



**INSTITUTE OF
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

web: www.issi.org.pk
phone: +92-920-4423, 24
fax: +92-920-4658

Report- Public Talk

“Formation of National Unity Government and Future of Peace in Palestine”

November 28, 2017



Compiled by: Arhama Siddiqua

Edited by: Najam Rafique

Pictures of the Event



The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) held a Public Talk on the "*Formation of the National Unity Government and Future of Peace in Palestine*" on November 28, 2017. The distinguished speaker on the occasion was H.E. Dr. Mazen Shamiyah, Assistant Minister of Palestine for Asia, Africa, and Australia. Other dignitaries at the occasion included, H.E. Mr. Walid Abu Ali, Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Pakistan and Mr. Ibrahim R.M. Altarri.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman ISSI, in his welcome remarks reiterated Pakistan's commitment to the cause of Palestine and its unwavering support at various international forums. He said that Pakistan pursues the Palestinian cause as if it were pursuing its own. He also said that the issue at hand had many aspects, including respect for international law - in particular the UN Charter, respect for international humanitarian law, as well as respect for human rights. It is in fact a question of foreign occupation and the right of self determination of the Palestinian people. Israel, supported by big powers, has been obstinate in complying with the UN resolutions which call for removal of Israeli troops from all territories and require the restoration of the inalienable right of the people of Palestine. Instead, Israel has introduced settlements which have and are continuing to displace local inhabitants and involve a lot of suffering. Another aspect which is of vital importance is the status of Jerusalem because it connects Muslims from all over the world, and hence any solution which changes the status of Jerusalem will not be acceptable to anyone.

The Chairman went on to state that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was born in Lahore during the OIC Summit in 1974. It was here that the PLO was recognized as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. Ambassador Mahmood said that what is encouraging is the growing recognition of the legal aspects of the Palestinian cause. Now Palestine is a non-member observer state at the United Nations and has also been admitted as an observer at both Interpol and UNESCO. The Chairman also drew parallels between the Palestine cause and the Kashmir issue. He said that though both issues arose at the inception of the UN, till date both of these remain unimplemented. He talked about the reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah in October 2017, calling it a favorable aspect and hoping that this would further reinforce the Palestinian cause, and would help in an early realization of the dreams of the Palestinian people which he said is also Pakistan's dream.

Dr. Mazen Shamiyah agreed that Pakistan played an integral role in helping the Palestinian people while outlining the strong bond that the two countries share. He also underlined how Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize Palestine and has always shown support on all forums for the Palestinian cause. He stated that November 2 marks a hundred years of the Balfour Declaration and a failed promise that destroyed the homeland where 12 million people are still in exile today. He said that only six million Palestinians remain in West Bank and the Gaza Strip today. There are no parallels to the racial discrimination being suffered in Palestine. Despite that, the Palestinians are resilient and still upholding their rights and identity and fighting for freedom and a worthy life. He said that Palestinians want to live in peace and they believe the right of self determination is key.

He went on to say that Palestinian flags have been raised in the UN headquarters and have joined many causes and through the UN and other various forum, based on the principles of international law and legitimacy, Palestinians have tried to forward their cause. He also said that twenty-four years have passed since the signing of the Oslo Accords leading to the end of the Israeli occupation. But despite all international efforts for achieving peace the Israeli government has not complied with any signed agreements, repeatedly violates international humanitarian law and has gone without accountability so far. Article 2334 was signed in 2016, which requires Israel to halt its settlements has been blatantly ignored. This year alone has seen the largest number of settler attacks against women, children and old people.

Palestinian leadership has tried to engage the international community, and Palestinian leadership has welcomed international efforts from Europe, for example the French initiative. Because of Israel's non-compliance to all agreements, there is an urgent need to bring forth a solution to this issue under an international umbrella despite the fact that the Palestinian leadership welcomed the initiative, Israel has attacked it harshly which has no doubt surprised the international community. The Paris Peace Conference was held this year, but Israel refused to attend and attacked all the countries that attended, we still believe that the key to peace in the region is finding a solution to this issue.

The Palestinian leadership is open to all international efforts. Our unity is the valve of our cause, therefore the Palestinian leadership is continuing efforts for the reconciliation under the

sponsorship of the Egyptian leadership in order to restore internal unity and enable the national reconciliation to carry out its tasks. Despite the obstacles at the moment we are confident that the reconciliation will go on.

Q&A Session

Question: How does Palestine view President Trump's peace process in the Middle East?

Answer: As Palestinians we welcome the peace process, but nothing new has been offered on the table so far, so we are still waiting. Because this initiative is in accordance with international law and supports Palestinian rights, we will be supporting it.

Question: How can peace in Palestine be separate from the happenings in the Middle East? Could you please elaborate a bit more on the National Unity Government in Palestine.

Answer: The Palestinian issue is now 70 years and it is the source of the instability in the region. Solving the Palestinian issue will bring stability not only in the region, but to the stakeholders around the world. Keeping the Arabs busy with the sectarian conflicts within itself diverts attention from Israel's continued violations. It is believed that the solution to Palestine is the solution to all instability around the world.

Question: What is the role of the US? And do you think greater power role can help in solving this issue?

Answer: We have to first of all rely on the national unity and the unity of Arabs and Muslims around the world. Our case is special because it holds significance to Muslims around the world. The role is not exclusive to the US. For example, we very much appreciate the Chinese role, and we are open to any initiatives which will help solve this issue.

Question: Can the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia play a significant role in this crisis?

Answer: King Abdullah is the one who proposed the Arab initiative. This initiative is 15 years old now and has garnered no appreciation by the Israeli side for this initiative. We see Saudi Arabia as a significant part of the entire region, and the Arab world in particular.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, in his closing remarks, labeled the Balfour Declaration as the original sin. He said that all attempts at peaceful resolution of this issue which have fallen over deaf ears. He stated that the cause of the Palestinians is just and the spirit and resilience which the Palestinians have displayed are admirable. He concluded by quoting Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah when the latter during a presidential speech to the All India Muslim League stated: "No nation, no people who are worth living as a nation, can achieve anything great without making great sacrifices, such as the Arabs of Palestine are making."