



THE SECOND UPRISING: END OR NEW BEGINNING?

REMA HAMMAMI AND SALIM TAMARI

This article examines the al-Aqsa intifada against the background of the Oslo accords and the Camp David summit. Comparing its features to those of the first intifada, it analyzes and develops a number of important differences. These include the structure of the clashes themselves, the religious dimension, the role of the settlements, the role of the media, and, most important, the presence on the ground of a Palestinian protostate apparatus and the diminished role of mass organizations and civil society. The authors end with a discussion of emerging trends within Palestinian politics in response to these events.

THE "SECOND UPRISING" IS AN APT DESCRIPTION of the clashes that engulfed the occupied territories as of late September 2000, and anyone who witnessed the intifada of 1987–93 could not help but feel a sense of *déjà vu*. The young men armed with stones facing the mightiest army in the Middle East, the grieving mothers, the nationalist symbols unfurled at martyrs' funerals all seemed like a restaging of the same events twelve years earlier. Even the parades of masked youth carrying guns recall the final days of the first intifada. This time, however, the episodes were more condensed, the killings more brutal, the reactions swifter, the media coverage more intense. Within a matter of weeks, the language of the uprising had become the idiom of everyday life.

As in the first uprising, a dramatic event in the context of diplomatic stalemate sparked a reaction on the ground that was ripe for explosion. In 1987 the immediate trigger had been a settler killing of a schoolgirl and the death of seven Palestinian workers in a Gaza car crash against the background of a disappointing Arab summit; in 2000 it was Ariel Sharon's visit to the Haram al-Sharif on 28 September and the shooting deaths of demonstrators at the site against the background of the Camp David (II) summit collapse in July. However, in both cases one should look beyond the sparks to the deeper factors that determined the sudden transition from a seemingly routinized system of control to widespread violence involving young men and women ready to give their lives for the sake of ending the status quo.

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The most crucial differences between the first and second uprisings lie in the profoundly changed political and diplomatic context in which they took place and in the consequences they produced. The first intifada broke out at a time when there was no contact between the Palestinian national movement and Israel, and little prospect of any. The PLO had been dispersed in the aftermath of Israel's military invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and the Israeli military was in full control of the daily lives of Palestinians throughout the occupied territories under conditions of direct colonialism. The uprising considerably enhanced the position of the "internal" political forces and the status of a dynamic civil society and its mass organizations. It took the form of a militant but essentially unarmed civil insurrection and succeeded in bringing home to the Israeli military elite—and Israeli society at large—the notion that Palestine could not be governed by colonial rule. It engaged a large sector of Jewish society in a process of soul searching and, ultimately, devolution. It also pushed the Palestine National Council formally to embrace, at its November 1988 meeting in Algiers, the two-state solution based on the 1947 United Nations partition plan.

At the time of the first intifada, the Palestinians were under Israeli rule but had a dynamic civil society and an amorphous internal leadership (the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising—UNLU) that the PLO directed, or attempted to direct, by remote control from Tunis. Today, there is a virtual Palestinian state apparatus in situ ruling over a population that, after seven years of the Oslo peace process, is penned up in disconnected fragments of occupied territory encircled by ever-expanding settlements. The Palestinian entity is headed by the relocated and expanded PLO bureaucracy, a substantial and armed security apparatus, and an elected parliament. Yet none of these new players seems capable of acting at this critical juncture of Palestinian history. Here we have a massive uprising supported by millions of viewers across the Arab world, galvanized into the street by some twenty satellite stations, but with a limited participation by the Palestinian street itself. We have an absent civil society, a token involvement of the opposition parties, almost no guidance from the government, and a crying silence from the legislative assembly. How can one account for this?

OSLO: ORIGINAL DECEIT OR BROKEN PROMISES?

The main political outcome (some would say achievement) of the first intifada was the Oslo accords themselves. These include, among others, the interim agreements, the Wye agreement, and the Hebron protocol under Benjamin Netanyahu. They would have included the Camp David agreements had the process continued along its bumpy path. How one reads these agreements is fundamental to understanding the causes of the present conflict. Early critics of Oslo, who saw the process as inexorably leading to a consolidation of the occupation either as a new system of apartheid¹ or as "occupation by remote control,"² most likely see in the current crisis vindica-

tion of their analysis. More important, however, is how the political leaderships who signed the agreements understood them, and how, over time, the various Israeli governments actually changed their meaning.

The broad logic of Oslo was that a phased devolution of Israeli rule over the West Bank and Gaza would take place, at the end of which the deferred thorny issues of settlements, refugees, and Jerusalem would be negotiated as part of a final status agreement. Besides the original withdrawal of Israel from Jericho and Gaza in May 1994, three redeployments by Israel from the West Bank would be undertaken during the five-year transitional phase. Though the various agreements are not explicit on the amount of West Bank land to be returned under the three redeployments, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the Palestinian supporters of Oslo widely assumed (and arguably were led to believe by the Rabin government) that they would comprise all of the 1967 occupied territories save for areas to be addressed in final status deliberations (Jerusalem and settlements) as well as for the vaguely defined “military installations.”

This optimistic reading of the transitional period first ran into trouble with the miserly second redeployment under Netanyahu. However, in line with the American administration’s thinking, optimists could still believe that a return of the Labor party would mark a return to the “original spirit” of the agreement. Ehud Barak’s election as prime minister in 1999 was therefore welcomed. But the optimists, among other things, failed to take into account the fact that Barak, as interior minister in the Rabin government, had actually voted against Oslo, at a time when faith in the agreement was at its peak.

CAMP DAVID

Barak refused to carry out the third redeployment that he himself had renegotiated under the Sharm al-Shaykh agreement of September 1999, insisting instead on moving directly to final status talks. This meant that when the Camp David summit was held between 11 and 25 July outside Washington, the PA was forced to negotiate permanent status issues with only 42 percent of the territory under its full or partial control (full control of 18 percent—the urban centers of area A; joint control over 24 percent—the villages and other built-up areas of area B). The original understanding that withdrawal from the vast majority of the occupied territories would be completed during the transitional period as a prerequisite to final status was now transformed into withdrawal being linked to major Palestinian concessions on final status issues. This shift represented the inevitable outcome of the massive power imbalance between the two sides that has defined the logic of Oslo all along.

Here it should be noted that the Palestinian leadership had implied in its political discourse from the outset a sharp distinction between the concessions they were forced to make during Oslo’s transitional phase (concerning internal mobility, bypass roads, economic arrangements, water sharing, and so on) and the “red lines” on core issues once the talks on final status began.

Thus the leadership presented the initial disappointments of Oslo as contingencies imposed by the need to bring the PLO home from exile and to consolidate an autonomous Palestinian entity, after which it could embark on the protracted struggle for statehood from its new home base.³ As the concessions and failures of the transitional period continued to mount, logically the leadership would be forced to adhere ever more strongly to these Palestinian red lines at the final status talks.⁴ On one level, then, the breakdown of Camp David was the product of the clash between these two contending logics: the Israeli expectation of Palestinian concessions on final status issues in return for greater land area versus the Palestinian leadership's inability to concede much on final status after having conceded so much during the transitional period.

On specific issues, however, major differences of opinion surround what happened at Camp David. In the immediate aftermath of the summit, the official Israeli view (echoed by the Clinton administration) prevailed, according to which the talks failed because of the Palestinians' rejection of Barak's "generous offers." The more immediate reason for the breakdown under this widely diffused version was Jerusalem, especially Israel's demand for some form of sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif. More recently, a range of analyses have emerged about the content of the Israeli offers, the causes of the breakdown of talks, and most important, the larger tactical strategies underlying Israel's behavior at the talks.

Jerusalem

Although Barak announced in a public interview at the end of September that he favored the creation of two capitals in Jerusalem for two states,⁵ the essence of the Israeli offer for Jerusalem at Camp David makes clear what he meant by this. According to Menahim Klein, adviser to chief Israeli negotiator Shlomo Ben-Ami, Israel would annex the main settlements in and around East Jerusalem (French Hill, Gilo, Givat Ze'ev, Har Homa, Ma'ale Adumim, Pizgat Ze'ev, and Ramot) and would expand the Greater Jerusalem area as far south as Gush Etzion near Hebron. The outlying Arab suburbs of East Jerusalem (including Bayt Hanina, Shu'fat, and Walaja) would form an outer ring with full Palestinian sovereignty, while the Arab neighborhoods immediately outside the Old City (including Shaykh Jarrah, Silwan, and Wadi al-Juz) would comprise an "inner ring" that would have an expanded form of autonomy. Muslim and Christian holy sites and the Arab neighborhoods inside the Old City would also have this expanded form of autonomy, but Israel would retain overall sovereignty.⁶ Within this arrangement, Metropolitan Jerusalem would be divided into an Arab and an Israeli municipality while remaining an open city, with no international borders and checkpoints marking the ethnic boundaries.⁷ This, in essence, is what Barak's stated support for "two capitals" amounts to.

Though the account of Akram Hanieh, one of the Palestinian advisers at Camp David, differs somewhat on the status of the Old City,⁸ the Hanieh and

Klein versions of the Jerusalem negotiations dovetail on three main issues: Arafat's insistence on full sovereignty in all Palestinian areas of East Jerusalem; the fact that proposed Israeli sovereignty over the Haram area was a critical element in ending the talks; and the content of Israel's proposal for the Haram (i.e., "vertically divided" sovereignty in which the Muslims would control the ground level and the Israelis would control the area below the surface).⁹ The idea of "shared" sovereignty over the Haram was stunning given that no previous Israeli administration (Labor or Likud) had ever advanced such a notion. And according to Klein, "It was on this point that the summit ended."

Settlements

Israel's proposals included the annexation of three settlement blocs (Ariel, Etzion, and the Greater Jerusalem settlements, including Ma'ale Adumim). This the Palestinians could not accept. The areas slated for annexation had a combined population of 250,000 settlers, who would retain Israeli citizenship; 80,000 to 100,000 Palestinians within these areas would be disenfranchised. Even more problematic, such an arrangement would legitimize the complete encirclement of East Jerusalem by vast expanses of settlements, sealing off the city from its Palestinian hinterland. The integration of such blocs would also extend Israeli territory in a long line from the eastern outskirts of Jericho westward to Bayt Sahur, effectively splitting the West Bank in two.

Refugees and End of Conflict

Perhaps more than the issue of control of the holy places, it was the refugee issue that constituted the main obstacle to the success of the Camp David summit. On offer were the largely symbolic gestures of returning a few thousand refugee families from Lebanon over a fifteen-year period under the guise of "family reunification" and the formation of an international fund for refugee compensation and resettlement in the host countries. In return, the Israelis demanded an "end of conflict" clause that would release them from all further claims on any of the final status issues. In the context of the refugee issue, this would mean that any implications of Israeli responsibility for Palestinian refugees would be buried forever. One consequence of such a clause would be to drive a wedge between Arafat and the diaspora Palestinian communities, which he would no longer be able to represent.

A key Israeli analyst, Uzi Benziman, is one of the rare Israeli sources suggesting that it was the refugee issue, not Jerusalem, that was the major obstacle to an agreement. "There is a growing impression," he writes, "that even if Barak had agreed, at Camp David, to leave sovereignty over the Temple Mount in the hands of the Palestinians, the question of the right of return would have remained open, and in any event Arafat would have refused to

sign a peace agreement that contained a statement declaring the end of the conflict and the renunciation of mutual claims.”¹⁰

While there was clearly a range of major obstacles to agreement along the way, commentators on both sides signal the “end of conflict” clause as the point at which the breakdown in talks actually occurred; significantly, the

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crisis over the Haram compound occurred *after* this. But if the talks had already essentially collapsed, then why the eleventh-hour Israeli demand for shared sovereignty over the Haram? One theory is that Barak wanted to make a gesture to the religious Right, especially to keep the ultra-Orthodox Shas in his crumbling coalition. Such a demand, which clearly the Palestinians would reject, would at least offer a high profile face-saving finale for Barak that might

compensate for the backlash that was bound to develop once his concessions to the Palestinians were leaked.

A second theory is that Barak went to Camp David intending all along to bring about its failure. Doubtful that he could survive even limited concessions to the Palestinians, he opted to let them provide him with an exit from an agreement. This is the scenario believed by most of the Palestinian negotiators, but it has some Israeli adherents as well. According to a recent analysis by an Israeli historian, the actual aim of Israel’s participation in Camp David was to create a crisis that would undermine the results by inviting Palestinian rejection.¹¹ A scenario along these lines was in fact suggested by Dan Margalit, a journalist close to the Israeli leadership, who wrote on 10 July, one week before the commencement of the Camp David talks:

This is what should happen with the Palestinians: Barak should present them with proposals, which stipulate that he is willing to make concessions that are very difficult for Israel. If they are rejected, both the Arab and Western worlds will understand that Arafat is no different from Asad, for at the decisive moment, he preferred the convenience of the routine conflict to the audacity of bringing about peace.¹²

The resemblance of this scenario to the events as they actually unfolded is uncanny. While the real content of Israeli concessions may seem stingy, Barak’s public relations succeeded after the talks in contrasting Israeli generosity to Palestinian intransigence. More intriguing is Margalit’s suggestion in the same article that “whoever advocates a national unity government must internalize the need to set two conditions for its establishment: generous Israeli proposals, and Palestinian refusal.”¹³ But of course, the formation of a national unity government (with the Likud’s Sharon) would end the peace negotiations entirely and could bring Labor into a conflict with the Ameri-

cans. Such a coalition would be acceptable to the Americans only if the Palestinians became belligerent.

Whatever Israel's intentions, the proposal of shared sovereignty over the Haram represented a critical moment in the negotiations in which the religious issue—and specifically, control over a highly contested sacred site—was raised and then thrown into the public arena. Israel's raising the issue, and then granting police protection to Sharon to visit the site, is what linked the humiliating historic deal represented by Camp David to the provocative event that galvanized the street. In this process, it was inevitable that protests would take on a religious character.

AN UNTENABLE SITUATION

The deeper backdrop to the current uprising is the actual experience of Oslo on the ground by the population of the West Bank and Gaza. The main features of the extended interim phase have resulted in a situation that is untenable for most and unbearable for hundreds of thousands. Importantly, this situation did not improve under Ehud Barak's tenure but was experienced predominantly as a deepening of negative processes accelerated under Netanyahu. What are these processes?

First was the continued bifurcation of the West Bank from Gaza, despite the fact that Oslo stipulates the need to "maintain [their] territorial integrity . . . as a single territorial unit." Movement between the two areas has remained almost completely restricted save for small sectors of the political elite and, to a lesser extent, large merchants. While some 100,000 commuting workers (less than 5 percent of the population) can get permits to work in Israel proper, they (like the rest of the population) are denied permits to travel to the other part of the occupied territories. The long awaited "safe-passage" arrangements, finally implemented in part in 1999, turned out to be the hated permit system in a new guise.

Within the West Bank and Gaza (and particularly in the former), built-up areas have become segmented from each other and from the land surrounding them. These so-called autonomous zones are marked off by Israeli bypass roads (for the use of settlers only) and by security zones controlled by the Israeli army (area C) making it possible for each area to be cut off at will. Only within the municipal boundaries of towns does the population not live directly under Israeli military control. For those living in village municipalities (area B) and the even unluckier populations living outside municipal boundaries (area C), direct Israeli military occupation continues.

This whole configuration of strategic settlement expansion and bypass roads has fragmented the West Bank. It has resulted in the virtual removal of Jerusalem from the Palestinian map by denying Palestinians access to the city and by ringing it with vast fortified colonies that not only separate Jerusalem from its West Bank suburban hinterland but effectively divide the West Bank into two major zones, north and south.¹⁴ Accompanying the in-

tensive Judaization of Greater Jerusalem through the import of tens of thousands of settlers from inside Israel (and from among new Jewish immigrants) has been the bureaucratic campaign aimed at transferring Palestinian residents out of the city by revoking their residency permits.

During the period 1998 to 2000, this internal segmentation of the West Bank and Gaza intensified with the accelerating settlement expansion and the scramble to consolidate disconnected settlements into major blocs so as to ensure their survival beyond final status. Most pernicious is the way in which the lightly populated area C, which constitutes the majority of Palestinian agricultural land, has effectively become an area up for settler grab. Land confiscation for settlement expansion in area C has gone hand in hand with accelerated house demolitions to encourage further depopulation, while settler attacks against farmers trying to harvest the olive crop during the 1999 and 2000 seasons have become routine occurrences.¹⁵

THE TWO INTIFADAS

While it is this overall situation that led to the current uprising, various elements have had specific consequences shaping this intifada's character and direction in ways that make it qualitatively different from the preceding one. For instance, at the logistical level, the first intifada involved clashes within the urban centers between the civilian population at large and the Israeli army and border police. It was therefore more widespread and more difficult to control. The present uprising—except in Jerusalem and except for the early clashes in Israel's mixed cities—is largely made up of confrontations at the military checkpoints that either mark the entrances of Palestinian towns or are used to control settlement roads (Netzarim Junction) and religious sites (Joseph's Tomb, Rachel's Tomb). The main result of this new geography is that the Israeli army is better able to confine the insurgency to specific sites and to protect itself in secure strategic locations. This geography of the "battle front" has also made possible the greater militarization of the clashes. Uri Avneri points out that while the military announces its use of attack helicopters, missiles, and tanks, it is silent about its main weapon: snipers. "The sharpshooter is trained to look at a crowd of demonstrators, choose a target, take aim, and hit the head or upper body."¹⁶ The majority of the more than 300 Palestinians killed have died in this manner.

Another difference from the first intifada is the existence of armed Palestinian security forces (with about 40,000 Palestinian police under arms). Among other things, this allows for greater justification for the use of Israeli military force, even though official Palestinian security forces have been involved in clashes only rarely. Instead, the majority of armed actions have been led by "Fatah *tanzim*," a murky designation that includes Fatah's street cadre (often with privately licensed weaponry) and by elements of the PA Preventive Security Force.¹⁷ Armed Palestinian action succeeded in clearing the Israeli military from only one site, Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, which, given

its vulnerability, could arguably have occurred without their intervention. In most other cases where armed cadres got involved in clashes in the midst of civilian demonstrations, there were soon popular calls for their retrenchment, since the main result was that Israeli sharpshooters could exact a higher price.¹⁸

During the second month of the uprising, Palestinian military actions (under the rubric of the *tanzim*) took a new strategic turn, focusing less on demonstrations and more on settlements (especially Gilo, Netzarim, and Psagot). Indeed, the prominence of settlers and settlements as major components of the current clashes represents another important difference between the two uprisings. In the first, the unarmed population was fearful of incurring the wrath of the well-armed and state-supported settlers, and thus clashes rarely targeted them. However, it is not just a lowered fear quotient that accounts for the change in the present uprising. In the twelve years since the first intifada, the number of settlers has dramatically increased, and settlement expansion has often been into the vicinities of Palestinian urban centers. The acceleration of settler land grabs and violence against the Palestinian inhabitants of area C have likewise galvanized the population. Settlements have become concretely understood by both sides as the cornerstone of Israel's ability to hold on to vast areas of the West Bank and Gaza beyond final status and to perpetuate its military presence.

While Hamas emerged as a major force during the first intifada, the religious character of that uprising was relatively muted. In comparison, religion has played a major mobilizing and symbolic role in the current uprising, even while the participation of Hamas has been largely confined (at least to the time of writing) to raising Hamas flags at funeral processions.¹⁹ Instead, the clashes have been dominated by secular groups (mainly Fatah, but with a visible presence of the Popular Front and other leftist organizations).

Nevertheless, with al-Aqsa as the main trigger for the uprising, religious fervor has been a salient dimension that at times has engulfed the entire conflict. This can be witnessed in the political idiom of the street and in the PA's sudden emphasis on Islamic themes in the struggle over Jerusalem. It can also be seen in reactions by the Israeli street. Following the Palestinian assault on Joseph's Tomb in Nablus, Israelis burned mosques in Tiberias and Acre and attempted burnings in Jaffa; Palestinians then burned the Jericho synagogue. At the start of the uprising's third week, several imams used the Friday sermon—widely broadcast on Palestinian TV on 13 October—to emphasize the Muslim-Jewish dimension of the conflict. In Gaza and Nablus, Hamas elements attacked several cafés and stores selling alcoholic beverages. While the only official response to the sectarian incidents came from the PA's information minister, who condemned them and called for national unity,²⁰ many Palestinian intellectuals voiced opposition to this turning of the national conflict into a communal one.²¹ One negative aspect of the current intifada has been the diminution of the national and secular and the enhancement of the confessional and sectarian aspects of the struggle.

The religious dimension is what initially galvanized Palestinian Israelis and led to a wave of clashes inside Israel. In contrast to the first intifada, the intensity and extent of Palestinian mass protest inside Israel led to a major rupture between Arab and Jewish citizenry as the former were accused of attempting to “erase the Green Line” or, worse, of constituting a fifth column.²² During the first week of the confrontations, fourteen Arab protesters inside Israel were killed. This was followed by pogrom-like attacks on Palestinians in the city of Nazareth and major clashes between Arabs and Jews in Acre, Haifa, Jaffa, and Lydda. For the first time since the Land Day events of 1976, major Israeli roads in the vicinity of Arab villages in the Galilee, and even the coastal highway (near Jisr al-Zarqa), were cut off for days on end. The intensity of these protests is also symptomatic of the failures of Oslo for Palestinians inside Israel. Exclusion from the very terms of the peace process has led to the rise of a new political focus on full civic integration into the Israeli state. The ongoing failure of the Israeli polity and political leadership to move beyond its traditional approach to its Arab citizenry and take steps toward making Israel “a state for all its citizens” is the critical underpinning of the protests that took place.

Another major difference between the two intifadas is the role of the media, which have played various and contradictory roles in the current events. During the earlier uprising, the population had access only to Israeli and, to a lesser extent, Jordanian or Egyptian broadcast media. And except for Sawt al-Quds, the short-lived pirate radio station of Ahmad Jibril, Palestinians during the first intifada had only the heavily censored local newspapers through which to disseminate their own views and analyses—hence the dependence on “guerrilla media” such as leaflets and graffiti to give political directives to the street. This time, of course, there is the presence of Palestinian official media (Palestine TV and radio), myriad local independent TV and radio stations, and—perhaps most significant—the Arab satellite stations. Given the lack of an articulated PA strategy for the intifada, the official media have not been used to provide direction or instructions to the general populace. Instead, their role has been predominantly mobilizational, providing a constant flow of reportage on events interspersed with nationalist music and iconography. This being the case, Israel’s aerial bombing of PA TV and radio installations had no strategic purpose.²³

Unquestionably, it is the Arabic satellite stations that have had the greatest impact on the street. Due to the low cost of locally produced satellite dishes, the satellite stations have become an ubiquitous feature of the landscape. Al-Jazeera (Qatar), al-Mustaqbal and LBC (Beirut), MBC (London), and ANN (Spain) have become household names, and almost all have well-known local correspondents. They provide professional and almost constant coverage of the situation on the ground and, as important, a steady stream of discussions with Palestinian and Arab analysts and leaders. Indeed, these stations (particularly al-Jazeera) have helped define for the local population the meaning and goals of the intifada.

The satellite stations have also contributed to regionalizing the uprising in two important ways. On the one hand, they have played a pivotal role in mobilizing Arab public opinion by providing intensive coverage far beyond what is allowed on state-run television. This has resulted in a far greater degree of popular Arab protest and solidarity than occurred in the first intifada.²⁴ This powerful image of Arab mass solidarity is then projected back into the West Bank and Gaza via the satellites. As a result, not since the heyday of Nasirism have Palestinians felt that the entire Arab world (if not the regimes) is with them. On the negative side, the Arab media have at times contributed to the notion that the uprising is a religious rather than national struggle.



Faris Odeh, 13, faces off against an Israeli tank at Qarni crossing in Gaza on 10/29. He died in a similar clash 10 days later. (AP Photo/Laurent Rebours)

One major disappointment during the current uprising has been the almost total failure to get a fair hearing for the Palestinian side in the Western media. The poignant image of young Muhammad al-Dura cowering behind his father under a hail of bullets was powerful enough to speak for itself, but this was soon superseded by the far more numerous images of the lynching of two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah. The lack of a PA media strategy for positively influencing Western public opinion is not new or surprising given that

historically Palestinian leaders have rarely viewed the Western public as an important part of the political map.

As with the first intifada, the continued dependence of the Palestinian economy on Israel is a major vulnerability that can and has been used by Israel to suppress long-term resistance. However, a major difference this time is that in addition to the old vulnerabilities (reliance on Israeli water and electricity networks; dependence on Israeli labor markets, which up until the recent clashes absorbed approximately 20 percent of the Palestinian work force), there are a host of new ones that have emerged as part of the Oslo process. For example, there is now a substantial public sector employing some 150,000 persons who rely directly on the PA for their salaries. But 63 percent of the PA's revenues derive from the VAT taxes that are to be paid by Israel under the shared customs regime that was part of the Oslo package,²⁵ and Israel has effectively frozen these payments since October, making continuing payment of the salaries uncertain.²⁶ Other interests that have emerged since Oslo are equally vulnerable. These include the small but influential "new economic class" that has emerged under Oslo that, through strong ties to the political leadership, has had a privileged entrée into the "private sector." Perhaps the best-known example of the new interests is the Jericho casino, which until its closure in late October (and subsequent strafing by Israeli helicopter gunships) had raked in millions every week for its private and semipublic Palestinian investors and their Austrian partners. Along with the casino are a number of new businesses such as hotels and resorts, advertising and telecommunications companies, and major contracting firms that have grown thanks in part to donor infrastructural investments. These all represent major capital investments that are now under threat. More important, they represent the economic interests of a class with political clout. Whether these interests will ultimately seek to bring a quicker end to the uprising is yet to be seen but is not unlikely.

Also vulnerable to Israeli economic collective punishment are the "investments in peace" funded by major international donors, which have proliferated since the first intifada (when the only major international agencies present were UNRWA and to a lesser extent the UN Development Program). Multilateral and bilateral, transnational and national, and governmental and nongovernmental organizations have invested close to \$3 billion since 1994 to shore up the peace process and in various projects. During the first two months of the al-Aqsa intifada, Palestinian losses (excluding property damage) reached, according to the UN Special Coordinator's Office (UNSCO), \$505 million, or more than 2.5 times the value of donor disbursements to the PA during the first half of the year.²⁷ Though emergency donor money is beginning to trickle in, at some point the continued wastage of their long-term economic investments may lead them to rethink their involvement.

As in the first intifada, it is the general populace that bears the economic brunt of Israel's economic collective punishment. UNSCO, which monitors long-term economic trends in Palestine, noted that core unemployment

since the crisis had risen from less than 11 percent to nearly 30 percent, which, when the effects of disruption in normal internal economic activity in Palestine are taken into account, reaches at least 40 percent.²⁸ In all, according to the report, the number of Palestinians enduring some amount of economic distress is 1,370,000, or 45.5 percent of the population.

But if the Palestinian economy is vulnerable because of its underdevelopment, the Israeli side is vulnerable for the opposite reasons—for its heavy integration into the global “new economy” and its consequent dependence on outside investors (which in turn requires projecting an image of reliability and stability). By the second week of the uprising, the Israeli stock market plummeted by 50 percent, suggesting the extent to which intifada-type insurrections can undermine Israeli economic stability and, perhaps as important, its sense of Western-style normalcy. The intifada’s impact is already deeply felt in the winter tourist season, the agricultural sector, and the construction sector. The Palestinians suffer far greater physical and human losses, but their secret weapon lies precisely in their undeveloped economy and the range of survival strategies that households have developed over at least the past fifteen years.

A WEAKENED CIVIL SOCIETY AND AN ABSENT STATE

The more militarized nature of the confrontations and the new geography of resistance cannot entirely explain one of the major differences between this and the previous intifada: the absence of a wider civil rebellion. This may be the uprising’s Achilles’ heel. Save for massive candlelight marches and funeral processions within the cities, the population at large has been left with virtually no active role in the uprising. This is clearly not by choice, but as a consequence of the fact that the kinds of political structures that made grass-roots organizing the main thrust of the first intifada, at least in the early years, no longer exist. Popular and neighborhood committees as well as mass organizations (and most of the political movements that sustained them) began to collapse at the end of the first intifada under the cumulative weight of Israeli anti-insurgency methods. Their recovery was preempted by the Gulf War and, even more profoundly, by Oslo and the state formation process it set in motion.²⁹ The demobilization of the population and their deepening alienation from political action (until the current uprising) has been one of the most salient outcomes of PA rule.³⁰

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In the current situation, the only structures remaining to organize civil resistance are the now “professionalized” nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and what is left of the political factions. In terms of the NGOs, their structural limitations (professional organizations lacking a mass base) and programmatic emphasis on developmental and governance issues have

made them incapable of organizing at the mass level.³¹ Similarly, the mass-mobilizational role of the political factions (except for Fatah and to a lesser extent Hamas) has been virtually obliterated by their post-Oslo organizational and political crises, from which they have never recovered.

Ironically, along with the absence of “civil society,” the other absence in the current uprising is that of the political leadership in a clearly articulated organizational role. Throughout the first month, no directives emanated from the PLO Executive Committee, the PA Executive Authority, or the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), none of which even convened.³² In contrast, during the first intifada, the PLO leadership in Tunis rode the tide of the uprising and gave it essential political momentum through various kinds of logistical support as well as strategic direction provided by Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad), at the time the commander of the PLO’s “Western Front,” which were transmitted through local Fatah cadres and the UNLU.

The apparent absence of the state in the current uprising is even more startling in view of the fact that the PLO in the intervening years has consolidated itself inside Palestine and built a complete protostate apparatus there. Yet, paradoxically, it is this very presence on the ground that explains its virtual invisibility. Entering into the drawn-out process of Oslo is what enabled the leadership to return, and the pivotal element of that trade-off was the role the PA would play in security matters. Thus, for Israel and the United States, “security cooperation” was the jewel in the crown of the increasingly security-driven Oslo accords. In this context, the repeated calls for Arafat to “stop the violence” not only implied his responsibility for starting it but were premised on the assumption that he was in violation of the fundamental role assigned to him by Oslo. The warnings can also be read as a way of demanding that security cooperation be reinstated, for the unannounced but actual cessation of security cooperation was probably the most powerful message that the PA could send to Israel.

Arafat did not start the current wave of protests, but it is clear that he has encouraged them by, among other things, standing back and allowing them to escalate. Moreover, while the PA has not formally taken charge of the intifada, it is in fact by no means uninvolved. Indeed, the very nature of its strategy of rule allows for its involvement through various “autonomous” bodies—most notably through the Fatah *tanzim* (which is not an official structure of the PA) and, to a lesser extent, through elements of the security apparatus. It should be noted that Fatah’s complex relationship to state power (and the links of many of its street cadres with the security services) is likely to entail restrictions on the intifada’s expansion into the civil arena due to its tendency to give priority to armed action rather than to organizing civil rebellion.

A number of critical analysts have identified PA rule as fundamentally based on the model of the PLO in Lebanon adapted to the specifics of the West Bank and Gaza. The essence of this argument is that the PLO in Lebanon, as part of its mobilizational effort, conflated civil and political society in

an all-encompassing movement.³³ This resulted in a system within which the lines between military bodies, political decision-making bodies, and civil organizations were collapsed. Over time, this system became shot through with patronage as the main mechanism of power.³⁴ Within the West Bank and Gaza, this model can be seen in the ongoing elision of political and civil institutions, democratically elected bodies and appointed political committees, and security forces performing multiple and contradictory roles.³⁵ However, in contrast to the Lebanese situation, the function of this overall strategy under the PA has not been mobilization but control and co-optation, and with it the dilution of the rule of law and democratically elected institutions. The imperative of maintaining the PLO as representative of all Palestinians everywhere has provided the main mechanism for Arafat's ability to dilute the role of democratically elected bodies such as the PLC with an array of appointed individuals.

In the current situation, the formal apparatus of the government stands back and allows elements representing various branches and wings of the "national liberation movement" to come to the fore. As such, the Fatah movement is the most active organizational player on the streets—but the much touted *tanzim* is not officially linked to the PA and the Kalashnikovs paraded by some of its members are privately owned. Along with the *tanzim*, a new political entity, the National and Islamic Higher Committee for the Follow-up of the Intifada (NIHC), entered the arena at the beginning of November. Significantly, the committee, which comprises all the political factions of the PLO plus the Islamic groups (Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and—separately—Hamas's political party, Hizb al-Khalas), does not call itself the "united leadership" in the tradition of the first intifada's UNLU, but simply a "follow-up committee." Its first leaflet, which is neither numbered nor dated, depicts its own role as providing direction rather than actual leadership. At the same time, it appears to consign the PA to the role of benevolent bystander: the PA is mentioned only twice in the leaflet, and that in the context of providing economic support to the victims of the clashes. Another striking feature of the leaflet is that the kinds of actions called for bear a clear resemblance to those in the first intifada. Thus, its operational suggestions to the population include the formation of defense committees, a boycott of Israeli products, the promotion of national products, the promotion of women's inclusion, and general calls for unity of voices and actions. If there is an overall strategic goal implicit in the leaflet, it concerns settlements. Most pointed in this regard is the call for unifying efforts to isolate settlements and disarm settlers in order to provoke their departure from the occupied territories.

The NIHC has also published calendars of events in the PA newspaper, *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, which give day by day instructions to the "masses"—mainly calls for peaceful processions by various sectors of the population but also calls at certain times for escalation in order to break the Israeli siege of towns and villages. But few of the committee's fifteen constituent groups have on-the-ground organizational ability; as mentioned earlier, most have long since

lost their mass support, being perceived as having fossilized leaderships that have been absorbed in various ways into the PA system of rule. The exceptions in effectiveness are Fatah, which, as the state party with access to patronage and clout, has expanded rather than contracted since the Oslo accords, and Hamas, which, as the main opposition to Oslo, has remained until now outside of the PA's circle. But Hamas, with its history of victimization by the PA, has been reluctant to take a central role in the uprising: as already noted, its role has receded even as its religious discourse has been adopted (albeit in altered form). At the organizational level of the street, then, Fatah will continue to be the main political movement in the intifada.

While the NIHC has attempted to give the intifada "direction," it is clear that the wave of protest has a dynamic of its own. More specifically, as in most popular revolts, multiple and often contradictory political processes

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are at work. Thus, the current rebellion has probably increased the popularity of Arafat, but at the same time it has enhanced the role of Fatah not as the party of the PA but as a popular force able to mobilize the street and lead it in confrontation against the Israeli military and the settlers. An implicit bargain has been struck. Arafat knows that since the 1996 Tunnel Intifada, the street will never again allow him to trade

Palestinian lives for a mere resumption of negotiations. And it is this that makes it impossible for the PA to attempt to rein in the uprising before gaining a concrete victory on the ground. As long as Arafat sticks to this rule of not intervening, his popular support will remain intact.

Underlying this understanding, however, is the growing criticism of the PA's inability to provide basic organizational and logistical support to the civilian population during the clashes. The public has been provided with no basic civil defense or civil emergency directives, and there is no indication that the PA is prepared for critical eventualities such as water and electricity cuts or gasoline shortages. Nor can there be much confidence in the ability of a government known for corruption to deal with the population's mounting economic losses. All these failures—which cannot be compensated for by the limited vision and capabilities of the NIHC—are seen as signs of PA incompetence or, worse, neglect. The current rebellion will be a crucial test in reestablishing the PA's credentials as an effective government—which so far it has failed to do—and in determining whether or not it can carry on with its proclaimed role as the historic leadership of a national liberation movement.

THIRD REDEPLOYMENT OR A MILITARY-LED STALEMATE?

As the intifada entered its third month, it was possible to speak of two contrasting trends within Palestinian politics in response to the events. The first called for utilizing the political gains of the uprising (increased Arab sup-

port, the isolation of settlements, heightened criticism of Israel, and European sympathy) to raise the ceiling of reconvened Camp David-style negotiations in which the Palestinians would be able to extract better conditions than those existing in July. This seems to be the position of Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazin) and the majority of the Palestinian leadership who have participated in negotiations. A second trend, calling for the continuation of the intifada, the enhancement of its mass base, and institutional reform within the PA (including new parliamentary elections), was exemplified by the more militant wing of Fatah and the opposition parties.³⁶ Arafat, while not yet allying himself with either trend, seems to be playing a wait-and-see game: though he will doubtless allow the militant trend to continue (unless the calls for internal political reform become too trenchant), he is likely to switch back to negotiations if the time seems right or if the militants reach an impasse.

Meanwhile, as already noted, a shift had begun to appear during the second month away from the daily toll of young demonstrators at the seams between areas A and B (mostly the borders of urban centers and at the approaches of Israeli army posts) to hit-and-run operations against settlements and settlers. The net effect of this shift has been an increase in the number of injuries and fatalities among settlers and soldiers, and an "improvement" in the ratio of Israeli to Palestinian deaths (still about 1:15, but lower than the earlier 1:20). Thus, what began as an uprising for al-Aqsa and Palestinian control over Jerusalem has increasingly become a battle against the settlements. Within Palestinian discourse there is now a noticeably firmer stand on the total evacuation of the settlements. Inside Israel, significant voices, spearheaded by several statements issued by Peace Now throughout November and into December, began to call for withdrawal from the settlements, including an immediate dismantling of those in Gaza.³⁷ A survey conducted by Dahaf on 5 December 2000 indicated that fully 63 percent of the Jewish public supported total or partial evacuation of Jewish settlements from the occupied territories.³⁸

Judging from public statements made by major PA figures, it would appear that the leadership has begun to introduce into the logic of the intifada both strategic goals and strategic methods for achieving them. The most explicit articulation of these goals was by Information Minister Yasir 'Abid Rabbuh at a 5 November rally in Ramallah. After observing that the intifada should be transformed into a peaceful means of protest and that the use of gunfire should be abandoned in view of the disastrous retribution from the Israelis, he delineated three central objectives for the uprising: the resumption of peace negotiations on the basis of withdrawal to the 1967 boundaries (rather than on the basis of trade-off of territories); broadening the sponsorship of the negotiations to include other partners besides the United States, such as the European Union, Egypt, and Jordan (and possibly Russia); and the establishment of an international presence in Palestine to protect the civilian population as a prelude to a trusteeship over the territories while their

future is being negotiated.³⁹ (Interestingly, while *tanzim* leader Marwan Barghouti, speaking at the same rally, came out strongly for escalating the intifada, he lined up with the mainstream leadership in opposing a unilateral declaration of Palestinian independence.)

Bringing an international peacekeeping force into Palestine and other partners into the negotiating process aims at removing the negotiating framework from the control of U.S. and Israeli politics and placing it once again within the realm of international law. Given that the settlements are illegal under international law (whereas under Oslo they are merely final status issues to be negotiated), such a framework is seen by the leadership as enhancing the possibility of dismantling the settlements and increasing international pressures for a solution, involving the creation of a Palestinian state based on the 1967 boundaries. It seems, however, that while inside Israel the intifada has succeeded in creating an atmosphere that is more favorable to the removal of settlements and a stricter application of UN Resolution 242, a new attitude (hardened by clashes between Israeli Arabs and Jews in October) has emerged against a meaningful return of refugees to Israel.

If the objectives stated by 'Abid Rabbuh can be considered as the outer perimeter of goals to be aimed for, a more realizable goal would be the achievement of a third redeployment by Israel closer to the 1967 borders. Such a redeployment would involve the dismantling of more settlements than Israel currently envisions and would result in the establishment of a Palestinian state that is neither heavily truncated nor at the cost of an "end of conflict" clause.

The intifada's role then becomes a means to keep up the pressure on a number of fronts. On the one hand, the continuation of clashes demonstrates the untenability of the status quo and the impossibility of returning to where Oslo left off in the context of civilian revolt against it. In addition, the Israeli military response helps justify the need for an international peacekeeping force to protect the population. Limited armed actions against settlements send a message to the settlers that they cannot remain in Palestinian territory peacefully and to Israel that the cost of keeping them there will be very high, both financially and militarily.

Nonetheless, one flaw in the logic of these considerations is the fact that, with the possible exception of Hebron, the past few years have seen a growing and conscious synergy between the army and the settlers—in contrast to their often conflictual relationship before Oslo. The growth of the permanent military presence at the settlements with each new redeployment suggests both the naturalization of this settler–army alliance and the interests that underpin it. The power of the army and its embodiment in the person of the prime minister portends an end-of-intifada scenario that will, at the least, first involve an attempted military solution.

One of the achievements of the first intifada was to demonstrate the futility of a military solution. This was brought about by the Palestinian population's ability to continue resisting under the huge weight of collective

punishment and anti-insurgency measures mobilized against them. Where the population may be short on organization or initiative, it has shown itself over fifty years to be long on the stubborn ability to survive under punishing circumstances. While all signs suggest that the population is willing to go through this again, and the leadership is banking on their ability to do so, the significant difference this time is that the population is less likely to allow the leadership a free hand in investing the outcome of this second intifada in a manner that will replicate the Oslo predicament.

NOTES

1. Edward Said, *Peace and Its Discontents* (New York: Vintage, 1996).

2. Meron Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies: Jews and Arabs in a Shared Land* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

3. The most elaborate discussion of this position can be found in Mamdouh Nofal, *Qissat Itiffaq Ushu* (The Oslo Agreement) (Amman: Ahliyya Publishers, 1995). See, especially, "Peace or Settlement?" pp. 289–98.

4. In a lecture at Ramallah on 24 October 2000, Azmi Bishara pointed out that the "Palestinian red lines," a term often repeated by both Arafat and his opponents as guidelines for peace negotiations, were never taken seriously by the Israelis, who saw them as mere rhetoric, particularly where Jerusalem and settlements were concerned. Reported in *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 25 October 2000.

5. Quoted in *al-Quds*, 28 September 2000.

6. These details are based on an interview with Menachem Klein, published by Graham Usher in *Publico* (Lisbon), 14 September 2000.

7. Ibid.

8. According to Hanieh, the Palestinians were told that the Old City would have a special status entailing Palestinian sovereignty over the Christian and Muslim Quarters and Israeli sovereignty over the Jewish and Armenian Quarters. Akram Hanieh, *The Camp David Papers* (Ramallah: al-Ayyam Press, 2000), pp. 42–43 [in Arabic]. An English-language version of this text appears in this issue of *JPS*.

9. Usher interview with Klein.

10. Uzi Benziman, "Corridors of Power—Battle Fatigue," *Ha'Aretz*, 3 November 2000. Later in the article, he writes, "Israeli and Palestinian sources

confirm that Arafat made it clear that he would not sign an agreement declaring the end of the conflict as long as the right of return was not realized. At most, he would be ready to sign a statement declaring that there were no more claims on the subjects regarding which agreement had been reached."

11. Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Different Aspects of the Bloody Events," *Between the Lines* (Jerusalem), November 2000, pp. 10–14.

12. Quoted by Raz-Krakotzkin, "Different Aspects," p. 12.

13. Ibid.

14. For a discussion of these issues, see Salim Tamari, "Jerusalem's Unsacred Geography," in *Capital Cities and Urban Governance in the Middle East*, ed. Seteney Shami (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, forthcoming 2001).

15. A systematic record of clashes between farmers and settlers during the second uprising is available at www.alternativenews.org/settlers_violence.

16. Avneri maintains that the IDF had been training for months for confrontation in preparation for an unwanted Palestinian unilateral declaration of statehood. "This method is based on a simple premise: 'to exact a high price,' as the general explained in their peculiar language."

17. For an overview of the jigsaw puzzle of Palestinian security forces, see Graham Usher, "The Politics of Internal Security: The PA's New Intelligence Services," in *Dispatches from Palestine* (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1999).

18. On the military aspects of the second intifada, see Saleh Abdul Jawad, "The Intifada's Military Lessons," *Palestine Report*, 25 October 2000.

19. The yellow banners of Hizballah, also ubiquitous at funerals, have been raised by nationalist groups rather than Hamas.

20. Yasir 'Abid Rabbuh, *al-Ayyam*, 15 October 2000.

21. See, in particular, Hasan Khader, "Khaybar, Khaybir ya Yahud," *al-Ayyam*, 6 November 2000.

22. Yosi Dahan, *Yedi'ot Abaronot*, 19 October 2000; see also Zeev Schiff, who wrote in *Ha'Areztz*, 20 October 2000, that the two principal reasons that many Israelis were shocked by the disturbances are (1) the participation of Arab Israelis and (2) "the bursting of the balloon of false security under which we have been living" in terms of the safety of certain roads and highways in Israel.

23. Israeli accusations concerning Palestine TV's role in "incitement" ignores the fact that in both intifadas, images on Israel TV often were the cause of "incitement" of the Palestinian street. Moreover, Palestine TV's mediocrity and heavily censored reporting tend to make it the least popular of all stations.

24. A point well made by the *Economist's* Middle East correspondent (21–27 October 2000).

25. UN Special Coordinator's Office (UNSCO), "The Impact on the Palestinian Economy of Confrontations, Mobility Restrictions, and Border Closures, 28 September–26 November 2000," 30 November 2000.

26. It should be remembered that during the first intifada there was a much smaller but significant public sector, predominantly of teachers and health workers employed by the Israeli Civil Administration. However, with Israel as their direct employer their salaries were never under threat as they are now.

27. UNSCO, "The Impact on the Palestinian Economy."

28. *Ibid.*, 6.

29. For an analysis of this process, see Rema Hammami, "NGOs: The Professionalization of Politics," *Race and Class* 37, no. 2 (1995).

30. Azmi Bishara has described this in terms of the PA's "monopolization of public space."

31. The most active NGO umbrella organization, the Palestinian NGO Network, has thus far limited its actions in the current intifada to appeals in the local press

for a boycott on accepting USAID money and on continued participation in shared Israeli-Palestinian projects. The network has also set up a number of task forces, including one to develop strategies for the internal situation. Many of the 120 member organizations are reviewing their activities in an attempt to give them relevance to the current crisis.

32. The PLC finally met on 1 November, but, partly because Israeli checkpoints prevented Gaza deputies from entering the West Bank, only twelve deputies showed up, and their deliberations were confined to messages of solidarity and support (*al-Quds* and *al-Ayyam*, 2 November 2000). Still, there is no explanation as to why the assembly did not meet earlier given the momentous circumstances. On 6 November, a second session of the PLC was convened simultaneously in Ramallah and Gaza. Both were well attended, and a resolution was adopted calling for the formation of an international protection force and the establishment of an emergency fund for public employment (*al-Ayyam*, 7 November 2000).

33. George Giacaman, "In the Throes of Oslo: Palestinian Society, Civil Society and the Future," in *After Oslo, New Realities, Old Problems*, ed. George Giacaman and Dag J. Lonning (London: Pluto Press, 1998), p. 6.

34. For the most extended analysis of PA rule, see Jamil Hilal, *al-Nizam al-Siyasi al-Filastini ba'd Oslo* (The Palestinian political system after Oslo) (Beirut: IPS, 1998).

35. Rema Hammami and Penny Johnson, "Equality with a Difference: Gender and Citizenship in Transitional Palestine," *Social Politics* (Fall 1999).

36. A good summary of these contrasting positions can be gleaned from the proceedings of a conference organized by Muwatin in Ramallah on 9 December 2000. Speakers included Yasir 'Abid Rabbuh, Mustafa Barghouti, Azmi Bishara, Ibrahim Daqqaq, George Giacaman, and Mahmud Nofal (*al-Ayyam*, 9 December 2000).

37. For a review of settlers' reaction, see Neri Livneh, "Time to Leave," *Ha'Areztz Magazine*, 24 November 2000, pp. 9–11.

38. Shahaar Ginorsar, "A Jewish Majority Supports the Evacuation of Settle-

ments," *Yedi'ot Abaronot*, 8 December 2000, translated into Arabic in *al-Ayyam*, 12 December 2000. The call for elections was made by Mustafa Barghouti, a Peo-

ple's Party leader, and by Azmi Shu'aybi, a PLC member from Fida.

39. *Al-Ayyam*, 6 November 2000.