

# Evaluating the Salam Fayyad government in Ramallah

*Mohsen Mohammad Saleh\**



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The formation of the Salam Fayyad government in the West Bank has been a striking and noteworthy phenomenon in the history of modern Palestine. This is due to the fact that his government was the product of internal division among the Palestinians. The reason that his government has endured is because of the persistent internal Palestinian split. Although the Fayyad government enjoys limited legitimacy within the Palestinian political arena, it has benefited from international Arab support and Israeli acceptance, the combined effect of which has ensured its ongoing existence. While the government could count on the backing of the Fatah leadership, which heads the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Palestinian National Authority (PA), Fayyad exploited his position so as to channel funds to his government and thereby consolidate his political base. This occurred even to the detriment of the political influence exercised by Fatah itself within the structures of the Palestinian National Authority (PA), particularly within the security forces. At the same time, Fayyad's programme coalesced with the political designs of President Mahmoud Abbas, who had adopted reconciliation with Israel as his project, along with the renunciation of armed resistance. Fayyad's programme dealt with Hamas and the constellation of armed resistance factions on the basis that they represented illegal political forces, while concluding a security agreement with the Israeli occupation, and focusing on economics as the basis on which to build a future Palestinian state.

This paper presents a general perspective on the Palestinian government established by Salam Fayyad in Ramallah, spanning the period from mid-June 2007 to mid-2010. It discusses the formation of this government, its legal basis, and its accomplishments in the fields of politics, economics and the guaranteeing of safety and security.

### **First: The establishment of the government**

The Makkah Agreement between Fatah and Hamas, which was concluded on 8 February 2007, resulted in the formation of a Palestinian government of national unity led by Ismail Haniyyah of Hamas. At the time of the Hamas-led government winning a vote of confidence in the Palestinian Legislative Council on 17 March 2007, Salam Fayyad held the position of finance minister. In the aftermath of events in the Gaza Strip which threatened national security, and Hamas taking over political control of the Strip on 14 June 2007, the government collapsed and President Mahmoud Abbas attempted to delegitimise Hamas and to override the Legislative Council where Hamas boasted a majority. To accomplish these objectives, Abbas put pressure on the PLO so that he might confidently control it through his presidential decrees. This occurred despite the fact that the PLO is merely the reference point for the PA as regards major policy issues, and is not an executive or legislative tool within the framework of the Authority.

The Executive Committee of the PLO convened in a special session on 14 June 2007 wherein it endorsed a number of recommendations which effectively subjected the PLO to the political discretion of Abbas. These recommendations included:

1. Dismissing the government of Ismail Haniyyah;
2. The proclamation of a state of emergency;
3. The formation of a government capable of implementing the state of emergency; and
4. The holding of early elections.

Abbas adopted these recommendations, and implemented them in terms of three ordinances. In addition, Abbas tasked Salam Fayyad with setting up an emergency government which would enforce the state of emergency. On 17 June 2007, Fayyad's new government was sworn into office in front of Abbas in Ramallah. The government was composed of Fayyad, and eleven ministers, including two independent politicians and a technocrat. It excluded all ministers who belonged to the resistance factions. This was in spite of the fact that in the 25 January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) election, Fayyad's independent party, the Third Way party – set up to be an alternative to the two-party Fatah-Hamas contest – had won only two out of the 132 seats in the Legislative Council.

One month before the term of the emergency government ended, on 13 July 2007, the government was enlarged. In terms of a presidential decree from Abbas, four new ministers were added to the government, increasing the number of ministers from twelve to sixteen, including Fayyad himself. Two days thereafter, Fayyad's emergency government tendered its resignation, and the expanded government was then regarded as a caretaker government.

Then, on 22 January 2009, four days after the end of Israel's war on the Gaza Strip, Fayyad created a new government under Abbas' supervision. On 7 March 2009, after the national reconciliation meetings began in Cairo, Fayyad officially tendered his government's resignation. Abbas accepted the resignation, and said that the purpose behind it was to consolidate and reinforce the national dialogue, and to pave the way for the establishment of a new government. However, he then requested Fayyad to continue administering the political affairs of the PA until a new Palestinian Authority government was formed.

On 8 May 2009, when the stuttering national dialogue halted, and extended sessions were agreed upon, Abbas decided that Fayyad should again be vested with the duty of setting up a government. This new government was established on 19 May 2009 and was comprised of twenty-four ministers, most of them technocrats. Members of the Fatah movement occupied half of the ministerial positions, while the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF), the Palestinian People's Party (PPP) and Fida' were all represented by one minister each. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) refused to participate due to its desire to form a government of national reconciliation.

## **Second: The legal framework**

In terms of the Palestinian Basic Law (the constitution), the dissolution of the government of national unity, i.e., Ismail Haniyyah's government, should have meant that any new government that would be appointed would merely be a caretaker government. This was exceeded by the Palestinian president through his proclamation of a state of emergency. Experts in Palestinian law have asserted that there is no legal text which explicitly endorses the decree setting up an emergency government. All that the constitution does, in fact, is to grant the president the right to declare a state of emergency for a limited period of thirty days. However it does not confer upon him the legal right to set up an emergency government. The constitution further empowers the president to extend the state of emergency by a month, provided that a two-thirds majority of the Legislative Council agrees to such an extension. There is another explicit constitutional provision which obliges any government to approach the Legislative Council to seek a vote of confidence from it. This provision applied to Salam Fayyad's new government, assuming the legality of its creation in the first place.

President Abbas sought to bypass all these problematic issues by legislating by decree. Accordingly, on 22 June 2007, a few days after the upheaval in Gaza, a presidential decree was issued abrogating a paragraph in the enabling law, the Constitution. The paragraph in question had required the Legislative Council's prior approval of any ministerial appointments. The decree also suspended the operation of Article 79 of the Constitution as amended.

According to the Palestinian democratic system, the legal requirement to allow Fayyad's government to operate was a presidential mandate. It failed, however, to gain legitimacy for its establishment and ongoing operation from the Palestinian Legislative Council with its Hamas majority. A remarkable factor is that this government, which is supposed to represent the will of the people, vigorously opposes the political party which democratically represents the will of the majority of the Palestinian people, and which has legally been entrusted with the mandate to represent them.

In view of the above scenario, it is clear that the primary factor behind the enduring existence of Fayyad's government is the fact that the Legislative Council has been prevented from discharging its important functions and has, in fact, been paralysed. To that one should add the continuing incarceration of the majority of the Council's members from the West Bank (especially those from the Reform and Change Bloc backed by Hamas) by Israeli authorities. Israel has arrested forty-one legislative members of Hamas out of a total of seventy-four members in the course of the aggressive campaign it launched in the middle of 2006. The number of arrested members later increased to forty-four. In other words, the Israeli-American alliance represents a substantial force behind Palestinian political decisions through the imposition of specific political directions aiming to benefit one political group against another.

President Abbas and the Fayyad government have jointly undertaken the task of reformulating the economic, social and security laws while taking advantage of the absence of the legislative authority which is opposed to these political measures. During the period from June 2007 to June 2008, Abbas and the Ramallah-based government issued 406 decrees covering almost all facets of life, and both the political and the legal systems. This opened the way for the accusation levelled against the presidency and the caretaker government that while they point fingers at Hamas for staging a revolt in Gaza and engaging in illegal activities, they themselves have turned against the law, opposed the representatives of the national legislature, and have sought to remove them from the political scene.

### **Third: Political support**

Fayyad's government has received ongoing support from President Mahmoud Abbas, who has thrown his weight behind it in his capacity as president of the Palestinian National Authority, president of the PLO, and president of Fatah. It is because of such continuous support that Fayyad's government has been protected by the PLO, the Fatah movement, and the various factions of Palestinian struggle which belong to the PLO.

At the same time, Fayyad's appointment coincides with the US and western desire to engage with him – both as a result of his political stance and on account of his economic and administrative competence. One can further witness Israel's satisfaction in dealing with him because of his adherence to the obligations of the Quartet's Roadmap and his efforts to disarm the resistance.

By virtue of the fact that Fayyad's party holds only two seats in the Legislative Council and heads no resistance faction, he needed Mahmoud Abbas' backing, as well as external support, to guarantee his political authority. This is even more pronounced given the fact that his government inherited complicated political files, prominent among them being the fight against Hamas, and the disarming of Hamas and other resistance factions.

It appears that the Fatah movement only reluctantly lent its support to Fayyad, and only as a result of pressure from Abbas. Several critical objections have emanated from Fatah concerning the way Fayyad manages the affairs of the government, particularly with regard to the fact that he has excluded many members of Fatah from the security forces and from the civil service, or coerces them into retirement while appointing several officials who are ideologically close to him. Two other major bones of contention, as far as Fatah is concerned, is the way Fayyad monopolises the financial resources allocated to the Authority and distributes them to serve his goals, and his relationship with the US.

During the twenty-fifth session of Fatah's Revolutionary Council – which ended on 26 May 2008 and was attended by Abbas – Fayyad and his government were subjected to a fierce political onslaught. Many participants demanded – with raised voices – that a number of ministers be replaced. In particular, they wanted the replacement of Minister of Foreign Affairs Riad Malki, and Minister of the Interior Abdul Razzaq Al-Yahya.

Senior Fatah official Azzam al-Ahmad accused Fayyad's government of trying to achieve hegemony over every aspect of every Palestinian institution. Some meeting participants compared Fayyad to Paul Bremer, the first American governor of Iraq after the 2003 occupation of that country. The basis for such a comparison lay, they said, in the manner in which he had disbanded the military organisations of Fatah. Others referred to Fayyad's government as an American government forced upon the Palestinian people.

When Fayyad formed his government on 19 May 2009, he immediately faced opposition from Fatah's parliamentary bloc which argued that he had failed to consult with them and that he had unilaterally appointed two of its members to ministerial posts without the party's consent. Abbas, however, told the Fatah bloc that the government was his government, and that they should not place any obstacle in its path or impede its work in any way. The presidential intervention compelled the bloc to accede to his wishes. A few weeks later, Fatah commander Hatem Abdel Qader, then Minister for Jerusalem Affairs, resigned from his post and accompanied his resignation with criticism of the government for its failings.

#### **Fourth: Political performance**

Fayyad's caretaker government pressed ahead with its programme of administering the PA in the West Bank, taking advantage of the respect and recognition it had received from Arab states and the international community. The government went along with the provisions of the Oslo Accords and adhered to the prescriptions and the security requirements laid down in the Roadmap for Palestinians to move towards statehood.

The Fayyad government regarded such a policy as being a realistic approach necessitated by the nature of the transitional political scenario and the weakness then prevailing in the Palestinian, Arab and Islamic situations, as well as the inability of the resistance trend, under the difficult circumstances it faced, effectively to achieve national goals.

As a result, Fayyad's government strove to meet its obligations in order to force its Israeli counterpart to honour its side of the bargain, and thus realise Palestinian rights – or at least some of them – through negotiations. The main objective of Fayyad's government was to improve the economic and living conditions of the Palestinians, given that economic development, which is relied upon by 'the essence of philosophical thought and a defiant political logic, is founded on the citizen's firm entrenchment in his homeland.

Salam Fayyad stressed that his government would be a transitional one which would remain in power until a government of national unity could be established. He identified the political priorities of his government as: putting a halt to new Israeli settlements, stopping Israeli incursions, and the lifting of the Israeli embargo. He also stressed that the political programme of his government would be the same as that of Mahmoud Abbas and the PLO.

Fayyad stated the aim of his government's political programme as being 'the establishment of the independent institutions of a state' within two years. His government spent two months elaborating the details of a political plan, which he formally unveiled on 25 August 2009. The plan included the establishment of numerous projects that would indicate a level of state sovereignty, such as an airport and a railway, the construction of necessary infrastructure, securing the sources of energy, urban improvements, education and agriculture, encouraging investment, and improving the performance of the security forces, as well as the building of hospitals, clinics and so forth. Fayyad refuted the criticism that his plan coincided with what is termed 'economic peace' (with Israel) as advocated by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, and the criticism that he was developing a 'comfortable life under occupation' for the Palestinians. Fayyad maintained that his plan was a comprehensive development plan which aimed at ending the occupation, not entrenching it.

Through the implementation of his political programme, Fayyad intended to achieve realistic objectives, by benefiting as much as possible from the prevailing circumstances, and by making an effort to produce facts on the ground which would buttress the establishment of a Palestinian state, or at least to support the Palestinian people's brave defiance and steadfastness in their homeland. His aim had to be realised against the backdrop of the facts on the ground imposed by Israel on the land of Palestine.

Fayyad was, however, confronted with the underhanded dealings of a treacherously double-crossing Israeli counterpart which turned the path of negotiations into an endless process. Thus, Fayyad's measures were weak when compared with Israel's swift and vigorous moves to implement large-scale projects of Judaization in Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank. Meanwhile, Israel benefited from the fact that the PA was dutifully complying with its obligation to curb the resistance movements, without which the Authority had no instruments with which to pressurise its Israeli counterpart.

### **Fifth: Economic performance**

Salam Fayyad exerted himself in his task of improving the dire Palestinian economic situation, especially in the West Bank. In that regard, he benefited from the Israeli government's lifting of the embargo on the West Bank, and from Israel's remission of tax revenues it collected from and on behalf of the Palestinians. Fayyad similarly benefited from international support, especially from the US, for both his person and his government. As a result, after a temporary suspension of donor funds, coinciding with Hamas' control of the PA, foreign aid and relief funds again began to flow from donor countries into the coffers of the PA.



Israel, however, continues to retain a stranglehold over the Palestinian economy. This is maintained through its unjust interference with its imports and exports, and its imposition of restrictions and impediments on the free movement of people and goods. Furthermore, Israel consumes most of the Palestinian water resources, expropriates land, and expands its colonisation and Judaization programmes, with the inevitable consequence that the opportunities for economic growth are largely pawns of Israel's volatile mood and contingent inclinations. Israel has continuously used economic and security pressure to reap political gains and subordinate the Palestinians to its domination, including those Palestinians who liaise with it in respect of the peace settlement project and who cooperate with it in the implementation of its security measures.

During the period that Fayyad headed the government, the gross domestic product (GDP) of the West Bank and Gaza Strip rose by 5.4 percent in 2007, 5.9 percent in 2008, and 6.8 percent in 2009. This occurred after it had dropped by 5.2 percent in 2006 as a result of the Israeli embargo. Notwithstanding these increases, the GDP is still of modest proportions if compared to the potential of the Palestinian economy. Indeed, it grew from 4.5 billion dollars in 2007 to approximately 5.15 billion dollars in 2009. However, a comparison in the same period with Israel shows that the latter's gross domestic product amounted to approximately 200 billion dollars. The average income of a Palestinian rose from 1 298 dollars in 2007 to 1 390 dollars in 2009, an increase of only ninety-two dollars, whereas the corresponding average income of an Israeli citizen soared from 23 000 to 27 000 dollars.

Foreign aid still accounted for between fifty and fifty-five percent of the PA's budget, reaching 1 763 million dollars in 2008 (including 446 million dollars from Arab countries), compared to a total amount of about 1 415 million dollars in 2009 (462 million of which came from Arab countries). Thus, foreign aid decreased by 19.7 percent in 2009. It has become apparent that foreign financial support is utilised as an instrument of pressurising the PA. The amount of foreign aid lagged behind during the first half of 2009 – following the cessation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip, the commencement of national reconciliation meetings, and Fayyad's resignation. The actual release of these foreign aid funds materialised only after Fayyad formed a new government in May 2009.

As for the Authority's revenue generated by tax collections carried out by Israel on behalf of the Palestinians, it saw a marked decrease from 1 137 million dollars in 2008 to 1 090 million dollars in 2009. There was, similarly, a reduction in local tax revenues – which comprise the third essential component of the Authority's budget – from 759 million dollars in 2008 to 585 million dollars in 2009.

Salaries and wages make up approximately half of the government's budget. In 2008 these items cost around 1.771 billion dollars out of a total budget of 3.273 billion dollars, in other words, 54.1 percent of the total budgetary expenditure. In 2009 they totalled 1.423 billion dollars out of a cumulative budgetary expenditure of 2.920 billion dollars, representing 48.7 percent of the total. It must be noted that 2009 saw a policy which aimed at reducing public expenditure, limiting new governmental appointments, personnel allowances and promotions, and encouraging early retirement. The security apparatuses consumed more than one-third of the total salaries disbursed to public servants employed by the Authority.

The unemployment rate in the West Bank shot up in late 2009 to approximately twenty-five percent, as compared to thirty-nine percent in the Gaza Strip which is still suffering from the effects of the siege. It is noteworthy that unemployment in the Gaza Strip was as high as forty-five percent in the latter part of 2008. The poverty rate reached twenty-four percent in the West Bank, compared to fifty-six percent in the Gaza Strip.

Israel exercises a persistent hegemony over the Authority's foreign trade in the West Bank. In fact, some sixty-nine percent of the Authority's imports in the West Bank are from Israel, and just over eighty percent of its exports head to Israel.

It is clear that hopes of realising a state of comfort under Israeli occupation is an elusive goal, given that the Israeli occupation itself is the cause of the political, social and economic suffering of the Palestinian people. Due to this, an improvement in the Palestinian standard of living is essentially conditioned on the end of the occupation, rather than on adapting their living conditions while still living under Israel's yoke.

## **Sixth: Security performance**

A few days after Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip, news was leaked to the media that the leaders of the Authority's security forces were in the final hours of arriving at a number of important decisions aimed at preventing a repetition of what they termed 'Gaza's experiment in the West Bank.' The first decision was about the disbanding of the military cells of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, and the Executive Force behind their operations. Another such cluster of important decisions included drying up the sources of Hamas funds, and the closure of its institutions. President Abbas subsequently, on 26 June 2007, issued a decree whereby he banned all armed militias and irregular military structures, regardless of their nature, other than the official military establishment of the Authority. The decree instructed the government to put a stop to the phenomenon of armed groups and to confiscate all weapons in their possession. Such steps were embarked upon so as to make space that would allow for the design of a security-related plan at the office of the Ministry of the Interior headed by Lieutenant General Abdul Razzaq Al-Yahya. The plan included measures against the militant wings of Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other militant factions. In truth, this plan represented an attempt to implement the Roadmap article related to the disbanding of resistance cells.

In the same context, a presidential decree had been issued on 22 June 2007. This decree conferred the necessary competencies on the Minister of the Interior to empower him to dissolve organisations which had previously been authorised to operate in the territory. Furthermore, the decree empowered the minister to shut down all institutions financing Hamas, be they financial, charitable or educational. The effect of the decree was that Fayyad's government was able to venture into the task of breaking up all the zakah (charitable) committees which had been operating in the West Bank on the basis that they served as sources of funding for Hamas.

As a spin-off of this issuing of presidential decrees, there developed a crisis which eventually engulfed the PA itself. This development was sparked by a new decree issued on 17 August 2007. It required the withdrawal of all presidential decrees issued between 7 March 2007 and 15 April 2007 – the period of the existence of the government of national unity led by Ismail Haniyyah – which related to promotions, salary increases, and transfers of ministerial, administrative and governmental officials. All the competencies and powers conferred on these officials as a result of resolutions taken in this period were withdrawn.

Salam Fayyad said that the PA 'was eager to establish political pluralism and will not violate it, but it was, at the same time, opposed to the notion of pluralism in the field of security.' He did, however, reveal the policy of his government's active approach to Hamas, saying, 'As long as the status quo remains in Gaza, Hamas will remain an organisation that is an adversary to the Authority, and the government shall deal with it in light of this reality.'



Illustrating a further hardening of attitudes, Lieutenant Commander Sameh al-Saifi, the head of the Authority's security forces in the Hebron region, did not differentiate between drug dealers and thieves on the one hand, and the members of the resistance groups on the other. Two days after he deployed his forces in Hebron, the security forces under his command arrested fifty-three people, 'sought after by the justice system' as he alleged, in the localities of Samu' and Yattah. Of those arrested, thirty-five were members of Hamas. Al-Saifi said, 'We are clear; we act against the outlaws, drug dealers, burglars, and armed groups related to any party that has weapons.' He added, 'All weapons other than the weapons entrusted to the security forces, whatever their type, are illegal.'

In the context of training and equipping the security forces of the Authority in the West Bank, a special 620 member Palestinian battalion completed training exercises in Jordan which went on for several months. This training took place as part of a general plan laid out by the US security coordinator attached to the Authority, General Keith Dayton. On 28 May 2008, after its training in Jordan, the battalion returned to the West Bank. According to a report by Israel's Haaretz newspaper, these trainees were carefully selected, received special training, and were the first battalion of five assigned to maintain law and order in the West Bank. The report referred to, 'The first Palestinian National Security (PNS) battalion to undergo training under an American program and Jordanian guidance – the first supposedly elite unit of what used to be viewed as the PA army' and added that senior PA officials have dubbed the battalion 'Dayton's baby'.

With Israel's approval, the Authority dispatched its security forces across the regions of Jenin, Nablus, Hebron and Bethlehem. It succeeded in breaking up and disbanding numerous resistance cells and in foiling bomb attacks against Israel. Although its focus was to strike at the civil and military infrastructure of Hamas, the Authority also strove to attack and break up all the military wings of the various resistance factions, including Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, and Al-Quds Brigades affiliated with the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, among others.

Various sources have revealed that Hamas in the West Bank had been subjected to 1 007 attacks from 11 June 2007 to 31 August 2007, both from elements of the security forces as well as from members of Fatah. These attacks included 639 arrests and kidnappings, thirty-six incidents of shootings, and 175 assaults on institutions and organisations, including centres of Qur'anic learning, charitable organisations, media institutes, press offices, schools and nursery schools. There were also 156 raids that targeted private properties belonging to Hamas and its supporters.

On 12 November 2008, Hamas released statistics showing that the Authority had arrested a total of 616 Hamas members for political reasons, including ninety-four university students, thirty-five people who had been political prisoners in Israeli jails and had been released, fifteen mosque imams, thirteen members of either municipal or village councils, and nine journalists. Hamas added that 2 921 of its members had been arrested for political reasons in the West Bank between 10 June 2007 and 11 November 2008. Furthermore, in August 2008, the media office of Hamas released a 369 page book entitled *The Black Book*, which discussed the hundreds of hostile pursuits and aggressions by the Authority's forces which, Hamas alleges, it and other resistance movements were subjected to.

Palestinian human rights organisations confirmed the existence of such political arrests and imprisonment in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Sha'wan Jabarin, the general director and main West Bank official of Al-Haq, an institute established for the defence of human rights, said that the number of arrested prisoners in the West Bank numbered approximately 270. Furthermore, he said all security forces practised torture in

all the regions of the West Bank, and such phenomena had become widespread. The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, a body which had been established by Yasser Arafat, reported that it had received twenty-eight complaints of torture and ill-treatment in November 2008 alone.

While everyone was talking about the Hamas political prisoners detained by the Authority in Ramallah, mentioning their names and numbers, and requesting that a conducive climate be created for the commencement of Palestinian dialogue, Riad Malki, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and of Information in Fayyad's government, went on record to declare: 'We do not have any political prisoners.' This declaration was then emphatically supported by President Mahmoud Abbas.

The security forces in the West Bank dealt harshly with the numerous demonstrations and protests which sought to express their anger at Israeli hostility in the Gaza Strip. Protesters were restricted to narrow forms of expression, and were forbidden from chanting slogans in support of Hamas (which had been leading the war in the Gaza Strip). The PA security forces also prevented protesters from coming into close contact with Israeli occupation forces. Furthermore, they arrested and imprisoned a number of activists who had taken part in the demonstrations of Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and other resistance groups.

Hamas has accused the security forces in Ramallah of never ceasing to carry out their extremely violent campaign against the movement. Indeed, according to Hamas, the concerted campaign against it 'persisted and increased' during the war against Gaza. Even immediately after the conclusion of that conflict, Hamas said, the security bodies in Ramallah carried out an aggressive programme of extensive political arrests of its supporters. Shortly before the commencement of the reconciliation sessions between Hamas and Fatah, the second deputy speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Hassan Kharisha, had observed that the number of political arrests had escalated in the West Bank, that members of Fatah and Hamas engaged in the dialogue had no say in that matter, and that the force heading the campaign of political arrests was 'Fayyad's government and some other parties'. The observation fuelled discussions in the course of 2009, as many people believed that Fayyad's government was implementing security measures, with a cover provided by the US, and noted that the arrests did not care about Fatah and its members. They also asserted that many Fatah supporters had been alienated or forced to retire if they did not agree with the security plan. Other persons, however, were of the opinion that Fatah was hiding behind Fayyad and his government in order to implement important steps which it wanted to keep secret. This was done so as to avoid tarnishing its popular image. The allegation was supported by the fact that Fatah exercised considerable pressure on Fayyad's government, and effectively participated in its activities. They added that, had Fatah not approved of the Fayyad government (even if only for the sake of what the current phase required), the government would not have survived.

In June 2009, while reconciliation meetings were taking place between Fatah and Hamas, the PA security forces conducted a campaign of arrests of Hamas' supporters. This was interpreted by political observers as an attempt to reaffirm a commitment to the path of negotiations with Israel as well as a commitment to the Roadmap. From the Hamas standpoint, however, it represented an attempt to eliminate the movement altogether, and to thwart the reconciliation process. According to Hamas, the Authority's security forces had arrested and detained 474 of its supporters, conducted 555 surprise raids and interrogations, and had summoned numerous individuals for interrogation in the month of

June 2009 alone. In the first half of December 2009 (shortly before Hamas' anniversary celebrations), the PA's security forces arrested 550 Hamas supporters.

Hamas lawmakers in the Legislative Council complained of being subjected to harassment, intimidation and being stalked. One of the overt manifestations of this practice, they said, was that Aziz al-Dweik, the PLC speaker, was prevented from performing his function or from going to his office, both of which were necessary for the success of the national reconciliation process.

### **Seventh: Security coordination with the Israeli occupation**

Israelis look on with pleasure and admiration at the activities of the PA's security apparatuses. A report by the Israeli Security Agency (Shin Bet or Shabak), published early in 2008, earnestly commended the work undertaken by these forces. Brigadier General Yoav Mordechai, the head of the civil administration in the West Bank, while speaking about the nature of Israeli coordination with the Authority said, 'We are fighting a real battle against Hamas, both civil and social, and we are working very hard against all the institutions of Hamas, civil and military alike, in the West Bank.' He also stressed that the collaboration was a direct Israeli-Palestinian one.

The head of the Shabak, Yuval Diskin, made it clear during a meeting of the Israeli government that 'security coordination with the Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank is going very well, especially in combating terrorism and closing down institutions.' Riad Malki not only did not deny that such cooperation was taking place, he also stressed that 'no reason exists for preventing security cooperation, which is a very important aspect'.

At the beginning of September 2008, a report issued by the Israeli Ministry of the Interior and published by The Jerusalem Post revealed the extent of Israeli satisfaction regarding the security collaboration with the Authority in Ramallah. The report stated, 'Security coordination is of an unprecedented scope, owing to the sincere effort made by the Palestinian Authority.' It further indicated that such coordination had reached high levels, and that 247 meetings had been held between Israeli and Palestinian officers since the beginning of 2008 until the time of publication.

US support to the Palestinian security forces in Ramallah continued unhindered through funding, training and the provision of equipment. America decided to increase its support to these security forces in 2009 by more than seventy percent, thus raising it to a total of 130 million dollars, as compared to a figure of seventy-five million dollars in 2008. Furthermore, four Palestinian battalions (comprising some 1,600 men) were fully trained at a military base in Jordan under the supervision of American, Jordanian and Palestinian officers, and formed an integral part of the general supervisory framework entrusted to General Keith Dayton. Many of these men were then deployed in the cities of the Jenin, Nablus and Hebron. The preparation of another six battalions was completed in 2009, and it is expected that they will fully be deployed within a period of two years, and will, together with the others, form an overall force of ten battalions. It should be noted that the details and nature of the training exercises are undertaken in coordination with the Israeli and Jordanian armies.

### **Eighth: Relationship with the Gaza government**

After the assumption of political control over Gaza by Hamas and the consequent estrangement from the government in Ramallah, western countries and Israel lifted their embargo on the Ramallah government while maintaining it on the Gaza Strip. The

Palestinian presidency and the Fayyad government expected that an experiment of development and growth would be created in the West Bank, and would be counterposed to the failed and inadequate experiment in the Gaza Strip which would be incapable of solving the problems of daily life. They expected that this 'successful' experiment would lead to the downfall of Hamas in Gaza.

The dominant view was that Salam Fayyad's government was obliged to continue shouldering its financial responsibilities vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip, and would withhold funds only from the Hamas movement. The dual rationale behind this position was: a) averting any accusation of active participation in the siege and collective punishment of the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip from being levelled at Fayyad's government, and b) to refute the accusation that it receives financial support and that it did not allow any part of it to filter to the residents of Gaza, while proclaiming itself to be the government of the entire Palestinian people.

Fayyad's government simultaneously set out to implement a series of measures to realise the rhetoric calling for Hamas' funding sources to be cut, in addition to other administrative measures that raised obstacles against Hamas' possible hegemony over the political scenario in the Gaza Strip. The following illustrate these measures:

- The decision taken by Salam Fayyad's government to refrain from paying the salaries of staff who retained their positions in Gaza, and the discrimination between a public servant following the Ramallah government and his colleagues who supported the government of Gaza.
- The issuing of a political directive to exempt all residents of the Gaza Strip from governmental taxes and dues, in order to prevent the dismissed government from accessing what is core funding source for any government.
- The enactment of a specific law to prevent money laundering, in order to 'reduce the financial channels of Hamas'.

This administrative and financial war waged by Fayyad's government proceeded unabated, as did the siege imposed by Israel; together these resulted in extremely difficult economic circumstances in the Gaza Strip.

Fayyad's government supported President Abbas' view on how to deal with the Gaza Strip and the government of Ismail Haniyyah in that territory. Fayyad said that the recovery of political control over the Gaza Strip by the Ramallah-based Authority represented 'a key political objective which we are vigorously pursuing'. He therefore called for Arab security forces to be deployed on a temporary basis in the Gaza Strip, with the goal of bringing about its reunification with the West Bank. This call intended directly to implicate Arab states in the internal affairs of the Palestinians in a way that would benefit one Palestinian party against another. It was a proposal that could not guarantee the end results, especially since Hamas rejected such a proposition. Hamas took the view that, if there was a need for Arab intervention, it should be directed towards the West Bank. This was because the West Bank was still experiencing direct Israeli occupation, and Palestinians there wanted to be protected from Israeli aggression, as opposed to their being 'protected' from the resistance.

The Fayyad government also called for the intensification of efforts to make a success of the process of national reconciliation, and for setting up a transitional government which would be capable of paving the way to presidential and legislative elections. It prepared itself for the task of administering the crossings into the Gaza Strip for the limited

purpose of overseeing the lifting of the siege. However, it rejected the suggestion of a joint administration with the government of Ismail Haniyyah, which was proposed by the latter.

Sums of money continued to be transferred to Gaza by the Fayyad government in order to cover salaries in certain sectors such as education and health, and to pay for essential services such as electricity and water. It reported that it had remitted approximately 120 million dollars per month to the Gaza Strip, which was equal to half of the Authority's budget.

However, the instructions issued by the Palestinian presidency and Fayyad's government with regard to public servants in the Gaza strip gave rise to an anomalous situation: the PA had instructed government staff not to report for work, except for those in certain specified ministries and institutions that directly and critically affected the lives of the citizens of the Gaza Strip, such as the ministries of health and education, administrative districts, and the Central Bureau of Statistics. The result was that the Authority in Ramallah paid salaries to people who stayed at home, and stopped payment to those attending work, except for the above exceptions.

According to statistics released by the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), which is subordinate to the Authority in Ramallah, the number of civil servants in the Gaza Strip had reached 78 000, 31 350 of whom were military personnel and 45 650 of whom were civil personnel. They further showed that the number of public servants actually present at the workplace numbered 17 750, that is, 22.7 percent, mostly in the Ministry of Education (12 300 employees) and the Ministry of Health (5 000 civil servants).

Wages and salaries paid to public servants engaged in actual work account for 14.2 percent of the total amount of wages and salaries that are disbursed to the Authority's employees in the Gaza Strip. That leaves some eight-six percent of the total salary remunerations, which is being paid by the Ramallah-based Authority to civil servants comfortably sitting at home, since such officials have been forced to abide by the PA's decision or have voluntarily decided to bind themselves by its terms. The monetary value of these remunerations is 386 million dollars, which is disbursed in return for no productive services rendered.

News reports and human rights organisations have pointed out that money had been deducted from the salaries of many employees in the civil service because of their political backgrounds. This included many public servants employed in the ministries of health and education. According to an April 2008 report by Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights, the salaries of 3 615 civil servants, of whom 1 549 worked in the Ministry of Health and 693 in the Ministry of Education, had been affected by salary deductions.

The policy pursued by the presidency and the Ramallah government towards public sector employment was intended to weaken the government in the Gaza Strip, to involve the employment of public servants in the confrontation between Fatah and Hamas, and to engender a disguised unemployment of a new type. This policy also exposed the contradiction and confusion that was prevailing within Palestinian national behaviour. This was reflected in the fact that the phenomenon of Palestinians working in Israeli institutions has become a normal occurrence, whereas working in Palestinian institutions serving the interests of Palestinian citizens was deserving of punishment, and sitting at home and not working resulted in rewards.



Salam Fayyad's government took upon itself the coordination and direct supervision of the reconstruction work in the Gaza Strip on the basis that it represented the legitimate political authority in that territory. It thus dismissed the idea of cooperation or coordination with Haniyyah's government. Fayyad's government prepared a reconstruction plan which it submitted to a conference of donor countries held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on 2 March 2009, where it received pledges of 4.5 billion dollars. The persistent Palestinian internal division, however, and the lack of coordination between the two governments, along with the continuation of the siege, has deprived the people of Gaza of most of the aid that had been set aside for reconstruction.

## Conclusion

It is clear that the future sustainability of Fayyad's government depends to a large extent on a prolonged state of internal division among Palestinians, just as it is evident that its acceptance by Israel and the US is dependent on its full compliance with the Oslo Accords and with the Roadmap's obligations to enforce security.

In the past three years Fayyad has succeeded in entrenching his political position in the West Bank by virtue of his heading the government and his monopolisation of donor funds. Just as Hamas suffered from the pursuit of its members by the security forces, the closing down of its institutional bases, and the strikes against its organised structures and resistance, the Fatah movement, too, has been affected by the termination of services and early retirement involving thousands of its members within the security forces and the Authority's ministries, apart from the disbandment and forceful targeting of members of Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. The same fate befell other Palestinian organisations. Fayyad filled vacancies with people more loyal and closer to him, and more willing to interact within the negotiations paradigm he was operating within.

Fayyad's policies have given rise to a far-reaching state of security, though the quieter environment has been as a result of numerous attacks on the resistance project, i.e., the alternative project to the negotiations project, and striking at one of the core elements underpinning Palestinian society in its confrontation with Israeli occupation. The consequence is that the general state of calm has tempted the Israeli occupation to perpetuate and entrench itself.

Another key result of Fayyad's policies is that they have resulted in relative economic improvement. Essentially, however, this improvement is linked to aid and support from donor countries, and is not indicative of actual economic growth. At the same time, the Israeli occupation never ceased to suffocate production, import and export activities, and the transfer of money, and to make use of these as tools that would help produce political and economic gains for Israel.

The solution to the problem faced by the Palestinian people lies in their ridding themselves of Israeli occupation, rather than in improving their living conditions under the occupation. The real key to this solution is the realisation of national unity and the prioritisation of the main national exigencies over secondary needs. This needs to be done alongside the breathing of new life into the Palestinian legislative and executive institutions, as well as the utilisation of the full potential of the Palestinian people.

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*\* Dr. Mohsen Mohammad Saleh is the Director of the Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies and Consultations, and is a prolific writer on matters dealing with Palestine and Israel.*