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**THE ROLE OF THE PALESTINIAN DIASPORA
IN THE REHABILITATION AND DEVELOPMENT
IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Palestinian diaspora groups around the world do not play a significant role in the development and rehabilitation of the occupied Palestinian territory (OPT) at this time. While there exists a plethora of Palestinian groups, many are not founded or run by Palestinians and are instead the projects of those politically sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, including other Arabs, encompassing a variety of nationalities, religious affiliations and interest. Though the Palestinian cause is often hailed as the unifying political cause of all Arab populations, the interests of such groups therein are necessarily less focused specifically on Palestinian development, as they need to address the disparate concerns of a varied membership.

Of the Palestinian diaspora groups that do exist, most are small in size and their membership tends to be very specific—organized by location, profession, or issue of interest. For these reasons, these groups do not usually have any major funding and their activities focus on community building, advocacy and awareness-raising and cultural activities. In the few cases where works on the ground are being initiated, the projects tend to be highly targeted, individualistic and narrow in scope, rather than part of a comprehensive socio-economic development and rehabilitation plan.

Given this situation, can there be a role for such diaspora groups in the development of Palestine? Is there something that they can bring to the table that other actors, such as the United Nations, governments, and NGOs, cannot? In other words, is it possible to identify characteristics, skills, and capabilities in which diaspora groups have a comparative advantage?

Unfortunately, until the Palestinian diaspora includes more specialized vocational groups and is more strongly networked in the professional arena, both within and across borders, driven by a common comprehensive vision and strategy for development and rehabilitation, there will be little for these groups to contribute to the development process in the OPT. While these groups should keep up their ongoing advocacy efforts, until a stronger professional arm can be established, their role will remain restricted to such domestic advocacy and awareness-raising. The latter is a critical function of these groups and should be continued if not increased, but it would probably only complicate the process of long-term development for small groups to get involved in a minor and ad hoc fashion.

However, there is potential for this situation to change. If they are able to organize into well-established and well-networked institutions, diaspora groups may be able to expand from advocacy into management of and participation in the development process in advising and consulting and in bringing specialized and advanced know-how. A local prioritization of requirements in the OPT alongside an identification of the capabilities of the diaspora may lead the successful matching of needs and resources. A description of the key features of the Palestinian diaspora, a comparison to other diasporas, and an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses as well

as its role thus far give way to recommendations for what role this group can play in future development efforts in the OPT and how to bring about this involvement.

II. THE PALESTINIAN DIASPORA: FACTS AND FIGURES

According to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) the Palestinian population worldwide numbers over 9 million, of which approximately 5 million, or 60 per cent, constitute the diaspora (the remainder reside in the OPT and Israel). Of these, the largest concentration of diaspora Palestinians reside in surrounding countries, with Jordan hosting the largest number and Egypt, the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf countries following. Other significant groups exist in Europe and North America, specifically the United States. Additionally, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) counts 4,083,300 registered refugees in its camps in the OPT and surrounding countries.¹ It must be noted that because this figure includes people in camps within the OPT, some of these would normally be considered internally displaced. How this figure overlaps with PNA figures is thus unclear.

POPULATION ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PALESTINIANS IN THE WORLD,
END YEAR 2002

Country	Number	Percentage
Palestinian Territory	3 559 999	38.2
Jordan	2 716 188	29.2
Israel	1 037 752	11.2
Syrian Arab Republic	423 453	4.6
Lebanon	402 977	4.3
Saudi Arabia	300 565	3.2
Other foreign countries	295 075	3.2
United States	231 723	2.5
Other Gulf countries	120 612	1.3
Iraq and Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	112 177	1.2
Egypt	60 114	0.6
Kuwait	38 254	0.4
Other Arab countries	6 333	0.1
Total	9 305 222	100.0

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Available at: Palestinian National Authority, Ministry of Planning web site: <http://www.mop.gov.ps/en/facts/population.asp>.

¹ "Total Registered Refugees Per Country and Area As of 30 June 2003." United Nations Relief and Works Agency. <http://www.un.org/unrwa/publications/statis-01.html>.

However, these population figures are somewhat misleading. For example, the PNA numbers for those living outside of the OPT and Israel probably only include those with Palestinian citizenship, not those who have switched their citizenship. Because there are vast numbers of Palestinians who fall in the latter category, the diaspora is likely much larger than the 5 million that the PNA counts. The real numbers are also made larger by the children of current and former Palestinians living abroad who have never held Palestinian citizenship but maintain a cultural or ancestral connection to Palestine. For the purposes of development work, they form an important part of the diaspora, but are nowhere registered as Palestinian.

Furthermore, while many Palestinians originally fled to one neighbouring country, they may have subsequently moved to another. This kind of movement outside of the OPT and Israel introduces the risk of double counting, as the refugee may be counted in their first stop, their second stop, or both.

In sum, because of the fluid and frequent movements of the Palestinians as well as issues of switched and dual citizenship, accurate population figures for the diaspora do not exist. On an abstract level, this introduces the question of who is a Palestinian. Are Palestinians only those who are registered as Palestinian citizens or does the population include former Palestinians who have switched their citizenship? On a practical level, this definitional problem means that identifying the diaspora—its numbers and locations—is a particularly complex task.

III. COMPARISON TO OTHER DIASPORAS: AFGHANISTAN, SRI LANKA AND SOMALIA

While many countries have significant diaspora populations spread out across the globe, there are certain features of the Palestinian diaspora that set it apart. First, while the Palestinian diaspora is almost entirely conflict-defined, it has taken on economic aspects. The original impetus to flight was the ongoing conflict with Israel, but some refugee movements have in effect become economic migration.

Second, the conflict has been ongoing for over 50 years, thereby creating a diaspora population that encompasses several generations. Recent conflicts, such as the Balkan War and internal fighting in Haiti, have given rise to significant outflows of asylum-seekers; however, in many instances, the people seeking to leave are the first of their kind, and there is therefore only an embryonic diaspora network outside their country of origin. By contrast, few conflicts have endured for so long that there are entire generations born as refugees in foreign countries or refugee camps. However, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Somalia do fall into this category. Like Palestine, they have seen continued fighting for decades, and their diaspora populations span both time and space.

Afghanistan and Palestine are both instances where there are significant numbers of internally displaced peoples (IDPs) and where many refugees remain in

neighbouring countries. Both also have a wider diaspora in Europe and North America. Most notable is that for many of these refugees, flight that was originally from conflict has become economic migration—that is, the search for better opportunities, both educational and vocational. This latter kind of migration is critical as it is the source of remittance inflows as well as awareness-raising in countries farther afield. Remittances from Palestinians in the Gulf countries and from Afghanis in North America, Europe, Pakistan, and the Gulf states have been instrumental to both these locations.

However, Palestinian economic migration differs from the usual definition of economic migration because of the uncertainty of the right of return. Many Palestinians who fled from deadly conflict subsequently move from their first destination in search of economic opportunity because the right of return has not been granted. Most Palestinian economic migration is thus indirectly conflict-induced because it often takes the form of a second or third migration after the original flight from conflict.

Moreover, even flight due to conflict is not restricted to flight from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While Palestinians witnessed the largest waves of flight out of the OPT and Israel in 1948 and 1967, they have also been forced to move by other regional conflicts, most importantly the two wars in Iraq. In other words, a Palestinian who fled to Iraq may then have been forced to flee from there. In some instances then, the multiple flights of a Palestinian are all conflict-induced, thereby further differentiating Palestinian flight from other long-lasting conflicts around the globe.

Sri Lanka also witnesses significant internal displacement alongside large outflows of both conflict-induced refugees and economic migrants. Again, however, the economic migration of Sri Lankans cannot be classified as the same kind of “forced” economic migration of Palestinians due to the denial of the right to return. Nevertheless, the Sri Lankan conflict is similarly long-lived and provides some important lessons.

Private remittances have played a salient role in Sri Lanka, surpassing foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows by 3 to 4 times and making up approximately 5 per cent of the gross national product (GNP).² In addition, the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora is considered a paradigmatic diaspora in terms of organization and institutions. Organized under the auspices of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) the main rebel group in Sri Lanka’s civil war, the diaspora is tightly networked around the globe and institutionally sophisticated. It undertakes complex business ventures, raising money for the LTTE in Sri Lanka, and it provides a highly accessible and highly organized network for incoming refugees, keeping them involved in the cause

² Sriskandarajah, Dhananjayan. “The Migration Development Nexus: Sri Lanka Case Study”. *International Migration* Vol. 40 (5), 2002, p. 294-295.

of their ethnic kin in Sri Lanka. While some of the LTTE's diaspora efforts have been illegal and have helped to fuel the conflict in Sri Lanka with arms purchases and funding, the high degree of organization and networking have led to an institutionally developed and extremely effective diaspora.

The diaspora of yet another conflicted country, Somalia, bears some similarity to the aforementioned diasporas. Somalia has experienced an ebb and flow of fighting since independence in 1960, which has produced, as in these other cases, a combination of conflict-generated refugees and economic migrants, many of whom went to the Gulf countries where rapid development triggered substantial labour importation. The latter group sent back money in the form of remittances, which like in Palestine, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan provided critical injections of cash into local economies. Later refugee outflows from Somalia went mostly to Europe and North America, where economic and educational opportunity was greater. As in other conflicts, these refugees tended to be the most educated of Somali society.

A few key points can be taken from these examples. Where migration patterns are originally conflict-defined, they can become economically based if better opportunities abroad are accessible. This is a major disadvantage for countries experiencing long-term conflict. A direct correlation of this economic migration is that those who leave tend to be the most highly-educated, therefore contributing to "brain drain".

However, as discussed, Palestinian economic migration remains conflict-induced due to the impossibility of return for those who have crossed the border out of the OPT and the fact that many refugees are forced to move because of regional conflicts as well as their own. Thus, while these other diasporas provide important insight into the blurring of the line between conflict-induced and economic migration, the Palestinian case is unique and must be addressed with an eye to its special circumstances.

On the more positive side, as mentioned, these educated diasporas experiencing greater vocational and educational opportunities often realize greater financial success and send back remittances which support local economies and provide survival money for families. While remittances traditionally finance consumption and immediate needs, there is some evidence that they are being invested into small businesses and real estate. Furthermore, where the numbers are great enough and diaspora members are clustered geographically, there is the potential for them to play a significant role in institutionalized development efforts in their homeland, as in the case of Sri Lanka.

However, unlike the Tamil diaspora from Sri Lanka, the Palestinian diaspora is currently not well organized and it is institutionally weak. Since Oslo, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) which traditionally had managed and organized the diaspora and, to a degree, remittance inflows, has become progressively weaker and its ability to oversee this process has evaporated. While remittance inflows may

remain significant, they are no longer methodical or managed in any way. They occur on an individual basis and make little contribution to larger development or rehabilitation needs.

Additionally, diaspora members outside of the OPT are not systematically networked. This means that there is no way to involve the diaspora in rehabilitation efforts because their locations, capacities, and numbers are unknown.

IV. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PALESTINIAN DIASPORA

In examining the strengths and weaknesses of the Palestinian diaspora it is important to distinguish between the periods before and after the Oslo Accords. Before the Accords, the PLO was an ascendant organization. It played a critical role in organizing diaspora members, and it established regional offices around the globe, organized conferences, and conducted advocacy work. Because the PLO included diaspora representatives, it enjoyed extensive membership at the same time as increasing international recognition.

However, with the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the PNA, PLO role diminished dramatically. The PNA has a foreign office within the Ministry of Foreign relations, but it is very small and does not have the capacity to effectively manage the diaspora. At the same time, because the PNA is elected within Palestine and therefore does not represent diaspora members, any efforts it makes towards diaspora management are hampered diaspora members' fear that any of the activities they undertake will not have autonomy of action.

Given the minimal role played by the Palestinian diaspora since Oslo, it seems fair to say that currently the weaknesses of the diaspora outweigh the strengths. While there was a resurgence of diaspora contribution with the inception of the 2000 Intifada, these efforts have been primarily relief-oriented not development-oriented, and overall diaspora involvement remains heavily constrained. However, these obstacles are not insurmountable and the successes achieved so far should be used as a base from which to build a more solid and continuous role for the diaspora in the OPT.

A. WEAKNESSES

Paucity of sustainable diaspora organization: Palestinians have not established a large number of sustainable institutions in the diaspora, which is probably a direct result of the absence of a comprehensive network of diaspora members. Though there are myriad groups in neighbouring countries that are affiliated with Palestinian political parties and factions, there are more active unaffiliated Palestinian institutions in Europe and the United States than in the Arab world and other regions. However, numbers do not necessarily translate into effectiveness and, importantly, there is a particular dearth of vocational groups in the diaspora. While advocacy groups abound,

only a few groups are organized around a profession or area of expertise—and this type of group is specially positioned to contribute to development initiatives. *The Palestinian American Society of Engineers* and the *National Arab American Medical Association Foundation* are two of the few organizations that fall in this category.

Institutional weakness of diaspora organizations: While some groups are well-established and efficiently structured, many smaller diaspora organizations do not have permanent staff, boards or trustees, headquarters, or—perhaps most importantly—funding. Instead, they undertake advocacy work on an ad hoc and voluntary basis. Some groups are becoming more effective by taking advantage of low-cost communication technology such as the internet, but this is not a substitute for institutional solidarity.

Narrow focus: As noted above, most Palestinian diaspora groups are focused on advocacy and awareness-raising as a result of their minimal budgets and lack of permanent resources. While this is a critical function of the diaspora, as it is indeed usually the first role any diaspora population plays anywhere and should be counted among its successes, there are currently no mechanisms for diaspora inclusion in rehabilitation and development.

Security: As long as there is no political solution to the conflict, the security situation in the OPT will remain precarious at best. While a development process must be undertaken despite these conditions, they present a variety of logistical obstacles. Sending experts to the OPT is tricky due to visa issues and movement within the area is heavily restricted. Sending funds is also made difficult.

Distance: As noted above, many Palestinian diaspora groups are in the United States and Europe. This has both positive and negative implications. On the negative side, these diaspora members have established new lives in new locations and are therefore necessarily less involved in the immediacy and urgency of the conflict. While they may remain sympathetic and informed about the conflict, direct involvement is neither a priority nor, in many instances, a possibility. An important segment of the diaspora is thus far from the conflict geographically and mentally. Beyond the difficulty of persuading people to leave the United States or Europe and travel all the way to the OPT and participate in its development, actually transporting people to the OPT—whether for brief site visits or for longer-term stays—introduce a host of logistical difficulties, including security concerns, visa issues, and the challenges posed by the restriction of mobility to and within the OPT by occupation forces.

Generational gap: Closely correlated with the problem of the geographical gap is that of the generational gap. Because the conflict has endured for so long, entire generations have been born and raised abroad. The OPT is a place they have never seen or been to, reducing their personal connection to it. And the connection that does

remain is primarily one of political sympathy rather than motivation to participate in development efforts, except for those in refugee camps.

Right of return: The ambiguity surrounding the right of return may present another obstacle as participant diaspora members may not be investing in a place they will eventually be able to call home again. If, as discussed, their lives have been reestablished elsewhere, there are strong incentives for them to invest in those new locations instead. Also, as discussed above, the denial of the right of return causes continued out-migration, thus increasing the numbers of diaspora, but potentially further frustrating efforts to involve them.

B. STRENGTHS

Distance: As mentioned, distance from the conflict has both positive and negative ramifications. On the positive side, despite the distance, many Palestinian expatriates feel a close affinity and allegiance to everything Palestinian. This sense of nationalism is key to envisioning a diaspora role in the rehabilitation of the OPT. More importantly, Palestinians living in the diaspora have the advantage of not living in the chaos and turmoil of occupation, which clouds vision and judgement. They are therefore capable of evolving a clear vision and strategy for the Palestinian struggle. They are further capable of linking this vision to a more global vision that resides in advancing human rights, international legitimacy and the rule of law.

Specialized vocational expertise: As discussed above, conflict-induced migration from the OPT has blended with economic migration of those seeking greater educational, vocational, and financial opportunities. Since such opportunities are more readily accessible abroad than in the OPT, the expatriate population tends to be highly educated and expert in specialized fields, including politics, law, engineering, management, and others. They are therefore in a position to bring expertise to the development process that cannot be found locally.

In the effort to move beyond only advocacy to development, steps have recently been taken to involve the diaspora in projects or at least to devise mechanisms for their eventual participation. The main example of this is the Palestinian programme entitled Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) which was introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1977. Its approach is based on the evidence that skilled national expatriates are often better positioned to provide technical support than foreign consultants by reason of their language, cultural affinity, and familiarity with local conditions, and that many expatriates are eager to render short-term service to their home countries on a volunteer basis. It has been successful in sponsoring short-term consultancy trips to the OPT for expatriate experts, attracting approximately 500 expatriate professionals who served in senior advisory and planning positions in various key PNA ministries and other leading Palestinian institutions, including selected NGOs and private sector

institutions. Around 19 per cent of TOKTEN participants have elected to resettle in the OPT, signaling the success of the programme and contributing to “brain gain”.

Despite achievements in medicine, macroeconomic planning, information technology, city planning, education, media, cultural preservation, TOKTEN does face some challenges. Its focus has been primarily on the public sector, and to remain a successful project, diversification into the private sector is necessary. Additionally, its database is currently not very large. This threatens the sustainability of the programme and creates problems of timing—experts may not be available when they are needed. Finally, the problem of resentment of the programme’s participants must be addressed. If expatriates are brought in where a local citizen could have done the job, cooperation is unlikely. Instances of overlap with local experts must be carefully avoided.

V. IMPLICATIONS AND THE DIASPORA’S ROLE TO DATE

Given the above constraints, the role of the diaspora in development and rehabilitation of the OPT has been minimal since Oslo, even with the resurgence of contributions after the most recent Intifada. Aid is mostly limited to relief and not development, and it is mostly undertaken by international or Arab organizations, such as the American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA) and the U.S. Agency for international Development (USAID) and not by Palestinian diaspora groups. However, due to the long-term nature of the conflict, relief organizations are beginning to withdraw emergency funding, citing the necessity of addressing longer-term needs and the fact that emergency relief is not meant to become a permanent solution. In November 2003, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) ended major emergency relief aid programmes in West Bank for these reasons.³ At the same time, when emergency aid ends, development funding often does not immediately begin, and few development organizations have taken up the Palestinian project.

On a practical level, because the Palestinian diaspora population is segmented into vastly disparate groups geographically and financially, there is no one database of diaspora members. Groups in neighbouring countries range from those with restricted rights and limited livelihood opportunities to those who are highly educated and financially stable. Not surprisingly, these nearby groups are more immediately involved in the ongoing conflict and current issues, but are constrained in their ability to access the OPT. Others live farther away in North America and Europe and have great educational and vocational opportunities but are more removed from the conflict.

³ “New Strategy for the West Bank”. International Committee of the Red Cross, 20 November 2003. Available at: <http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/iwplList393/2E0FC25564F315EFC1256DE400337D3E>.

However, precisely because of these educational and vocational opportunities, this segment of the diaspora may be able to bring specific technical expertise to development initiatives, particularly in the fields of engineering, management consulting, sustainable development, law, and politics. Yet, without a comprehensive and up-to-date database, it is impossible to determine the capabilities of the diaspora population.

The diaspora has not, however, been idle. While diffused and mostly un-networked, there are countless solidarity groups undertaking advocacy and anti-discrimination work on behalf of the Palestinians, and in these areas, some success has been realized. For example, *Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition*, has had 3,000 media hits since May 2000, held over 1,000 demonstrations, vigils, teach-ins, exhibits, and other functions in 2003, and has overseen the direct donation of funds and goods to refugees and those whose homes have been demolished in the OPT. Additionally, Arab groups have done extensive advocacy work on behalf of the Palestinian cause. *The Arab American Anti-Discrimination Committee* has helped to ensure that Palestinian concerns remain on the agendas of US politicians and has provided legal assistance to many expatriates.

Unfortunately, the impact of this advocacy work is limited. While these groups have kept the Palestinian cause on the radar screen, they are unable to reach vast segments of the populations in host countries or to affect the policies of host governments. In the United States, for example, the numerous demonstrations organized by solidarity groups have failed to bring about changes in policy towards either the Palestinian or Israeli governments. And despite the large attendance at some demonstrations, the groups seem unable to successfully target those who do not have some prior connection to or interest in the conflict.

These failures are no doubt a result of sparse resources and the lack of coordination between various groups around the world. With no management of the activities of various groups and of available resources, even success in advocacy will remain limited.

VI. MOVING FORWARD

The circumscribed successes of diaspora advocacy activities do not mean that a role in development should not be considered. Instead, these small-scale advocacy efforts should be continued and expanded. Before rehabilitation and development can be undertaken in any meaningful sense, the political and social discourse must be transformed at the international level to include not only Israeli security, but also Palestinian rights violations, including the right to self-determination and the right to development.

These rights are always due, even under conditions of occupation and ongoing violence, and the international community must be reminded of its responsibility in

this area and held accountable for the enforcement of these rights. Current initiatives should therefore maintain and, indeed, enhance their focus on advocacy.

Importantly, this does not preclude a meaningful role for the diaspora. Many expatriates are expert in international law and political issues. This highly-educated group may be able to play a significant part in ensuring that the international community fulfills its legal obligations towards the Palestinians. As a complement to such official efforts, diaspora groups should continue to provide fora where Palestinians abroad can share their stories, in order to increase awareness and counter misconceptions abroad. Indeed, since advocacy efforts to date have not been successful in affecting policy or of reaching unaffiliated segments of populations abroad, they must necessarily be amplified.

Furthermore, as mentioned, the international community must acknowledge the Palestinians' right to development, including education, health care, and employment, even while the conflict persists. Many object to undertaking development initiatives under conditions of occupation and conflict, citing the possible destruction of completed projects and security concerns. However, this view only takes into account projects involving physical construction, without considering efforts in health care, education, and professional development.

It is thus amply clear that there remains a lot of work to be done to address the many challenges and obstacles to diaspora involvement. A critical first step is determining the capabilities of the diaspora by creating a strong and inclusive diaspora database that includes locations, numbers, and areas of expertise. While *Palestinian Scientists and Technologists Aboard* (PALESTA) attempted to create a virtual community of diaspora professionals, it encountered myriad problems and has been on hold since 2001. However, the concept is on target. Before development initiatives can be launched, it will be necessary to determine and then prioritize needs on the ground and then to match resources to those needs. Without specified knowledge of the capacities of the diaspora, it will be impossible to match them to work, thus making database-creation a priority.

However the prerequisite needs assessment must be done locally in a process managed by the PNA and the PLO with the input of local experts and citizens. Outside experts will not have the familiarity with current conditions necessary to accurately determine and prioritize development needs. Additionally, they are likely to be viewed as "foreign experts", even if they have Palestinian heritage. Communication between the diaspora and local citizens is critical to the success of any joint venture, and if expatriates are perceived as imposing their agenda on Palestinians in the OPT, cooperation efforts will fail. In sum, a local prioritization of development needs and an assessment of diaspora capacities and the creation of a diaspora balance should occur simultaneously: once they are complete, needs and resources can be appropriately matched.

Additionally, as noted above, vocational diaspora organizations are practically few in number, but are specially poised to contribute expertise to the development process. Building on the examples of TOKTEN and PALESTA, a special effort should be made to foster vocational groups, which will bring not only networks of expatriate experts, but the networks those experts belong to in their host countries, thereby possibly increasing funding possibilities.

Furthermore, the number of logistical obstacles—security, restricted movement within the OPT, visas—will need to be addressed. As long as the occupation and the precarious security situation persist, it may be very difficult to persuade expatriate experts to go on site visits either for actual project implementation or in advance of project design. However, including them in consulting activities, including advising and management—which can take place virtually—rather than on-the-ground work in the OPT may help to overcome security concerns. This type of involvement may also help to slowly decrease the disconnection from the conflict due to the geographical and generational gaps that separate many experts from the OPT.

Additionally, if security concerns preclude the travel of expatriates to the OPT, Palestinians can be sent to foreign countries for training. Not only does this help to overcome logistical challenges, it builds sustainability of development work by creating expertise within the citizens of the OPT.

Another channel for long distance diaspora involvement is financial. Many have pointed to the success of the Israeli Independence Bonds of 1951, which provided a means for diaspora Jews to contribute to the building of Israel, without having to travel there or give up current means of livelihood. A similar bond may be introduced for the OPT, which could provide another first step in re-involving out-of-touch diaspora members with the situation on the ground in the OPT, as well as a significant source of funding.

Finally, while after Oslo the PNA was in a position to manage the flow of aid and had the potential to begin the shift from emergency relief to development, it has been so weakened, particularly since 2000, that it does not have the capacity to take on this role. The absorptive capacity of the OPT for development initiatives is thus generally reduced. A priority in any development process in the OPT must be to address the Palestinian government's ability to manage that process. Again, there is great promise for diaspora involvement here. As mentioned, many expatriates have advanced hands-on experience in politics and management, and may be able to provide consulting and advising to the Palestinian government in advance of projects on the ground.

However, the framework for managing diaspora involvement may need to be completely restructured. The PNA is elected internally and is the representative of Palestinian citizens. Diaspora members are likely to be wary of any government-managed process, fearing their autonomy of action and corruption. The PLO

historically included diaspora representation but is not currently capable of managing this process. Whether diaspora management is best done internally, within the OPT, or externally, by an independent body, must be carefully considered. Internal management has the advantage of bringing together all actors under one umbrella. External management allows diaspora groups to maintain flexibility and autonomy that enhance efficiency. Whichever modality is adopted, bridges have to be maintained and action should stem from common objectives and priorities.

VII. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Create a mechanism for streamlining and sustaining efforts among Palestinian diaspora groups and between them and other pro non-Palestinian diaspora groups, governments, citizens and civil organizations of the OPT and other Arab countries, relevant United Nations programmes and donors for furthering sustainable Palestinian development, governed by a common vision and strategy in political, economic, institutional and human resources development aimed at creating an enabling environment.
2. Strengthen the Palestinian cause by encouraging advocacy efforts to change the discourse abroad by involving expatriate experts in law and politics in furthering the Palestinian cause and in continuing to provide fora for sharing the Palestinian story, emphasizing the right to development, the right to self determination, the rule of law and human rights.
3. Enlist diaspora groups in mobilizing the international community in addressing the causes rather than the symptoms of the Palestinian predicament by supporting efforts towards a lasting and equitable peace, without which the majority of development efforts would be laid to waste.
4. Determine possibilities for consulting and advisory roles in the OPT for expatriates through the creation of a database mapping their locations, numbers, areas of expertise and other characteristics which can be matched with priorities set by the Government and citizens of the OPT.
5. Foster the formation of vocational diaspora groups.
6. Establish a mechanism for managing diaspora involvement either by strengthening the capacity of the Palestinian Government to absorb and mandate diaspora involvement, or by creating an independent body whose mandate is to involve and administer diaspora groups.
7. Explore the possibility of devising innovative mechanisms for financial support, such as Palestinian development bonds.

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