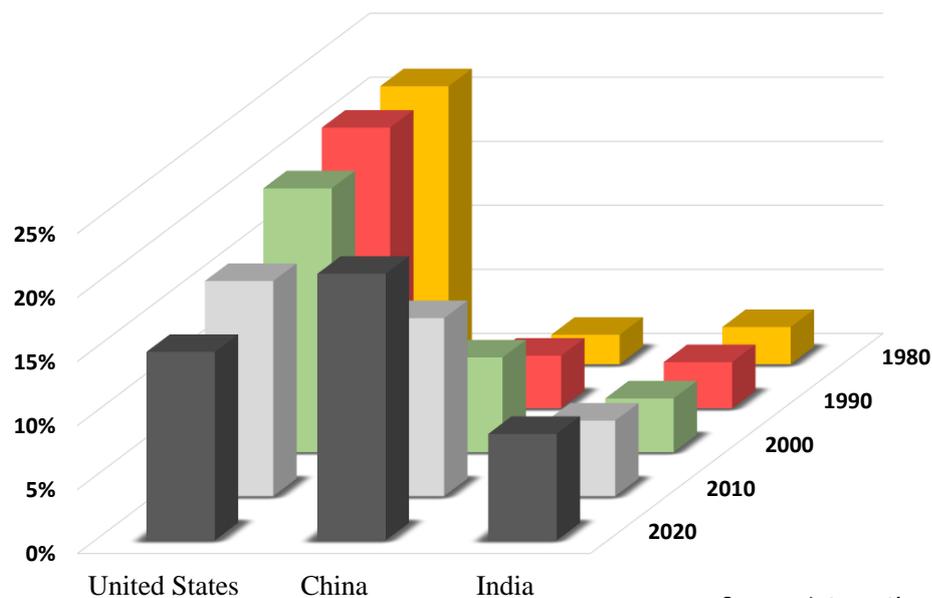
*This came at the expense of the concepts of the welfare state, national sovereignty, “the right to self-determination”, and national policies*

*...the Chinese expansion around the world to compete in markets or over sites and resources. This puts it in direct confrontation with the larger economic force, the United States.*

precautions against the Chinese expansion and growth, as well as the possibility of it becoming the largest economic power in the world. This pushed China to develop and increase its military capacity, mainly in areas deemed vital to their interests.

- India and Brazil becoming some of the largest economies in the world. This development has placed them both in a position of competition to gain support and allies, or for other parties to enter into economic relations and agreements.

### Share of total world GDP (based on PPP)



- The appearance of transnational corporations that are more powerful than states and governments. These entities are active in national economies, but from the outside. They are able to direct these national economies and impact decision-making.
- The weakness of representative democracy and liberalism as systems for dealings and relations, and the appearance of savage capitalism, which does not care about democracy as a right for everyone. It is only limited to the rights and freedoms of capitalism and means of production. This has been expressed by forces in the United States under the Trump presidency, as well as others in different regions around the world. These are forces that have a right-wing tendency in terms of their internal and foreign policies, as is the case in Brazil, India, and Hungary, for example.
- The concept of a welfare state has become limited and it has shrink as part of market forces taking control of the international space and decision-making. There has been a weakening of national economies and they have become subordinate to the interests of market forces, with their capacity and control of the resources of the state being overtaken.

- Trade wars are changing the basis of international trade, especially with regards to taxes and customs imposed on specific goods and in the change in the balance of trade, in the interest of one country and against another. Note the current trade war between the United States on one side and China, the European Union, and Canada on the other.
- The increased fluidity in alliances and axes around the world in competition over interests, resources, and sea lanes. There have been direct and proxy wars waged for this purpose, which hinders international stability, namely in the regions that have natural resources (specifically oil and gas resources) such as in the Middle East.
- The increased emergence of “mercenary armies”, even among the international axes in power, such as the United States, Russia, and Britain, or among regional axes, such as Iran and Turkey. This is where the powerful can fight through the vulnerable. Moreover, this also means the increased privatisation of wars, even if it seems like there are governments and states behind them.

*The increased fluidity in alliances and axes around the world in competition over interests, resources, and sea lanes*

These changes have weakened the international system and what it constitutes. It has led to a theory that we are approaching a new world war, or towards a system based on two conflicting poles, which are the United States and China, as well as a third or fourth party that is less of an axis, like Russia, for example. As a consequence, states and societies must align themselves with one pole or the other. Other theories mention that the global political and economic powers are also greatly benefiting from the absence of stability, which they are involved in. It enables them to win rounds and gain more resources and interests.

There are those that draw attention to the fact that the current situation of competition and conflict has weakened the bodies of the United Nations and the position of the Secretary-General. This position had been considered important and vital in international relations in the past and has, over the past decade, become a ceremonial position. After the end of the Cold War, one of the signs of the transformations in international balances has been the widespread circulation of the idea of expanding the number of permanent members of the Security Council to include countries such as Germany, India, and Japan. These signify the emergence of new power centres and are part of changes to international forces. This idea, however, disappeared from the public discussion over the past few years and shifted to interest in confrontational American, Russian, and Chinese policies, and among some of the regional axes, in conflicts over interests.

The current condition of the Security Council membership and its regulations seems as if it is easier for the opposing parties to conduct their conflicts in such a manner that secures a larger share of their interests. They do this by mobilizing their efforts, resources, and policies at the expense of chronic regional conflicts, such as those in the Middle East.

As part of efforts to achieve their interests, there have been several occasions where they have conducted efforts to fulfil this, at the expense of nations and whole regions, as is currently happening.

## 2. A New World War

As the infrastructure of international politics, free markets have created momentum to break apart the linking networks of international documents, weakening them in each field. Such documents have been referenced earlier in this section. We reiterate the impact of

*It has become clear that the international globalized system is one that is better able to accept sub-state entities and is more accepting of the idea of managing conflicts, not resolving them.*

globalization, as a free global market, with its forces consuming the weak. (The scene reminds us of what was mentioned in the literature on social contracts. The situation before a social contract is the state of nature, without any security or safety, and where the strong eat or exploit the weak). We also cannot forget the dysfunction that affected the map of interests after the Cold War, with influential powers having to try to redraw this map once again through direct or proxy warfare. We use this to see the map of conflicts around the world, impacting more than forty countries since the end of the Cold War. The collapse of the global two superpower system and the emergence of a single superpower world with active groups of regional powers, have been translated into a new division of interests and spheres of influence and power. This was reflected in a series of transformations in several locations in Latin America, southern and eastern Europe, the Middle East, as well as middle and east Asia.

It is true that the weaker components of the globalized system have been most affected by these changes, such as the Arabic world, including Palestine as a people, a cause, and a national project. But, these changes have also led to impacts on central powers such as the United States, Russia, the European Union, China, and India. These have taken unique forms with certain characteristics: (1) limiting power of the idea of liberal democracy in its strongholds; (2) strong return of the extremist international right to the forefront; (3) beginning of the withdrawal from international environmental agreements and adherence to conventions on curbing greenhouse gas emissions; (4) amendments and attacks on international trade agreements, as well as violations by the Trump administration; and (5) eruption of regional wars in conflict impacted countries and the collapse or weakening of a number of states to the point where they only exist in name, such as in Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Venezuela, Yemen, among others.

It has become clear that the international globalized system is one that is better able to accept sub-state entities and is more accepting of the idea of managing conflicts, not resolving them.

This is primarily because the world's power centres have moved into the free market, which have had two additional large powers that have influence on the international stage, China and Russia (formerly the Soviet Union). Allied with political power and decision-making centres, economic power centres have become more capable as they are able to accept

situations of fluidity or areas of creative chaos and can produce social structures that increase their control and further their interests. The following examples have made clear that military forces of powerful influential states are entering areas to ensure their interests are met. These include: invasion of Iraq; France in West/Central Africa; Russia in Syria; America in numerous areas; the Gulf states in Bahrain and Yemen; Turkey in Qatar, Libya, and Syria; and Japan in the Arabian Gulf.

It is true that we have not seen a third world war by the traditional definition. Instead, what we are witnessing are a series of proxy wars on a huge scale on the land of other nations and other different continents. Even if some of these wars have been conducted on the borders of Russia, Turkey, or on the Saudi border, for example. These are wars and conflicts with multiple parties, each aims to either protect their own interests or take control of the interests and resources of others. We are, once again, experiencing worldwide efforts of powers to divide global resources. Reviewing what is happening now in northern Syria and Iraq will help us realize that we are in the middle of a severe conflict over oil and gas resources in this region. The situation is the same if we look at Libya, Yemen, Venezuela or Nigeria. These strategic transformations are having an impact on the level of ideas and events everywhere, including Palestine.

Israel benefits from this climate and ideas that it has produced, including the renewed conflict over interests and a shift towards managing the conflict with the Palestinians, rather than resolving it. This is in conjunction with working alongside right-wing parties around the world to instil Darwinian ideas about the survival of the fittest and that the strong should take everything from the weak, the Palestinians.

No matter the situation after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, we think it is likely that the right-wing neoliberal forces will not easily give up the positions that they have achieved, through which they control decision-making and policies towards a more hard-line direction.

### 3. Seen and Unseen International Actors

Many international actors are known, while others remain unseen. The United States plays a central role in the international arena, changing its political strategies from time-to-time. This includes the White House, administration, huge military, economic force and interests it has around the world. There is a belief that its economic policies are more influential and widespread than its military power, evidenced by the fact that it remains the world's largest economy.

It could, however, find itself in a strategic confrontation with China. An economic and military giant that has become the world's second largest economy, it is superior to the United States in a number of economic components. These are: the high growth rate in China over the past three decades; the trade balance with the United States, which is in China's favour; the vast Chinese investment network in vital facilities around the world; the Chinese government's ability to direct the country's economic policies towards global strategic objectives; and the larger size of the Chinese middle class as a producing and consuming force.

There is confusion surrounding American economic policies that try and confront the Chinese giant. The current American president has made attempts to change the flow of history through decisions by trying to attack Chinese trade and production process in the country. In contrast, China aims to become the world's largest economic power within the coming few years, which gives it further weight in the international political arena.

What makes China unique is its reliance on economic investment in a number of areas around the world, specifically those that have promise, such as the African continent. This is combined with its production specialization in all economic facilities, especially high-tech industries and telecommunication. At the same time, strategic military measures are being taken in the China Sea, such as taking control of empty islands and establishment. These steps are to protect its national surroundings and interests in this area that are both commercially and strategically important.

Despite it being economically weak compared to the other superpowers, Russia is trying to invest its military power to preserve its international status, even if its actions seem to be limited to areas surrounding Russia and its geographic area, extending to the Middle East. Mutual gesturing between Russia and the United States about nuclear weapons systems and the desire to renew them as a part of a limited return to the arms race, is seen as a translation and return to open conflict over interests and resources, unlike regulated conflict.

The European Union is facing other issues, namely the United Kingdom and its exit from the Union. Furthermore, there is an American pressure on other entities within Europe to take the same steps as the United Kingdom (Italy, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, for example), which bothers the decision-making centres in the EU, specifically France and Germany. These

*The European Union has been the main strategic partner for Palestine since the signing of the Oslo Accords, namely with regards to financial and developmental aid.*

two countries are compensating for this by establishing a scheduled timetable for new countries to join the European Union from eastern Europe.

It is important in this context to delve deeper into the European axis and the position of the European Union towards Palestine in the past few decades. The European Union has been the main strategic partner for Palestine since the signing of the Oslo Accords, namely with regards to financial and developmental aid. With some satisfaction, we can also see the relative alignment of many popular, academic, and political groups on numerous levels in European countries towards the Palestinian cause, as well as their support for the activities of the BDS movement.

On the other hand, there is a historical and moral European responsibility towards Palestine, as Europe contributed directly to the Nakba of the Palestinian people through the UK's Balfour Declaration and the persecution of European Jews by Nazis, who perpetrated the Holocaust of the Jewish people. This was then used by the Zionist movement to turn Palestinians and Palestine into the victims of the victims of the Holocaust. This explains the European feelings of guilt, especially in Germany and France, towards Jewish people around the world, as well as their leniency towards Israel's occupation and colonial policies in historical Palestine. It is

also beneficial to investigate the disparity in the interests and positions of the member states of the European Union towards the conflict. This is clearly demonstrated in how the Palestinian file is dealt with. For instance, some smaller countries that are linked by strategic, economic, and ideological interests with Israel, such as Hungary and the Czech Republic, take on the role of stopping any unanimous European agreement on Palestine and support to its people.

*It is also beneficial to investigate the disparity in the interests and positions of the member states of the European Union towards the conflict.*

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are an economic tool used by the countries in power, mainly the United States, to influence the economies of states and pull them into the American sphere, or subject them to the considerations of this sphere. Moreover, they are used to make countries follow the rules of the game that are already determined. These start with countries withdrawing from the national economic cycle in the interest of the private sector, which has been globalized more than any other period in history. Usually, these private sectors are agents for American companies, or are made up of the large American corporations themselves.

There are also transnational corporations in all fields, for instance in high-technology and telecommunication, petroleum and energy, food, and heavy industry. These companies have influence on international politics and decision-making in various countries. As some seem to be more economically powerful than most states, they can change or create realities around the world. Despite not being an international entity, they are heavily involved in policies regarding wars, tensions, control over sources of energy, or changing governments in various countries, as can be seen in election cycles throughout the world. Whether by governments, companies, or economic entities, the amount of interference by foreign powers can be seen in elections around the world to push for a certain party.

Ultimately, influential international powers are fighting amongst themselves, using the whole world as their battleground, whilst attempting to use states, peoples, societies, and their forces to achieve their own interests. This is how the world works and operates. It is within this international system that Palestine finds itself.

#### 4. More Interests and Less International Legitimacy

The renewed international conflicts over resources, interests and geography are by no means new. However, it is being conducted either without laws or in violation of the laws governing conflict that were set forth by the post-WW2 world. The priority of achieving ones interests is at the expense of customs, laws, and conventions, which is clear from the return of savagery, genocide, extermination, and crimes against humanity. It is true that the world was busy completing and agreeing upon the protocols of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the past few years, but international policies relating to conflicts have overcome these ideas and their institutions, including the Security Council and its system.

The United States and other parties have violated the system of the UN Security Council when it undertook military action without Security Council resolution or permission in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. These conflicts were waged not to stop other conflicts or rescue a nation, but to achieve interests and gain resources. At the same time, the United States and the other members of the Security Council refused to intervene in Syria, despite the regime violating all of the articles of the Security Council regarding intervention to rescue civilians from war crimes and crimes against humanity that were committed by the regime and its allies.

*The United States and other parties have violated the system of the UN Security Council when it undertook military action without Security Council resolution or permission*

Similarly, countries that use military power against their own civilians, or against any other countries, seem to be completely free in the use of destructive power, without any limitations or control. This is especially true for internationally banned weapons, such as phosphorous bombs (used by Israel in Gaza), or chemical weapons (used by the Syrian regime against its civilians). We have witnessed in several conflicts acts of siege to try and impose forced hunger and famine, as well as the deliberate bombing of hospitals, shelters, and schools where civilians were hiding. Moreover, it seems like conflicts are completely out of control with actors resorting to using excessive force to achieve absolute destruction of targets, even if civilian in nature, as Russia is doing in Syria.

Further to this, there is also an increasing use of civilians as human shields. This has caused growing concern among human rights organizations and international aid organizations, whose activities have not curbed the violence of states and wars in all the areas in which they operate. Moreover, groups of rights activists and aid supplies have not been allowed access to those in need, including civilians and groups besieged during military operations. All that we have outlined above regarding states is also applicable to non-state fighting formations, as we have witnessed from ISIS and Al-Nusra Front in the Levant, to Boko Haram in West Africa.

## 5. Predicting the Future of the International Scene

The international system today is characterized by conflicts over interests, not agreements on them. It is this system that is unable to reach a settlement on how to resolve and manage conflicts. During this period, it seems as if the influential powers are responsible for this as part of the utilisation of power structures against, and in some instances overstep, international customs, conventions, and laws, as well as “legitimacy” standards, as we have mentioned in this section.

No matter what, the globalized human society is a different society and presupposes a system of principles, customs, balances, and policies that go beyond the world that we have come to know. International consensus seems to be ending and globalized consensus formulating. This is a world that establishes states and entities if it needs them, and destroys states and entities if their interests call for it. It can also keep these states and entities in a middle ground.

They are on the map and a member of the United Nations, yet do not have sovereignty or control their destiny. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic sweeping the world and the protection and prevention measures to counter it, as well as the above, these could be indicators of the “end” of globalization and the start of its “amendment”.

International conventions, treaties, and laws are still in effect and have not been repealed. Although these can be utilised, as well as their systems and decisions, we must admit that they are less binding and effective than they were in the past. It is within this environment that international axes are able to violate and turn their backs on these. The current balances and fluidity could easily abort international resolutions or stop their implementation. One of the methods this could occur is by permanent members of the Security Council enacting their veto right on resolutions. Palestine has experienced the latter on various occasions. Resorting to veto power was easy to block resolutions that would have otherwise given it justice, or end the harm against it and its people.

*International conventions, treaties, and laws... are less binding and effective than they were in the past.*

With all of this in mind, this report stresses the importance of Palestinian adherence to the internationally legitimacy available through the bodies of the United Nations, international conventions, treaties, and laws that are still in effect and are being applied. This is while considering the impact of international transformations and the trends for the foreseeable future. Palestine must read these transformations and know how to manoeuvre in order to avoid being harmed, as well as to achieve political gains for the national project and its main pillars.

### 5.1. Globalized Society Scenario

As we have mentioned previously, the international system is in an extremely fluid state, including conflicts over interests and efforts to seize what they can. Even if they began as local or national conflicts, the ongoing wars are translated into conflicts between international powers or where these powers participate. The international mood does not seem worried about wars, maybe even showing interest in them. More clearly, it is a system that achieves its interests through wars and is one that requires “two actors” to participate to achieve strategic interests, especially economic interests.

To this system, vulnerable groups are not important. It is possible to deal with them in two opposite ways: these groups are neglected and their interests overlooked, passing over its corpses, such as what happened in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Somalia; or the interests of these vulnerable groups not being resisted, as long as they do not conflict with the international system and its balances in the region, such as in the Middle East. It seems, from the events of the past decade, that the international system is not serious enough to find a just solution for Palestine and does not have the political will to do so.

## 5.2. Continuing Larger Conflicts and Postponing Smaller Ones Scenario

This scenario examines a situation where the conflicts of large international powers over strategic interests continues, such as oil or gas in the Middle East, shipping and commercial lanes, strategic locations or military bases. They are to be conducted either through direct warfare and clash of policies, or through proxy wars through mercenary armies, private armies, or weak local forces. In this situation, smaller conflicts will be postponed or taken over, especially if they expand to include larger areas and lead to wider and more comprehensive wars.

For example, if the United States intends to confront Iran through an alliance with Israel and effective cooperation with Arab states in the Middle East, this will lead to the postponement of the issue of Palestine indefinitely or shall morph the issue into this larger conflict, which is vaster in geography and time.

## 5.3. International Agreements Scenario

In Syria, international and regional powers have temporarily reached understandings over interests and their division, and violence there has started to decrease. The scope of these could expand to other places. The associated agreements would include unjust treatment of the rights of peoples and societies, as has happened in Syria in the past few years, and would be at the expense of smaller actors. The more international actors can be convinced of the central position of the Palestinian issue, the more it can be included in the agreements, whilst ensuring that it is on the basis of respecting the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people. We say this whilst acknowledging the importance of being careful with these agreements, ensuring that they do not overstep Palestine and its people. The “Deal of the Century” shows that a deal such as this considers Palestine to be a “commercial transaction” more than a cause of a people and a right to self-determination.

## 5.4. Continued Fluidity Without Escalation Scenario

This scenario envisages the continuation of confrontations at a high level and conflicts throughout the world. This means the absence of any form of agreements, not at a bilateral level or UN bodies or agencies. The aforementioned fluidity closes the door to internationalisation of this process at the moment, or limits how open they are to Palestine. They could, however, become more open in the long-term after the parties to the conflict are convinced that there needs to be a third party, that of the United Nations or the Security Council, to help settle conflicts, including Palestine.

## 5.5. The Presence and Absence Scenario

Globalized society creates two conflicting processes at the international level, where international actors are present or disappear. In the first, we are referring to the growth of large bodies, like a union of a number of countries (such as the European Union), the large international axis and their membership, or the establishment of international or regional

alliances that have strong structures, organization, and relations. The second is the fragmentation of states and their disappearance, with their sovereignty decaying and their areas turned into ones of influence and wars for international powers. Sub-state power centres emerge in these situations and play their roles in a globalized society. These are in two forms, either aimed at building larger or smaller entities. They carry out specific tasks in globalized society or ensure the international balances of power that are currently in place. Palestine has a place among both processes, where it can see itself as a part of a larger entity that includes Jordan or is a federal entity with Israel. Furthermore, it can also view itself as smaller than a state, playing its role as a part of the globalized system and its regional reflection.

### 5.6. A Sober World Scenario

It is true that the conflicts and wars in recent decades have brought wealth, riches, and power to international powers. At the same time, however, they have sown destruction and killing in many areas. Due to their accumulated impact on nations, they could lead to an increase number of struggles by affected nations within powerful axes, or those that are weak, in order to stop the escalation and go back to the limitation of conflicts. To achieve this, United Nations or international mechanisms should be strengthened in order to regulate these conflicts and move towards a system that could limit conflicts and resolve tensions in hotspots. It is known that the process of intervention to stop conflicts is started by the forces whose interests or gains were harmed. We need to pay attention to international powers, governments, peoples, and non-government organizations that aim to strengthen these above-mentioned mechanisms and develop them as an alternative.

We can consider the European Union as an important entity that expresses, from time to time, this tendency and exercises international policies in this direction. However, the international non-governmental organizations that are concerned with this matter, and have a global presence, are the ones more responsible for these thoughts and ideas. They are persistent and serious in their efforts, despite their power being limited during this period. Due to their efforts on accountability, they are able to hold states, governments and the world to account. This scenario, in the long-term, needs to be taken into consideration and prepared for. Palestine could very well be one of the main issues of this system, due to its historical significance and the religious symbolism that it carries for the monotheistic religions. Within these systems and associated rhetoric, it is important for Palestine to compete for its position, especially since it is presenting – based on the efforts of the PSG – itself once again as a challenge and a national project.

## 6. “Strange Palestine”

Palestine seems small and strange in a globalized international system whose current main characteristic is one of conflicts over interests, resources, and a lack of systems to curb conflicts through international conventions and laws. It seems like a repeated victim of such a world, where Israel is not held accountable for its continued and daily crimes against the

Palestinian people. This is the same world where some countries are prepared to arrest generals or army officers who have participated in crimes of occupation, if their feet touch their soil. This is an encouraging step as it is a victory for the victims of occupation, but it does not provide redress for Palestine as a national project.

*Palestine must decide and enter the language of the international system and its game.*

Having bet in the past on the balances of international and regional powers, Palestine will find itself once again forced to continue dealing with a world and a system with these characteristics and nature. It will remain strange when it comes to the doors of governments to demand for its historical right because this world is one that looks for

settlements, not justice, even in a relative and limited sense. It will find itself strange while discussing justice and redress, while others are talking about practical settlements for its cause. This settlement will not solve the problems of Palestinians under occupation, but could solve those issues international parties have with one another. Palestine must decide and enter the language of the international system and its game.

Looking for a foothold in a changing world is a strange thing, especially in one that does not have any regard for states or nations unless they serve its interests, or if these people prove, through a bitter and difficult struggle amid great sacrifices, that they are worth the attention.

## 7. The United Nations – The Focal Point

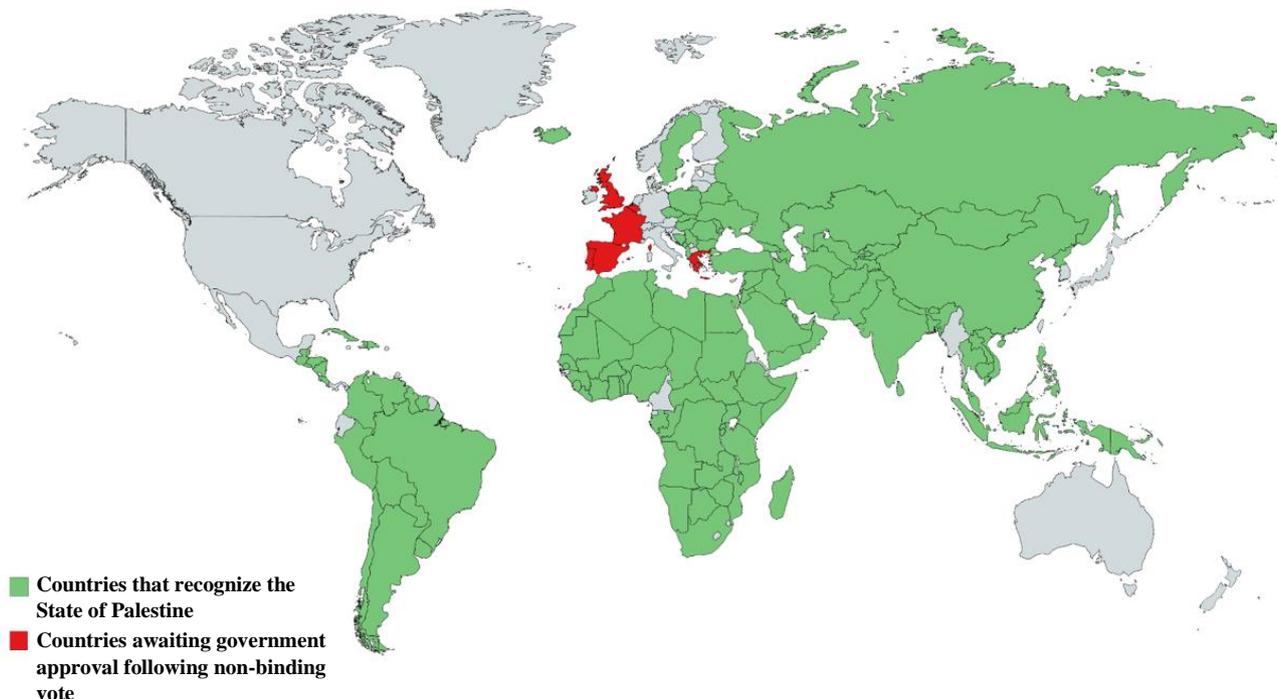
The process of Palestine's affiliation with the United Nations started many years ago and has achieved some gains. The Palestinian Authority is trying to escalate these processes as a form of local pressure on the Israeli side, while Israel aims to cut these efforts off or stop any progress. On several occasions, Israel has expressed its grave concern about this, considering it a strategic threat. This position needs to be understood by the Palestinian side and must be an incentive to continue this work until the end.

For example, Palestine must increase the number of states that recognise Palestine, especially the central nations. This is important, but increasingly so due to serious Israeli work to mobilize support for political objection that could be translated into parliamentary decisions in Europe that consider criticizing Israeli's policies and supporting a boycott against it as being anti-Semitic. Israel has succeeded in doing this in the German and French parliaments, with an aim to replicating this success in other European countries.

*Palestine must increase the number of states that recognise Palestine, especially the central nations*

The texts of the United Nations, as well as international documents, conventions, and laws are still a partner in creating the global language of diplomatic or UN channels. The United Nations, through its bodies and networks, is still responsible for issues of states and nations in various fields. It is vital to become a member of this network and not just as topics to investigate or write reports on. Palestine cannot remain outside the world or operate without it. Therefore, it must join it because there is no other

world that it can rely on. Even if the United Nations was full of policies and considerations that are not in line with an international body, there is a need for political manoeuvring if Palestine wants to have a presence in a changing world. This world of conflicts creates opportunities for Palestine to progress, even if it blocks it at others.



Joining the General Assembly of the United Nations as an observing member is a good start and must be completed at every stage so that Palestine can become a full member. Strategically, Palestine cannot operate without the world and its institutions or be absent from it, even if just in protocol. The weakness of the United Nations during this stage does not mean that it could not be strengthened in the future, even if two or three decades from now. This means that the status of the United Nations, which has been limited due to globalization, conflicts and countries not adhering to international agreements, could witness a return to the forefront in the future. These needs to be part of the completion of the process to turn the United Nations, and all its parts, into a supporting pillar for a renewed Palestinian project. It is a space to build relations of confidence, partnership, and coordination with states and governments that are still concerned with the Palestinian issue. Also, it is a global space to have a presence and attempt to win “wars” that are undertaken by Palestine, not just in confronting the Israeli side, but in confronting the world in a political, rhetorical, and moral war.

The expansion into the United Nations could compensate Palestine, during this period especially, for the receding regional and international concern with it and prepare for the coming period in which the Palestinian project will be launched once again.

Palestine has nowhere else to go and must rely on “international legitimacy”, even if it has limited guarantees during this period. As a political, legal, and moral reference for Palestine, it is in the interests of Palestine to return to this rhetoric and build upon it. Even if some things are looked into again, it is better that it is done on the basis of international legitimacy, represented by a series of international resolutions that support Palestinian rights. This started with the partition decision in 1947, through to the decision of the smallest UN committee relating to the rights of Palestinians under occupation. Palestinian policies that rely on “international legitimacy” will inevitably have more support in international and popular spheres, as well as from civil society, international rights organizations and among populations around the world. These are the organisations and populations that still believe in the importance of talking about international legitimacy and its rehabilitation, especially so that it can deal with the transformations of globalization and the phenomena and political ideas it led to.

*Palestine has nowhere else to go and must rely on “international legitimacy”, even if it has limited guarantees during this period.*

Palestine has long bet on the United States to be a primary actor in the implementation of rulings of international legitimacy and sponsor the negotiations process with Israel. This can be seen now, more than any period before, as having done nothing except harm to the Palestinians, or in the best-case scenario, not brought them closer to their goal. In the end, not only did not bring a state for the Palestinians, but it actually hindered

## A BRIEF TIMELINE OF PALESTINE AT THE UNITED NATIONS

- 14 OCTOBER 1974**  
The **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)** was recognized by the UN General Assembly as **the representative of the Palestinian people** and granted the right to participate in the deliberations of the General Assembly on the question of Palestine in plenary meetings.
- 22 NOVEMBER 1974**  
The PLO was granted **non-state observer status**, allowing the PLO to participate in all Assembly sessions, as well as in other UN platforms
- 23 SEPTEMBER 2011**  
President Mahmoud Abbas on behalf of the PLO **submitted an application for membership** of Palestine in the United Nations
- 15 DECEMBER 1988**  
UN General Assembly **Resolution 43/177** "acknowledged" the Palestinian Declaration of Independence of November 1988 and replaced the designation "Palestine Liberation Organization" by **the designation "Palestine"** in the United Nations system.
- 29 NOVEMBER 2012**  
The General Assembly granted Palestine **non-member observer state status** in United Nations General Assembly **Resolution 67/19**.
- 17 DECEMBER 2012**  
UN Chief of Protocol Yecheol Yoon decided that "the designation of **'State of Palestine'** shall be used by the Secretariat in all official United Nations documents".
- 26 SEPTEMBER 2013**  
President Mahmoud Abbas was given the right to sit in the United Nations General Assembly's beige chair which is reserved for **heads of state** waiting to take the podium and address the General Assembly.
- 15 JANUARY 2019**  
President Mahmoud Abbas says he plans to reactivate an **application** for Palestine to have **full membership** at the United Nations
- 10 FEBRUARY 2020**  
President Mahmoud Abbas **shelves plan for UN vote** on Trump's Middle East plan, instead using his speaking slot to rail against the US administration



it. As for the Trump administration, it has seen fit to shake-off diplomatic language and to side completely with the Israelis. It has invested in the international environment that we mentioned above to move their embassy to Jerusalem, remove the illegal label from the colonial settlements, try to break apart the UNRWA, and adopt a more Zionist rhetoric. With this, it has given up the role of sponsor and mediator. This is a matter that Palestine must invest in strongly and challenge through international legitimacy, including it as part of the responsibility for the conflict. The American administration now does not seem to be the “saviour” for other Arab allies, such as Saudi Arabia. This has created a comfortable environment for Palestine to manoeuvre and strongly present its position.

Another important matter is the return to internationalizing the conflict with the Israeli side. This means appealing to international legitimacy, its institutions, and its parties, returning to diplomatic channels to weaken the others, including the American one. International actors, alone or together, are the choice for Palestine during this stage because they represent international legitimacy and its rulings.

While we are moving towards this, we should keep in mind the Israeli-American project, which aims to liquidate the issue of Palestinian refugees. This is still a strong source of pressure during international forums on Palestine, namely with the international resolutions supporting their return and the rights of refugees. This is a project that began years before Trump started his tenure in the White House. At its core is the removal of this file from discussion through a number of steps, including: drying out the sources of funding of the UNRWA; Israeli-American attempts to change the UNRWA definition of “Palestinian refugee” so that the legal classification is not passed down to the children of refugees in 1948 and their grandchildren in order to decrease the number of refugees and decrease their rights; and trying to liquidate the UNRWA by trying to merge it with the UNHCR.

These are steps that aim, like we have stated, to liquidate the issue of the refugees and the right of return. As for the long-term objective, it is changing the future demographic situation in Palestine and decreasing the cost of compensating Palestinians – part of a coming settlement – to the lowest possible level. It is very important that this issue is at the heart of any international attempts or efforts and that it is present during the renewal of Palestinian efforts in international forums to give Palestinians their rights in all of their forms, including on the issue of refugees. This is due to the importance of this aspect in any collective national Palestinian project in the foreseeable future.

This requires that we use the United Nations and international legitimacy resolutions, based on international law, as the foundation to defend this cause.

*...we should keep in mind the Israeli-American project, which aims to liquidate the issue of Palestinian refugees. This is still a strong source of pressure during international forums on Palestine, namely with the international resolutions supporting their return and the rights of refugees.*

## 8. International Civil Society – Actual or Potential Champion

In the scope of the current international system, we must not ignore civil society around the world, which indicates, from time to time, that it has not forgotten the issue of Palestine. For instance, it boycotts Israel and the products of its colonial settlements, or does not deal with Israeli entities. The relatively short BDS experience has proven that Palestine remains a political and moral issue among a wide swath of civil groups in Europe and South America, which are influential areas in global public opinion and where the Israeli side is active. The preparedness of cultural, academic, and political groups (in parliaments, political parties, or belief systems) to support the right of Palestinians or oppose Israeli occupation as illegitimate and immoral has become clear. These groups must be viewed as potential and real friends and need to be worked with, continued in the spirit of a renewed national project that is viable in its objectives and methods. This means that it includes a moral aspect, not just political.

These types of forces can conduct activities around the world and in international politics, as well as in their own countries, with their governments and own societies. We should understand that they act, and are based on, the principles of international laws and its ruling on the right of nations and opposing occupation, oppression and crimes against civilians, not just because of their love for Palestine and its people. This means that they are initiative partners who are motivated by values and principles, and their positions can be built upon in the long-term.

## 9. A Palestinian Project and an Israeli Opposition Project

Palestine must see the reality that the primary Israeli effort in the international arena revolves around limiting the Palestinian narrative and denying it, as the Zionist movement did on the eve of the establishment of Israel. The absence of a narrative also means the absence or disappearance of the people of this narrative. Israel is doing this through intensive work on three axes, and they are:

- a) Emphasizing the Zionist narrative of the conflict over the land, which is emphasizing the “right” of Israel to exist, including its settlements in the occupied territories and its right to continue besieging Gaza and the Palestinian people residing there, as well as its occupation of Palestine. From there, the rhetoric considers the settlers to be the native inhabitants and that the Palestinians are the ones threatening their rights and their existence. Inside Israel, ideological Zionist groups have established a network of “human rights organizations” for settlers as an alternative to those established in Israel. They have granted them the right to represent cases in court, appeal cases, and collect funding. These are organizations that are active in Israel, and around the world, that aim to flip the reality and make the “settlers” the group that is defending itself against the Palestinians.
- b) Undermining the Palestinian narrative on the conflict and conducting a war against the idea of boycotting Israel or products that were produced in the Israeli colonial

settlements in the West Bank. This is done through lobbying and paying tens of millions of dollars a year for this purpose, especially in Europe (including the European Parliament). The American administration is aiming to take control of more than a third of the European Parliament to ensure the failure of any attempts to make decisions against Israeli policies in and for the settlements. The goal is to ensure the absence of the Palestinian narrative from the media and reality, whenever possible. This starts with a war against Jewish organizations that are opposed to the occupation, then oppress the Palestinian narrative, or the narrative supporting the Palestinians, and ends up with a war against Palestine and its presence in international bodies. After that, there are efforts on multiple levels by Israel and the United States to remove the issue of refugees and make it one of humanitarian relief, not part of a cause of a people demanding their right to self-determination.

- c) Linking Palestine to international terrorism and anti-Semitism. This is a global Israeli activity that aims to remove the legitimacy of Palestinians and criminalize Palestinian efforts abroad by forcibly linking them to international terrorism and anti-Semitism in Europe and other areas around the world. The political and military Islamist forces in Gaza make this task easier for Israel. Israel is always trying to compare these groups to ISIS and radical groups that use violence in the name of Islam, or Israel links these organizations to the official Iranian rhetoric, which brags about its ability to “wipe Israel off the face of the Earth.” It should be noted here that the Palestinian National Authority has reached important achievements in ensuring the failure of these Israeli attempts by using policies that consider these factors. At the same level, Israel is attempting to create a link between the concept of anti-Semitism and all international or popular political activities opposed to Israel’s policies or its colonial occupation. It has been successful in influencing the German and French parliaments, for example, in making decisions that consider boycotting Israel and encouraging the boycott of Israel as anti-Semitic practices punishable under German law. Israel is working to do the same in France and other countries.

In light of these renewed Israeli efforts to liquidate the Palestinian narrative, cause, and its files, such as the refugees, Palestine must manage the international track cautiously, with an understanding of its importance and the Israeli project attempting to block these efforts.

## 10. What Can Be Done Now – Possible Directions

Strategic thinking at all levels – by which we mean within Palestine, between Palestine and Israel, between Palestine and the region, and between Palestine and the world – has shown the importance of rebuilding the starting point for the Palestinians to have the ability to effectively deal with the contexts and influential systems surrounding Palestine, as well as the transformations happening to them and how they are reflected on it.

Our estimates are that we, as Palestinians, have started to understand the situation that we are now in, especially after witnessing Israeli policies that aim to liquidate all negotiated solutions and move forward with unilateral solutions. For example, pushing forward the

settler-colonial enterprise to its peak and partial or total annexation of the West Bank. Among the indicators of the increasing awareness among the Palestinian people are the return marches in Gaza and the growing status of the BDS movement and its activities around the world, as well as the growing rhetoric among Palestinians in Israel and some of their protests, namely in Haifa. These protests do not talk about solidarity, but a shared fate (“Haifa Meets Gaza”). Further to this are the reflections of the repaired relationship, even if based on fantasy or in conscience, between the various groups of Palestinian people in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.

*The comparison of Israel with apartheid South Africa in the context of the Palestinian struggle has become popular and is no longer a secondary idea*

We can also see this awareness reflected in the writings and opinions of Palestinians, including decision-makers and the public, on social media and other platforms. The comparison of Israel with apartheid South Africa in the context of the Palestinian

struggle has become popular and is no longer a secondary idea, especially with the scenes of Israeli brutality when suppressing the return marches and mass movements in the Gaza ghetto. There have been responses from all over the world, including South Africa which withdrew its ambassador from Tel Aviv. This is act of great symbolism for the Palestinian struggle and opposition to Israeli policies, coming from a country that came out of the experience and horrors of apartheid. Another indicator is the continuing campaign to boycott Israel, among artists and cultural icons, in response to the activities of the BDS movement.

Strengthening popular resistance among the Palestinians is necessary for all potential desired and disliked scenarios. There is a general estimation by the Palestine Strategy Group (PSG) that a resistance like this – by which we mean the resistance seen during the First Intifada, one that is popular, organized in the streets, and where all Palestinians from all segments participate in all areas of Palestine – could form an effective strategy that partially neutralizes Israel’s strategic military superiority on the ground.

*Strengthening popular resistance among the Palestinians is necessary for all potential desired and disliked scenarios.*

We need to keep in mind that official Israel understands the weight of this resistance and recognizes its effectiveness, which is why it has defined it as a terrorist act. It has called it “popular terrorism”, which is a term that Israel has used to label any type of activity in the struggle carried out by Palestinians under the occupation. This means that popular resistance is the same as the diplomatic option in the United Nations, and that it can become an influential factor for the future of Palestine.

Before talking about what must be done as Palestinians, we should think deeply about the transformations happening on the Israeli side, especially those that have strengthened its abilities or reflect them:

- a) Increasing Israeli awareness of their superiority over the Palestinian side and the neighbouring Arab countries, in the context of the historical conflict that has existed for over a hundred years. It is accompanied by a collective feeling that there is a

historic opportunity that emerges from the huge disparity between Israel and the “Palestinian weakness”, between the successful consolidation of Israel as a reflection of the Zionist project in Palestine, and Arab weakness and decline of the Arab nationalism movement, including in Palestine. This is seen as an opportunity to end the conflict on the ground by annexing the West Bank and stopping the implementation of the Palestinian project, which is supported by the Arab states and internationally, and encompasses the division of land and establishment of two sovereign entities, Israel and Palestine.

- b) Israel joining a group of countries that produce natural gas and its emergence as an exporter after this resource was recently discovered in huge reserves. It has an agreement whereby it plans and aims to export to Jordan and Egypt, and with Greece and Cyprus, in the future. This development increases Israel’s ability at three levels. The first of which is the direct economic sphere through the increase of Israeli revenues and the strengthening of the Israeli economy. The second level is by using gas to link other economies to Israel’s economy, making it able to influence, at least, the economies and decision-making of these countries. And finally, the third is that this factor creates new dimensions for Israel, its international presence and relations with other states, improving positions towards Israel and its policies.
- c) Despite the occupation, policies of power and oppression used against the Palestinians – or maybe because of it – Israel has turned into a “model” of dealing with “terrorism” and a leader for the racist international right-wing, which flocks around it and supports it. Israel, and the international Zionist movement, rely on new policies to take advantage of the rising anti-Semitism in Europe and North America to carry out widescale attacks against those that criticize Israel’s policies and anyone who opposes Zionism and its policies. This puts it in a position, once again, in the European arena, and to some extent in Latin America, as a state that is “defending itself and its citizens in the face of those that want to eradicate it”. In this, Israel benefits from the missile attacks against civilian targets around Gaza, the Iranian rhetoric that Iran is going to eradicate Israel and from the existence of “global terrorism”, aligning itself with alliances working to combat it..

In light of these transformations and others, the writers of this report see the importance of the Palestinian leadership taking practical steps at numerous levels, whilst taking into account the realities mentioned above. For example, the war of words, on the ground, at the organizational level, and at the level of rebuilding the national project. Recommendations have been listed below:

- Theorizing the conflict once again along settler-colonial lines under which Israel is viewed as continuing its colonial policies, practices, and achievements. Moreover, it has also withdrawn from the negotiations and settlement process, and aims to end the implementation of any solution based on international legitimacy and its resolutions, avoiding its procedures. At the same time, the Palestinians are holding on to their narrative and their constants, being flexible in their positions towards solutions and relying on international legitimacy. In the field, there are some who call

for a return to the starting point of the partition decision and international resolutions relating to the conflict and refugees, fixing the demands for a two-state solution, especially since this solution still has international and Arab support and is discussed by Palestinian elites. Those with this opinion reiterate that changing the current power structure in the interest of Palestinians on Palestinian land will force the Israeli side to return to this option. Alongside this, there is another trend that is being discussed by Palestinians. It is on the importance of presenting new challenges to the Israeli side and the world, presenting the binational state solution in historical Palestine, with the associated changes that this would mean to the Palestinian project. Some go even further than this by presenting the option of a historical reconciliation in Palestine, describing it as a wider scope for providing national rights.

- Ending the political and geographic Palestinian division between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as this separation, in its form and substance, feeds into the apartheid system and voluntarily goes along with it, its procedures, and measures. This division is in the interest of the apartheid system and of those enterprises attempting to transfer the Palestinian issue to Sinai or to Jordan. Ending this requires everyone to go back to the creation of a single will that aims to achieve a single project, which is liberation, return, and equality.
- Rebuilding the organizational foundation of the Palestinian project from scratch with a democratic and participatory spirit, reaching all the conglomerations of the Palestinian people to take into account their issues and opinions. While this is being done, it is necessary that the national authorities take initiative and develop procedures that deepen the democratic spirit and popular participation in decision-making and in struggle. During the coming period, it also needs to increase coordination with Palestinians in Israel and their leaders, considering that we are all in opposition to the same Israeli apartheid project, even if it might operate differently from Palestinians in the West Bank to those in Israel.
- Rebuilding integrated political and economic relationships between all of the Palestinian people through the investment of each group's strengths, especially among Palestinian communities around the world, and supporting these forces in establishing Palestinians once again, in light of the regional and international fluidity. The presence of these communities can be used to rebuild relations with the countries that they are living in, or with their popular and civil groups, especially in Africa and Latin America – two continents where most of the countries were an important source of support for Palestine and its cause.
- Investing the relationship between Palestine, the cradle of Christianity, and its historical landmarks to link with popular and church groups in states that have a traditional relationship with the church and have been drawn to the new Palestinian narrative.
- Starting to internationalize the issue of Palestinian rights through capitalizing on the fact that the state of Palestine has become an observing member of various United

Nations bodies. This issue should be used in a well thought out manner by confirming the lack of legitimacy of the colonial settlements in Palestine, for instance. The sphere of the United Nations is a fertile ground that is diplomatically based on international legitimacy, even if this legitimacy is subject to the balances of international powers and policies that have hindered or misguided it. It is important to activate the role of international bodies to confront the current Israeli policies, as happened with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague recently. The ICC Prosecutor responded to the Palestinian request and approved opening investigations into Israeli violent crimes against the population in the Gaza Strip. This issue mobilized official Israel and sent it into a state of defence and justification, and at least temporarily deterred Israel from imposing the transfer of Palestinian families in Khan al-Ahmar near Jerusalem.

- Normalizing the relationship between efforts to impose various forms of boycott against Israel and between Palestinian leaders in the current national institutions and civil society organizations. Concurrently being completely prepared to pay the price that Israel might try to impose in exchange for these efforts by Palestinians.
- Directing all of the efforts and capability of the Palestinian people and their institutions towards uncovering the racist and settler-colonialist enterprise of Israel, as well as their annexation attempts, apartheid tools, displacement of people and cases of these displaced persons, as well as the nullification of their historical and citizenship rights. This is where the importance of correcting the Palestinian narrative, through the Palestinian and allied worldwide media (especially Arab), comes in. This is considering that this is a new stage of the conflict that Israel has started and one that the Palestinians are responding to.
- Directing special efforts now towards Europe, as Israel has been able to persuade two central parliaments in it – the German and French parliaments – to make a decision that corresponds anti-Zionists and the critics of Israeli policies, including the supporters of the economic and cultural boycott of Israel, to anti-Semitism. This requires that Palestine expend special efforts to curb this Israeli “achievement” by stressing the right of Palestine and its supporters to liberation and struggle, in different internationally legitimate forms, against the continued oppressive and colonial Israeli policies and the deprivation of the rights of Palestinians, especially the right to self-determination.
- Creating the Palestinian narrative once again on the basis of international legitimacy and moral discourse that does not compromise the freedoms and rights of nations, groups, and just causes that are completely in line with international law and the texts, documents, and conventions that humanity has produced to maintain peace and justice. This strategy, in its second aspect, means taking a stance against oppression, the absence of justice, and the violation of rights and freedoms anywhere in the world.

## Conclusion

We reiterate, in this conclusion, that our Palestinian nation still has the chance to achieve national independence and embody the right to self-determination. It also aims, through an accumulated process on the ground and in foreign policy, to curb Israel's colonial expansion and instead impose Palestinian presence and sovereignty using innovative means. We do not ignore that a choice such as this requires building a political system, and formal, national, and popular Palestinian institutions in order to come out of the deadlock of the negotiations process and its requirements that have sustained the colonial status quo. These national institutions are compatible with and will enable the process of imposing Palestinian independence and national rights.

This choice comes from a belief and confidence in the ability of the Palestinian people, in the foreseeable future (seen as a decade) to build their popular support base, organizations, and bodies. This is in addition to building the capacity of current institutions that administer the affairs and deal with the needs of the people for this confrontation that will happen soon. With this, the leadership must work in parallel to ready the people, mobilize them, and prepare them mentally and politically for the coming stage, which could see some withdrawal from the Oslo system and its agreements, moving towards a stage of creating hope and change. These steps require patience during the coming period and containment regarding policies of the Israeli side. Furthermore, a change is also required in the approach to Palestinian foreign policy, so it can be invested in international efforts to impose international law and used, to an extent, to impose independence on the ground. This can be done by achieving international recognition of the state of Palestine, joining international institutions, and maximizing the benefit from their political, economic, and legal tools.