

SELECTIONS FROM THE PRESS

This section includes articles and news items, mainly from Israeli but also from international press sources, that provide insightful or illuminating perspectives on events, developments, or trends in Israel and the occupied territories not readily available in the mainstream U.S. media.

YOUSEF ABU SAFIEH, "THE RADICAL TRANSFORMATION OF PALESTINE'S ENVIRONMENT," *AL JAZEERA ENGLISH*, 2 MAY 2012

Nowhere is the relationship between environmental protection and social justice displayed more clearly than between Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. The Israeli government takes great care to guarantee that its citizens enjoy the benefits of a clean and comfortable environment. The opposite is true in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, over which Israel has maintained ultimate control for almost 45 years.

There, Israel has instituted an exploitative regime that disregards the needs of the local population and ignores the occupier's responsibility as a custodian of the environment as stipulated by the Geneva Conventions. This is particularly evident in how Israel distributes water, permits the environmentally destructive behavior of Israeli settlers and prevents Palestinian development on the land it directly controls.

A recent report issued by the French Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee stated, "Some 450,000 Israeli settlers on the West Bank use more water than the 2.3 million Palestinians that live there. In times of drought, in contravention of international law, the settlers get priority for water."

According to B'Tselem, an Israeli nongovernmental organization, Israelis consume up to 242 liters of water per person every day. Due to restrictions imposed by Israel, Palestinians consume just 73 liters per day on average (and as little as 20 liters per day in some areas), dramatically less than the 100 liters that the World Health Organization recommends as the minimum quantity for basic consumption.

Israeli settler communities use even more water than their counterparts in Israel proper, consuming over five times

than Palestinians. The contrast between the indigenous Palestinian community and the Israeli settler community is even more extreme in the Jordan Valley. According to a recently released study conducted by Ma'an Development Centre, the Israeli government provides settler farms in the valley with large quantities of water, while only 37 percent of Palestinians report that sufficient water is even available to them. The Ma'an report also found that Israeli water companies have been charging Palestinians 11 times more for water than residents in neighboring Israeli settlements.

Water Wars

The Israeli government also turns a blind eye towards the actions of the settlers. The UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) recently revealed that Israeli settlers have forcefully seized dozens of springs, the single largest water source for irrigation and a substantial source for watering livestock for Palestinians, and have turned them into tourist attractions and swimming pools. Most of these springs are situated on private Palestinian land.

Israel not only exploits Palestine's resources, it also pollutes and destroys them. According to a paper published by the Applied Research Institute—Jerusalem (ARIJ) in the *International Journal of Environmental Studies*, "Israeli colonies are sited on hill tops and they often allow the generated wastewater to run untreated into nearby *wadis* [valleys] and Palestinian agricultural lands, which results in the pollution of these lands."

Water in affected areas has become unsuitable for drinking, and Palestinian farmers are unable to cultivate their crops. Further, a report published in the *Palestine-Israel Journal* explains that a number of polluting factories

were moved from Israel proper into the West Bank due to carcinogenic chemical emissions and protests from the Israeli public:

“A pesticide factory in Kfar Saba [Israel] which produces dangerous pollutants has been moved to an area near Tulkarem [West Bank]. . . . The Dixon Gas industrial factory, which was located in Netanya, inside Israel, has also been moved to the Tulkarem area. The solid waste generated by the factory is burned in open air.”

Unlike Israeli citizens, Palestinians have no effective political recourse against the presence of industries that endanger their health. Palestinians are unable to stop Israel’s destruction of their environment because the occupation denies them the sovereignty critical to maintaining a sustainable presence on the land. Sixty-two percent of the West Bank is designated as Area C, meaning that it is under direct Israeli military control.

The ARIJ study cited above states that “around 80 percent of the solid waste generated by the [Israeli] colonists is dumped at dumping sites located within the West Bank.” Furthermore, the Israeli chemical and military industries have both dumped hundreds of thousands of tons of hazardous waste in the West Bank, a clear violation of the Basel Convention, of which Israel is a signatory. The Palestinian leadership is powerless to prevent this, even though many of these dumping sites constitute severe health and safety hazards to nearby Palestinian cities and communities.

Environment in Crisis

Israel also uses its domination of Palestinian land to prevent Palestinians from building sustainable infrastructure. A joint Palestinian-Israeli NGO [nongovernmental organization] recently partnered with a German aid agency to build small, reliable solar and wind generators for the impoverished Palestinian community in the Israeli-controlled south Hebron hills (since the Israeli government refuses to recognize this community, it has failed to provide it with electricity as per its obligations under the Geneva Conventions). The Israeli government has recently issued

demolition orders against the installations, arguing that they were built without permits. According to data from OCHA, Israel denies building permits to Palestinians in Area C 94 percent of the time.

The siege of Gaza has made the environmental situation there even more dire than in the West Bank. Israeli consumption from wells surrounding Gaza, and water scarcity enforced by Israel’s blockade that has forced over-pumping within Gaza, have begun to cause the intrusion of seawater into the coastal aquifer on which Gazans rely.

In addition, Israel’s assault on Gaza at the end of 2008 destroyed much of Gaza’s waste management capacity and left the tiny coastal strip with huge amounts of toxic waste. The fact that Israel has prevented critical waste management infrastructure from entering Gaza since 2007 has greatly exacerbated this problem. Today, only 5 percent of water available in Gaza is suitable for drinking, according to B’Tselem.

There is no point in denying it: Israel’s occupation is the significant cause of the pollution and radical transformation of the Palestinian environment.

The occupation and its policies are the antithesis of Earth Day, an occasion that was celebrated by people around the world this month. When Earth Day arrives next year, Palestinians hope to celebrate it as responsible custodians of their own country. That will only be possible if we finally put an end to Israel’s occupation.

[Dr. Yousef Abu Safieh is chairman of the Environment Quality Authority of Palestine.]

Yael Lerer, “THE ANDALUS TEST: REFLECTIONS ON THE ATTEMPT TO PUBLISH ARABIC LITERATURE IN HEBREW,” *JADALIYYA*, 16 MAY 2012 [EXCERPTS]

Should a visitor from another planet happen to arrive here and look around at the reality between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea without the usual lenses of distortion, she would see that in Israel/Palestine—the land stretching from the river to the sea which has been under one rule for over forty years—almost half the population

is Palestinian Arab and Arabic is their mother tongue, as well as that of nearly half of the Israeli Jewish population. Should our guest distinguish—as does the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, as well as the Israeli academy and media—between Israeli citizens and occupied Palestinian subjects, she would find that within the category of “Israeli citizens,” the majority is of Arabic-speaking (and to a large extent reading and writing) origin. Our guest would likely notice that Israel is located in the heart of the Arab world and that each and every one of its neighboring countries is Arab.

Out of a desire to familiarize herself with local culture, our guest might walk into a nearby bookshop, where she would expect to find books in Hebrew and Arabic—the two official languages of the state of Israel. But alas, at the first store: Hebrew books only. At the second store: some English books too. The third store, she will find, is dedicated to Russian literature. “There are no Arabs here!” they would all inform her. “This, my dear, is Tel Aviv.” The guest, who has been to Paris and Rome and London and Moscow and Nairobi and Johannesburg and Buenos Aires, might be a bit surprised: “A city without Arabs? Without Arabic? Here? In the center of the Middle East?”

Then our guest might meet up with a friend, also from another planet. Unlike our guest, the friend does not look at reality but rather at its representations. She watches current affairs shows and nightly news on TV; she reads newspapers, especially the “leading liberal daily” *Ha’Aretz*; she goes to the theater and the opera; she attends faculty meetings at the university; and, like our guest, she browses bookshops. “Why are you so surprised?” she admonishes our guest, “After all, this is a European country!” This is because by and large the friend only encounters middle-aged secular Ashkenazi men. They are practically the only ones to be seen, heard, and read: the shelves are overflowing with their books, as well as those of their American, French, German, and Spanish counterparts. Our guest does not manage to convince her friend that middle-aged secular Ashkenazi men make up less than 10 percent of the

land’s people. Nor does she manage to get her to believe that Israel is not in Europe.

It was into this reality, and its representations, that Andalus Publishing was born. But when I launched a publishing house that would specialize in translating Arabic literature into Hebrew, I had the impression that this reality was going to change. It was in the late 1990s, on the eve of the second intifada, and despite my critique of the so-called “peace process,” I hadn’t altogether internalized my own criticism.

Prominent Palestinian intellectuals, including the late Edward Said and former Knesset Member (MK) Azmi Bishara, now in exile, feared that the Oslo process would lead to the formation of Palestinian Bantustans and the consolidation of Israeli Apartheid. Although the Israeli policy of “closure” began in the early 1990s (heralding the “disappearance” of Arabs from Tel Aviv), even the liberal architects of “separation” never imagined the eight-meter high concrete wall. Many of the Oslo critics, myself among them, imagined “closure” as a temporary setback in a framework that nonetheless aimed at reaching historical compromise and “peace.” And even if the word peace was stripped of any meaning, like justice and equality, it seemed the process still pointed toward rapprochement, understanding, and life together, rather than apart.

In the merry Oslo years, alongside the uninhibited construction of new settlements and the paving of bypass roads for Jews only, there was prolific joint Jewish-Arab activity, much of it under the auspices of “people-to-people” type programs aimed at fostering dialogue and funded with European, American, and Japanese money. Concurrently, it seemed as though the dominant Ashkenazi-Zionist ideology that conceives of Israel as a European “bastion of the West in the East” was starting to weaken: the public presence of two historically disempowered and marginalized groups—Palestinian citizens of Israel and Israeli Jews of North African and Middle Eastern origin (Mizrahim)—could be felt loud and clear.

Andalus’ “Declaration of Intentions,” as written in 1999, read in part as follows:

Andalus is a new publishing house that specializes in the translation of Arabic literature and prose into Hebrew. Andalus, the site of the "golden age" of Islamic and Jewish thought, was also an era during which Jewish and Arabic cultures fed and fertilized one another; an epoch known for its literary and intellectual output by some of the greatest Moslem and Jewish philosophers, theologians, and poets. It was a period during which materials were translated from Arabic to Hebrew and vice versa.

Despite Israel's location in the heart of the Arab world, Hebrew-reading Israelis remain, for the most part, unexposed to Arabic culture in general, and Arabic literature and thought in particular. The quantity and variety of existing translations is insufficient, especially as compared with the wealth of works translated into Hebrew from European languages—since the 1930s less than forty Arabic language titles have been translated into Hebrew.

Our goal is to establish a successful independent publishing house that will produce a dozen translated titles each year, representing a variety of styles: classical and modern literature, journalistic and academic research, poetry, plays, satires, theory and criticism.

Our first move was to identify translators and editors. Palestinian artist Sharif Waked, who has designed all of our books, also helped to choose the first titles for publication. Everyone and anyone with expertise was consulted, and our appeals for advice were met with enthusiastic and generous input. Our first list of publications consisted of ten novels that would give the uninitiated Hebrew reader a good "sampling" of contemporary Arabic literature.

However, our plans changed when in March 2000, then-Minister of Education Yossi Sarid announced that he would include two poems by the Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish in the high school curriculum. These "poetical not political" poems, to quote Sarid, were to be included in a long list of poems that teachers could choose to assign to their students, but were not, God forbid, to be included in the mandatory reading list. This fact did not prevent Sarid's decision from triggering public hysteria. Prime Minister Ehud Barak declared: "Israeli society is not ripe to study Darwish." It was much ado about nothing, and still, not a single collection of Darwish's poems on the Hebrew bookshelf.

The first translator I turned to was the late Muhammad Hamza Ghanaem

. . . [who had] translated three of Darwish's collections.

When the Darwish "hysteria" broke out in Israel, Ghanaem suggested that we publish *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?*, which he had already translated. So our first publication was not a novel, but a collection of poetry. The hysteria only strengthened our conviction that the Hebrew-reading public needed to be exposed to Arabic literature. Within weeks, the publishing house was named, a design plan was conceived, and our first book hit the shelves.

Much to our surprise, when the book was published it received almost no attention. Apparently, people found it easier to talk about Darwish without a book in their hands. Despite the hysteria, *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone?* did not sell as well as expected—and yet it remains one of our best and most steady sellers. Most of the poems in the collection deal with the 1948 Nakba and the life that preceded it. It turns out that these "materials" have a readership. One such reader was none other than former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. In an interview with *Ma'ariv* in April 2005, he was quoted as follows:

Have you finished Fontanelle by Meir Shalev?

"I have a few more pages to go. At first, I had a hard time with that book, but as I read on, I discovered that it's an extraordinary book."

Meir Shalev is hardly a fan of yours.

"So what? I also read Mahmoud Darwish's book, and I have spoken about his poem, the one with the horse that was left alone, and how much I envy his description of their connection to the land."

Mahmoud Darwish addressed the motivation of his Israeli readers before the book was even published, repeating the following sentiment on various occasions: "I would like Israelis to read my poetry, not as a representative of the enemy, not so as to make peace." In that spirit, Darwish granted us blanket rights to publish his books, refusing any and all form of compensation: "By asking for permission you have surpassed your predecessors. When you start making money from this venture, come back with your offer for remuneration."

With the arrogance and hubris of a first-time cultural entrepreneur, I refused to accept what he was telling me. How wrong I was.

. . . Since I founded Andalus, I have recognized the dangers of creating a false sense of “peace-making” and “dialogue” by means of “normalization.” I have always made my objection to normalization publicly known, but more importantly, I have searched for ways to make the translation of Arabic literature into Hebrew a means of resisting the occupation. . . .

We wanted to publish books on the basis of “purely” cultural considerations (if there is such a thing). We wanted to translate Arabic into Hebrew in accordance with the norms and conventions of the intelligentsia (as opposed to the “intelligence” community—which produces most of the Arabic-Hebrew translations in Israel) and, to the best of our ability, without paternalism and Orientalism.

The Egyptian authors we approached did not share our thinking. Rather, they preferred to ignore our declarations and refused to have their works translated on the grounds of “anti-normalization.” These writers belong to a milieu that avoids any and all contact with Israel as such, . . . since, according to them, any contact with Israel, including applying for a visa . . . so as to enter the OPT [occupied Palestinian territories], constitutes “normalization.” After my initial approach, Andalus came under vicious attack by an Egyptian cultural weekly. This attack was followed by dozens of articles across the Arab world, both supporting and opposing our enterprise.

We were honored to find out that Andalus is privileged to have so many supporters in Arabic literary and intellectual circles. Mahmoud Darwish, Elias Khoury, Edward Said, Mohammed Berada, Mohamed Choukri, and many others launched a “counter-attack,” lauding Andalus both in theory and in practice. Many of them granted us publication rights free of charge, as a way of expressing partnership and solidarity with our effort. Unsurprisingly, this debate had no echoes in Israel. Just as most Jewish Israelis do not seem to care what Arabs write, they do not care what they think.

I guess Mahmoud Darwish was right. Most Israelis do not care about Arabic literature, and the select few who do want only to “know the enemy” or “make peace” with him. The two novels we published by the Lebanese writer Elias Khoury form an interesting exception. *Gate of the Sun* (*Bab al-Shams*) that deals with the Nakba, received a few mentions in the Israeli press over the years, but upon publication in Hebrew it garnered relatively few reviews. Nonetheless, we sold over 5,000 copies (a quarter of which were donated to Israeli public libraries, where they are borrowed frequently). This is Andalus’ bestseller, and the most popular Arabic title ever translated into Hebrew.

In 2005, we published Khoury’s masterpiece *Yalo*, which does not have to do with the Palestinian narrative per se; rather, like *Gate of the Sun*, it deals with the intersection of history and memory, this time of a Lebanese prisoner who endures interrogation and torture. We thought the book would surpass its predecessor, especially since the stores showered it with attention, as did the press (sixteen rave reviews in the first month). But alas, *Yalo* sold just 1,500 copies—far more than most of the titles we have published, which have generally sold five hundred copies or fewer, but nonetheless a disappointment. If this is what a bestseller makes, it seems we have lost the battle for the Hebrew reader’s heart and mind. Our dream of being a self-sufficient, sustainable independent publishing house came to an end.

And then, just as we were forced to freeze our activities, we had a short glimmer of hope. Award-winning Canadian author Naomi Klein—who, like us, resists the normalization of the occupation—asked to publish her latest bestseller *The Shock Doctrine* in Hebrew via Andalus. Alongside her pointed criticism of the State of Israel, dialogue with Israelis is extremely important to her. So, while like me she has called to support the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, the idea was “not to boycott Israelis but rather to boycott the normalization of Israel and the conflict.” She thought that Andalus would be the perfect address for this kind of resistance, and we thought salvation had come.

When Klein generously donated all her royalties toward future translations of Arabic writing into Hebrew, we had every reason to believe that following the Hebrew publication of *The Shock Doctrine*, Andalus would be able to publish several more books—always our primary goal. Sadly, the increased readership we hoped for never materialized: it seems that Israelis cease to care about anti-globalization when it is linked to anti-normalization and calls the occupation into question. Our would-be Northern savior turned out to be a true political friend, but no Santa Claus.

Klein's book launch and book tour in June 2009 were dedicated to BDS promotion. We did not plan on there being a brutal massacre in an already besieged and beleaguered Gaza just a few months before. We could not have imagined that 95 percent of the Israeli-Jewish population would support the brutal killing of four hundred children. In our wildest dreams, we never imagined the first-time (there is always a first time) phenomenon of Israeli families making their Saturday outing to the hills overlooking Gaza to cheer at the shelling and bombing of one and a half million civilians incarcerated in the world's largest open-air prison. We did not realize that the walls we have been trying to topple for so many years would become hermetically sealed with self-censorship.

The book launch and book tour for *The Shock Doctrine* were effectively censored, and most of Klein's Hebrew followers (from the bestselling *No Logo*), refusing to hear any political criticism, have boycotted the book. Hence, not only did publishing Naomi Klein not enable us to translate more Arabic titles into Hebrew, it elucidated the fact that the walls we are confronting are more fortified than ever, and that breaking them is a nearly impossible mission.

Nevertheless, after all I have said, Andalus does what it can to prove me wrong, and I hope one day it will. I am continuously reexamining the ways we worked, the choices we made, and the tools we employ to get our books out there. As a cultural enterprise, it has left its illustrious mark: rave reviews, die-hard fans, grateful happenstance readers. As an economic venture, it is a complete failure: supply without

demand. Maybe it is not about us, continuous reexamination notwithstanding, but rather about the other publishing houses: in seven years we published twenty-four titles, eighteen of them Arabic literature translated into Hebrew. We increased the numbers of such books by over 50 percent, while the Arabic titles published by other Hebrew publishers in the same period can be counted on a single hand.

And here we must remember our alien guests. How strange it must seem that despite the fact that the majority of the people of the land are Arabic speaking or of Arabic-speaking origin, Arabic is hidden away, and along with it the possibility of al-Andalus—the site of an Arabic-Jewish culture—and of Andalus Publishing. "Our Place in al-Andalus," wrote Maimonides, yet the number of Israeli Jews who know that Maimonides wrote his finest works in Arabic grows smaller by the day.

At times it seems as though the cultural divide, the mental walls, are deeper and taller than any physical barrier underway. These walls do not just pass between "us and them" (or as former Prime Minister Ehud Barak put it, "We are here and they are there"). They are erected within ourselves, between our past and our present, between metaphysical fantasy and physical reality, between us and the place where we live.

NOAH BROWNING, "ARAB REVOLUTIONS FAIL TO STIR DIVIDED PALESTINIANS," REUTERS, 15 APRIL 2012

Popular uprisings have transformed the Middle East and North Africa in the past year, unseating four veteran autocrats and capturing the imagination of a generation of youths.

But the protests have left Palestinians—long at the center of the Arab world's main political conflict—unmoved.

Dejected by lingering political divisions and exhausted by decades of mostly fruitless rebellion against Israel, they appear to have lost their appetite to take their fight for change up another level.

"There's no revolution here because the government is less oppressive than

in Egypt or Syria, and anyway it's Israel that deserves our anger," said Mahmoud Bisher, 20, a student from the West Bank city of Hebron.

"But we're divided and there's no coordination. This only serves the occupation's interests," he sighed, referring to the schism between the Fatah-dominated Palestine Liberation Organization in the West Bank and the Islamist group Hamas in Gaza.

Small protests waged weekly in some of the villages pressed up against Israeli settlements and a separation barrier in the West Bank are among the few outlets for popular frustration, attracting a regular group of dedicated demonstrators.

In Nabi Saleh, Fridays usually see a couple of dozen activists and children surge towards Israeli military positions waving banners and hurling stones, only to be quickly scattered by the advancing soldiers' rubber bullets and tear gas.

"Resistance has been part of our strategy for more than 40 years," village activist Faraj Tamimi said, flinching as a tear-gas canister sailed low, crashing and hissing near his feet. A companion's deft kick sent it back towards the Israelis to a roar of cheers from his friends.

"But after such a long time being suppressed by the Israelis, we get tired of confrontation all the time. The leaders could support us more and we hope protests like these become wider and will have more popular support," he added.

There is no sign of that happening, however, even though the last intifadas, or uprisings, remain fresh in people's memories.

Anniversary

The first intifada in the 1980s resulted in the Oslo interim peace accords, but that was seen by many Palestinians as an appallingly bad deal.

The second intifada resulted in the deaths of hundreds of Israelis and thousands of Palestinians between 2000 and 2005, and prompted Israel to erect a barrier in the West Bank.

A call to rise up again, issued last month by Fatah strongman Marwan Bargouthi—who is serving five life terms in an Israeli prison for murders

he committed during the last intifada—has pointedly failed to galvanize many Palestinians.

"They (the intifadas) had limited political impact, and that's why people haven't repeated them," said Rami Khoury of the American University of Beirut.

"The Palestinian leadership is directionless and as the occupation continues, civil society and independent groups have failed to provide much intellectual guidance to the people."

Officially-sanctioned rallies for the "Global March to Jerusalem" last month attracted only modest numbers in the West Bank; after hours of Palestinian stone-throwing and Israeli firing of rubber bullets, life quickly returned to normal.

Unofficial demonstrations in the squares of Gaza City and Ramallah in the heady first days of the Arab uprisings calling for the estranged Hamas and Fatah factions to reconcile and unite also fizzled, in part due to tight police surveillance and arrests.

Efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated peace deal are equally moribund.

President Mahmoud Abbas refuses to resume direct talks unless there is a halt to all Jewish settlement building in the occupied territories, a precondition that Israel rejects.

Palestinian leaders had hoped to provide some kind of rejoinder to the Arab Spring. But they failed to overcome internal divisions or to achieve UN recognition of their statehood after a high-profile campaign stalled in the face of U.S. opposition.

After any spring comes winter, and the scenes of death and destruction in Syria may also have discouraged those Palestinians eager to confront either their own leadership or the Israelis.

Rhetoric of Resistance

Nervous about political discourse taking place outside its control, the PLO in the West Bank has discouraged independent protests while putting the rhetoric of resistance to work on its own faded image.

In Bilin, a flash-point for community-based protests against Israeli settlements, a once-modest annual town

meeting on popular resistance was mobbed this week by ruling Fatah party flags and government VIPs.

Foreign envoys and aging international solidarity activists occupied the front rows, listening to translations of speeches on headphones, while uninterested-looking Palestinian youths mostly chatted among themselves.

"Peaceful resistance goes side by side with efforts to . . . found a state," PA [Palestinian Authority] Prime Minister Salam Fayyad told the small gathering.

"This is the twin track of the political struggle conducted by the PLO—the single, legitimate representative for our people in all areas and forums," he added.

Fayyad is an economist. He knows that the greatest challenge to his government's institution-building drive may yet be curbing public sector unrest if dwindling foreign aid finally affects its ability to pay salaries.

The PA failed to pay civil servants salaries in full and on time on several occasions last year and is facing an even more difficult financial environment in 2012, with its budget deficit projected to exceed \$1 billion.

"For 20 years after the peace accords, the Palestinian Authority has gone from concern for the collective to concern for itself, to stay in existence by collecting checks and paying salaries," said Ibrahim Shikaki a lecturer at al-Quds university and a youth organizer.

During Friday's modest demonstration in Bilin, resident Umm Samarra walked along a deserted path in her traditional dress and headscarf towards the Modiin Illit settlement's wall, as Israeli soldiers manning the ramparts with tear-gas guns looked on.

Asked if she felt abandoned by the Palestinian leadership, she shrugged: "We don't know if the authorities support us or not, and we organize ourselves. Me, I've protested here for six years and I'm as strong as any man."

ALAIN GRESH, "PALESTINE: FORGOTTEN BY THE ARAB REVOLUTIONS?" ARAB CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND POLICY STUDIES, 11 APRIL 2012 [EXCERPTS]

December 2010: with the first demonstrations in Tunisia, a shock wave

rolled across the whole Arab world, one as deep as those that had inundated the region after the defeats of 1948–1949 and in June 1967. While the first two were centered on Palestine and its future, the current one seems to be focused on domestic problems. Some even claim that the ongoing revolutions have nothing to do with Palestine. What is the real truth?

Before our eyes, a long period of stagnation and paralysis is coming to an end. . . . Leaders who had governed their countries for decades have been overthrown. Granted, the movement is still in its early stages and it will probably take a number of years to bring down the power structures that have been in place since the 1960s, but for the first time since that period, the Arab peoples have taken their history into their own hands and the myth of their passivity and their inability to handle democracy has been shattered.

Palestine has seemed to be relatively absent from these waves of change. Certain Western commentators have claimed that these revolutions are not interested in the conflict with Israel or in Palestine, that they only have a domestic political program, that they are neither anti-American nor anti-Western. Without a doubt, these analyses are false, as scores of events have proven—from the attack on the Israeli embassy in Cairo to the welcome the new Tunisian government extended Hamas leader Ismail Haniyya. . . . [T]o answer the question of Palestine's place in the Arab revolutions, however, . . . it is necessary to go back into the history of the relationship between the Palestinian question and the Arab world.

A Long History

[The analysis describes in some detail how the Palestine question was an Arab question during the Mandate and the wave of upheavals in the Arab world provoked by the 1948 defeat.]

During this period, which stretched from 1949 to 1967, a new generation of Palestinian leaders emerged. The events in Egypt and Iraq had an immense resonance among Palestinians, who enthusiastically rallied to the revolutionary—that is, resolutely anti-imperialist and non-aligned—version of Arab

nationalism, where one of the most important representatives (though not the only one) was to be found in [Gamal Abdel] Nasser. Henceforth, for them, the catchphrase would be: "The liberation of Palestine will come through Arab unity."

However, Palestine has remained an object in the hands of Arab leaders and a card to play in their struggle for hegemony. It was Arab rivalries, notably between Nasser and [Iraqi president Abd al-Karim] Qasim, that triggered the process that ended in the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). . . . At the first summit of Arab heads of state, which took place in Cairo at Nasser's invitation from January 13 to 17, 1964, Ahmad Shukeiri was put in charge of consultations in view of laying the foundations of a Palestinian entity (*kiyan*). From May 28 to June 2, 1964, the first Palestinian National Congress took place, which saw the creation of the PLO.

A charter was adopted at that time, insisting on the definition of Palestine as "an Arab area related by links of nationalism (*qawmiya*) to the other Arab lands which together form the Great Arab Nation" (Article 1). We do not find mention of the "Arab people of Palestine [who] have the legal right to their homeland," before Article 3, but this homeland "is an integral part of the Arab nation."

While most Palestinians adhered to this view, at the end of 1959 a small group called Fatah began to publish a different point of view, claiming that the liberation of Palestine is fundamentally a Palestinian affair and cannot be handed over to the Arab states. At best, the Arab regimes could provide help and protection. These themes, defended in the newspaper *Filastinuna* (Our Palestine), went against the grain of the surrounding "pan-Arabism." They were reinforced by the [1961] failure of the Egyptian-Syrian unity (UAR) and by the victory of the Algerian revolution in 1962, which served as a model for the leaders of Fatah. . . . One of the editors of *Filastinuna* wrote, "All we are asking for is that you [the Arab regimes] surround Palestine with a security buffer and watch the battle between us and the Zionists." And again, "All we want

is that you [the Arab regimes] take your hands off Palestine." The organization, still little known at that time, was badly looked upon by most of the Arab capitals and was often denounced as being "regionalist." After Fatah's first military operations (the beginning of 1965), it was even qualified as an agent of CENTO (Central Treaty Organization, a pact encompassing Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Great Britain, under the leadership of the United States).

The 1967 war and the bitter defeat of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan leveled a terrible blow at revolutionary Arab nationalism and triggered a second wave of changes in the Arab world. Among Palestinians, those who had banked on the independence and decision-making autonomy of the Palestinian people saw their positions reinforced. The political void created for several months by the scope of the Arab collapse allowed the groups of the Palestinian armed resistance, and above all Fatah, to come to center stage in the region, and to get established in Jordan.

The PLO, too closely linked to the Arab countries, thus entered into crisis. Negotiations were undertaken to integrate the armed organizations into it. In July of 1968, the fourth National Palestinian Council met, dominated by Fatah. The National Charter and the PLO statutes were modified to emphasize armed struggle. Article 9 of the amended Charter specifies, "the Arab people of Palestine [. . .] affirm their right to auto-determination and to sovereignty over its country." In Article 1, Palestine is defined as "the homeland of the Palestinian Arab people," whose role is repeatedly highlighted. This insistence was translated into the very definition of the PLO, "which represents the Palestinian revolutionary forces, and is responsible for the Palestinian Arab people's resistance in their struggle to recover their homeland, to liberate it and to return to it in order to exercise their right to auto-determination."

The strategy of the fedayeen seems to have been similar to that which was developing throughout the third world at the same time, from Vietnam to Latin America to Eastern Africa—national and social revolution, via the rifle. Did that mean that the moment for an Arab

revolution had come, spearheaded by Palestine? Not at all: “revolutionary” logic never motivated Fatah, and armed struggle was never theorized. There was neither Palestinian strategic thinking nor any theoretical military text. What the Palestinian resistance sought above all was the construction of the absent “state framework,” necessary for nationalism to truly take off. It found this in the PLO. A leader of the left wing of Fatah, Naji Alloush, was right when he reproached the leadership for having abandoned the revolution and for wanting to transform the PLO into a “state in exile.”

“The generation that took control of the PLO in 1968–1969,” noted Yezid Sayegh, “was strikingly similar to the ‘new elites’ who came into power in Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and Iraq between 1952 and 1968.”[1] Fatah, the most powerful of the fedayeen groups, placed its cadres in many positions of leadership and integrated some of its own organizations (the Foundation of Martyrs, the Red Crescent) into the PLO; in addition, it created numerous structures to offer positions to its base (a form of clientelism) or to other organizations. Thus, it guaranteed itself the loyalty of tens of thousands of functionaries. This “was far from unusual” for young independent states; the originality of this policy in the Palestinian case was the fact that “it developed in the context of a liberation movement”[2] that didn’t even control a part of its territory. The influx of financial aid from Gulf states and other Arab countries, a genuine political “rent income,” was a decisive element in the construction of this quasi-state and in facilitating a form of management based on clientelism.

This “statist” choice determined both the power and the limits of the PLO. It became, in the 1970s, the framework of reference for all the Palestinian organizations, and, more broadly, for Palestinians scattered throughout the world. It could claim its role as the “sole representative of the Palestinian people,” but in the sense that a state represents its citizens. It lost its “revolutionary” character and accepted the Arab status quo that resulted from the defeat of 1967.

On the other hand, despite a certain pluralism, the PLO showed the same

flaws as all of the surrounding Arab states from which it had been inspired, an absence of control over its leadership and an incapacity for self-criticism, as well as bureaucracy, patrimonialism, personal power, etc. It feared any autonomous initiative in society and maintained a stubborn attitude of suspicion toward the movements in the West Bank and Gaza, which it could not entirely control. All the Palestinian organizations, including those on the Palestinian left, accepted this statist and clientelist logic, negotiating the allocation of positions and resources with Yasser Arafat. The PLO thus lost any role it might have had as a revolutionary inspiration in the Arab world. It established itself in the Arab political game, playing one capital against another, without ever truly breaking with any of them. Having successfully clashed with the Jordanian, Lebanese, and Syrian states, incapable of developing a strategy of armed struggle, it committed itself to the diplomatic path, which would culminate with the signing of the Oslo accords.

However, this “bureaucratization” of the PLO (a phenomenon which affected all its organizations, including on the Left) did not diminish the importance that the Palestinian problem held for the Arab peoples; it was the symbol of the former colonial order and blatantly displayed the double standards of Western policies. During the second intifada, as after the Israeli invasion in Gaza in December–January 2008–2009, Arabs powerfully expressed their solidarity with the Palestinians.

The Arab Revolts

The third revolutionary wave to hit the Arab world, after those in the 1950s and 1960s, was not directly provoked by Palestine, although one could imagine that the spectacle relayed by satellite television of the incessant oppression of the Palestinians contributed to the feeling of humiliation among the Arab peoples and their will to recover their dignity (*karama*).

This wave has also touched all “Palestinian powers”; however, in both Ramallah and Gaza, these powers, Fatah and Hamas, prohibited demonstrations of solidarity with the Egyptian people struggling against Hosni Mubarak.

The two authorities then sharply suppressed the March 15 movement, which intended to transpose the demands for dignity, the struggle against corruption, and the desire to end authoritarianism to the Palestinian situation. Here we see the first consequence of the Arab revolutions: calling into question the incompetent Palestinian leadership. The crisis within the Palestinian leadership is due not only to its authoritarianism, but also to its inability to formulate strategies. The strategy based on negotiations pursued by Fatah with the Oslo accords has entirely failed, while that of Hamas, founded on “armed struggle,” is even less credible given that since January 2009 the Islamist organization has done its best to guarantee peace with Israel.

Beyond these direct consequences, the Arab revolutions have changed a fundamental fact: for the first time since the 1970s, the geopolitics of the region cannot be analyzed without taking into account, at least to some extent, the aspirations of peoples and countries that have become masters of their own destiny again.

For decades, the United States was able to support Israel unconditionally without having to pay the price—except for their unpopularity in the Arab streets, which they didn’t care about—since the Arab leaders remained faithful allies. This period is coming to an end. In March 2010, General David Petraeus, then head of the U.S. military’s Central Command (CENTCOM), was heard saying, “Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of U.S. partnerships with governments and peoples in this region and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world.”[3] This can also be seen in the Egyptian debate over the Camp David accords and the question of Israeli-Palestinian peace. As Steven A. Cook of the Council on Foreign Relations (New York) wrote, “From the perspective of many Egyptians, this arrangement hopelessly constrained Cairo’s power while freeing Israel and the United States to pursue their regional interests unencumbered. Without the threat of war with Egypt, Israel poured hundreds of thousands of Israelis into settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, invaded Lebanon (twice),

declared Jerusalem its capital, and bombed Iraq and Syria.”[4]

Any government in Cairo will have to take Egyptian opinion into account from now on, even if only partially, and henceforth no president will be able to be as submissive to Israel and the United States as Mubarak was. More importantly, democracy is creating the conditions for a more general thought process about the struggles in the Arab world, about their forms and their goals, and about the relations between democracy and national liberation. Without doubt, Palestine will be at the heart of this questioning and the renewal of the Arab world, just as it has come to be . . . at the heart of worldwide movements against an unjust international order.

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- [4] Steven A. Cook, “The U.S.-Egyptian Breakup,” *Foreign Affairs*, 2 February 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67347/steven-a-cook/the-us-egyptian-breakup?page=show>.

MICHAEL BARBARO, “A FRIENDSHIP DATING TO 1976 RESONATES IN 2012,” *NEW YORK TIMES*, 7 APRIL 2012 (EXCERPTS)

. . . The relationship between Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Romney—nurtured over meals in Boston, New York and Jerusalem, strengthened by a network of mutual friends and heightened by their conservative ideologies—has resulted in an unusually frank exchange of advice and insights on topics like politics, economics and the Middle East.

When Mr. Romney was the governor of Massachusetts, Mr. Netanyahu offered him firsthand pointers on how to shrink the size of government. When Mr. Netanyahu wanted to encourage pension funds to divest from businesses tied to Iran, Mr. Romney counseled him on

which American officials to meet with. And when Mr. Romney first ran for president, Mr. Netanyahu presciently asked him whether he thought Newt Gingrich would ever jump into the race.

Only a few weeks ago, on Super Tuesday, Mr. Netanyahu delivered a personal briefing by telephone to Mr. Romney about the situation in Iran.

"We can almost speak in shorthand," Mr. Romney said in an interview. "We share common experiences and have a perspective and underpinning which is similar." . . .

The ties between Mr. Romney and Mr. Netanyahu stand out because there is little precedent for two politicians of their stature to have such a history together that predates their entry into government. And that history could well influence decision-making at a time when the United States may face crucial questions about whether to attack Iran's nuclear facilities or support Israel in such an action.

Mr. Romney has suggested that he would not make any significant policy decisions about Israel without consulting Mr. Netanyahu—a level of deference that could raise eyebrows given Mr. Netanyahu's polarizing reputation, even as it appeals to the neoconservatives and evangelical Christians who are fiercely protective of Israel.

In a telling exchange during a debate in December, Mr. Romney criticized Mr. Gingrich for making a disparaging remark about Palestinians, declaring: "Before I made a statement of that nature, I'd get on the phone to my friend Bibi Netanyahu and say: 'Would it help if I say this? What would you like me to do?'"

Martin S. Indyk, a United States ambassador to Israel in the Clinton administration, said that whether intentional or not, Mr. Romney's statement implied that he would "subcontract Middle East policy to Israel." . . .

Mr. Netanyahu insists that he is neutral in the presidential election, but he has at best a fraught relationship with President Obama. For years, the prime minister has skillfully mobilized many Jewish groups and Congressional Republicans to pressure the Obama administration into taking a more confrontational approach against Iran.

"To the extent that their personal relationship would give Netanyahu entree to the Romney White House in a way that he doesn't now have to the Obama White House," Mr. Indyk said, "the prime minister would certainly consider that to be a significant advantage."

It was a quirk of history that the two men met at all. In the 1970s, both chose to attend business school in Boston—Harvard for Mr. Romney, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for Mr. Netanyahu. After graduating near the top of their classes, they had their pick of jobs at the nation's biggest and most prestigious consulting firms.

The Boston Consulting Group did not yet qualify as either. Its founder, Bruce D. Henderson, was considered brilliant but idiosyncratic; his unorthodox theories—about measuring a company's success by its market share, and dividing businesses into categories like "cash cows" and "dogs"—were then regarded as outside the mainstream of corporate consulting. . . .

. . .
Mr. Romney worked at the company from 1975 to 1977; Mr. Netanyahu was involved from 1976 to 1978. But a month after Mr. Netanyahu arrived, he returned to Israel to start an anti-terrorism foundation in memory of his brother, an officer killed while leading the hostage rescue force at Entebbe, Uganda. An aide said he sporadically returned to the company over the rest of that two-year period.

Mr. Romney later decamped to Bain & Company, a rival of Boston Consulting. They did, however, maintain a significant link: at Bain, Mr. Romney worked closely with Fleur Cates, Mr. Netanyahu's second wife. (Ms. Cates and Mr. Netanyahu divorced in the mid-1980s, but she remains in touch with Mr. Romney.)

The men reconnected shortly after 2003 when Mr. Romney became the governor of Massachusetts. Mr. Netanyahu paid him a visit, eager to swap tales of government life.

Mr. Netanyahu, who had recently stepped down as Israel's finance minister, regaled Mr. Romney with stories of how, in the tradition of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, he had

challenged unionized workers over control of their pensions, reduced taxes and privatized formerly government-run industries, reducing the role of government in private enterprise.

He encouraged Mr. Romney to look for ways to do the same. As Mr. Romney recalled, Mr. Netanyahu told him of a favorite memory from basic training about a soldier trying to race his comrades with a fat man atop his shoulders. Naturally, he loses.

"Government," Mr. Romney recalled him saying, "is the guy on your shoulders."

As governor, Mr. Romney said, he frequently repeated the story to the heads of various agencies, reminding them that their job as regulators was to "catch the bad guys, but also to encourage the good guys and to make business more successful in our state."

A few years later, Mr. Romney had dinner with Mr. Netanyahu at a private home in the Jewish quarter of the Old City, in central Jerusalem, where the two spent hours discussing the American and Israeli economies. When Mr. Netanyahu informed Mr. Romney of a personal campaign to persuade American pension funds to divest from businesses tied to Iran, Mr. Romney offered up his Rolodex.

Before he left Israel, Mr. Romney set up several meetings with government officials in the United States for his old colleague. "I immediately saw the wisdom of his thinking," Mr. Romney said.

Back in Massachusetts, Mr. Romney sent out letters to legislators requesting that the public pension funds they controlled sell off investments from corporations doing business with Iran.

Even as Mr. Netanyahu, a keen and eager student of American politics, has tried to avoid any hint of favoritism in the presidential election, friends say he has paid especially close attention to Mr. Romney's political fortunes in this campaign season.

And the prime minister keeps open lines of communication to the candidate. When it was Mr. Gingrich's turn to leap to the top of the polls, Mr. Netanyahu was startled in January by an article exploring why Sheldon Adelson, a billionaire casino executive and outspoken supporter of Israel, was devoting millions of dollars to back Mr. Gingrich. It described Mr. Netanyahu and Mr. Adelson as close friends.

Mr. Netanyahu's office quickly relayed a message to a senior Romney adviser, Dan Senor: the prime minister had played no role in Mr. Adelson's decision to bankroll a Romney rival.