Fatah: Recognition of Palestine requires more than lip service

The spokesman for the Palestinian Al-Fatah movement and member of Fatah's Revolutionary Council, Dr. Jamal Nazzal, arrived on his first visit to Denmark on Saturday, January 24, 2014. Dr. Nazzal's visit renews hopes that Denmark will follow its Scandinavian neighbors Norway and Sweden with regard to a recognition of Palestine. He stressed, however, that a recognition of Palestine requires more than lip-service and that there is an urgent need for the establishment of a Palestinian State and initiatives to end Israel's occupation and impunity.

Asked during a telephone conversation whether his first visit to Denmark could suggest initiatives towards a Danish recognition of Palestine, the Fatah envoy to Europe replied that Fatah, of course, hopes that talks with colleagues in Denmark and at the United Nations would help facilitate a recognition of the Palestinian State and a change in Danish policy. Both Norway and Sweden have recognized Palestine, leading especially to tensions in Israeli - Swedish relations and the recent cancellation of Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström's visit to Tel Aviv in January. A spokesman of Sweden's Foreign Ministry noted that Wallström canceled the visit due to scheduling difficulties but that he wouldn't exactly describe Israeli - Swedish relations as “the best”. Prior to the cancellation, Wallström commented on the Israeli government, saying:

“It is unacceptable how they have been talking about us and everybody else... It has irritated not only us, but also the Americans and everyone involved with them right now.”

It is among others within the context of this current Scandinavian atmosphere with regard to Israel and Palestine that Dr. Jamal Nazzal visited the Danish capital Copenhagen.

Several prominent Palestinian legislators from various factions, including Fatah have repeatedly noted that the Norwegian brokered 1993 Oslo Accords were, for all intents and purposes, practically dead and buried. Statements in that regard were often made in the light of systematic Israeli violations of the Oslo Accords. To mention but a few, the continued and accelerated settlement policy, house demolitions, the violations of religious rights of Christian and Muslim communities in East Jerusalem, daily violence, the use of disproportionate military force, the usurpation of Palestinian water rights, the recent decision to withhold Palestinian tax revenues, and on and on.

Asked about his and Fatah's official position with regard to the Oslo Accords, Dr. Nazzal replied that Palestine, as a State, is committed to adhering to all treaties which it has signed, including the Oslo Accords. He stressed that this was Palestine's policy, regardless whether Israel violated treaties or international law or not.

Giving Israel Card Blanche for Violations of the Oslo Accords, International Law and UN Resolutions made Palestine walk away from two Decades of Negotiations.

Following up on his statement that Palestine was committed to adhering to the treaties it has signed as a State, Dr. Nazzal stressed that what was required was an end to the policy to give Israel card blanche with regard to its violations of the Oslo Accords, its violations of international law and UN Resolutions.

The Fatah spokesman in Europe stressed that it was this policy by certain nations to give Israel card blanche that
ultimately forced Palestine to walk away from two decades of negotiations. Dr. Nazzal’s statement reflected the words of chief PLO and Palestinian Authority negotiator Dr. Saeb Erekat. In 2014 Dr. Erekat stressed that Palestine’s situation has worsened since the 1993 Oslo Accords, adding that “We don’t need more peace talks, what we need is peace”.

**ICC’s Preliminary Investigation a Step in the right Direction.**

After the UN Security Council rejected the adoption of a Jordanian-sponsored Palestinian draft resolution that called for a fixed time-line for a full Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territories in 2017, Palestine signed and acceded over 20 international treaties and conventions, including the Rome Statute. Earlier that month UN Secretary-General Ban Kiyoon stated that Palestine has UN Observer State status and that Palestine therefore would become a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on January 1, 2015.

The Israeli government responded by withholding Palestinian tax revenues which it is collecting under the provisions of the Oslo Accords. Israel denounced the PLO and the Palestinian Authority for unilateral action and threatened with strong and decisive action “to protect Israeli officers and citizens.

Asked about Fatah’s position with regard to the fact that Israel has not made Israeli citizens libel to prosecution at the ICC, Dr. Jamal Nazzal responded that Palestine was aware of that fact. He added, however, that there have previously been special ad hoc tribunals like the ICTY. He said that Palestine, under any circumstances, considers it as a positive step that the ICC has launched a preliminary investigation. Moreover, he added, that one might consider the implications of the fact that many of the crimes which had been committed by Israelis had been committed within the territory of Palestine which has acceded to the Rome Statute and will become an ICC member on April 1.

**U.S. Senate’s Decision to stop funding the PA counterproductive and collective Punishment.**

In December the United States’ Senate adopted legislation to end the U.S.’ funding of the Palestinian Authority if Palestine accedes to the ICC and lodges suits against Israeli citizens. The legislation was crafted in such a manner that the White House could not override the bill, even if the administration of President Obama would have wanted to do so.

 Asked about the legislation, Dr. Nazzal stressed that this legislation was counterproductive and a form of collective punishment of about 170,000 Palestinian public employees and their families who are dependent on the wages. Asked whether he thought that the legislation had been crafted to weaken a Palestinian unity government Dr. Nazzal replied:

“Palestinians are an intelligent people and they know what this legislation aims at and which forces were at work behind it”.

**Recognizing Palestine requires more than Lip-Service.**

The Fatah spokesman in Europe stressed that Fatah and Palestine appreciate the recent wave of recognitions of Palestine by certain European countries. He added, however, that a recognition per se was unsatisfactory and that recognizing Palestine and solving the decades-long conflict required more than lip-service.

Dr. Nazzal stressed the urgent need for a UN Security Council Resolution that puts an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and other concrete, tangible steps. What is needed, he said, is to send unequivocal messages to Israel which convey that non-compliance with international law will have tangible, economic and political consequences.

**The Israeli Occupation of Palestine and the Radicalization of Palestinian Arab and European Youths.**

Dr. Nazzal noted that six decades of Israeli occupation has resulted in the radicalization of the Palestinian youths. Moreover, he added, the occupation has also contributed to the radicalization of young people throughout the Arab world as well as young people in Europe and beyond.

Radical Islamist organizations, including Hamas, Egypt’s and the International Muslim Brotherhood, as well as Islamist terrorist organizations have in part been cause by this radicalization process caused by Israel’s occupation of Palestine.

Dr. Nazzal added that it was particularly noteworthy that the majority of the most radical of these organizations never targeted Israel, while they are primarily targeting those Palestinian factions and those Arab States which have
a pro Pan-Arab policy that builds on national sovereignty. Dr. Nazzal concluded that it is a well-established fact that Israel has supported such radical Islamist movements to weaken the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and any Arab States which oppose Israel's regional ambitions.

Dr. Christof Lehmann an independent political consultant on conflict and conflict resolution and the founder and editor in chief of nsnbc, exclusively for the online magazine “New Eastern Outlook”. 