

Is Palestine's UN Bid the Final Chance for a 'Two-State Solution'?

by Michele Steinberg

On Sept. 29, EIR interviewed Dr. Ghada Karmi, a Palestinian leader and activist, about the Palestinian resolution for statehood now before the United Nations. Dr. Karmi was born in Jerusalem, the Holy City sacred to the three Abrahamic religions. She was forced to flee from her home in May 1948 as war broke out between Jewish militias and Palestinian citizens, and to become, in her words, one of the "legions of Palestinian displaced people." She has authored numerous articles and books about the Palestine-Israel conflict, and the Palestinians fight for justice, including *Married to Another Man: Israel's Dilemma in Palestine*, *The Palestine Papers: The End of the Road?* (co-author), and an autobiographical work, *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story*.



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Dr. Karmi resides in England, where she is an Honorary Fellow at the University of Exeter's Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies (IAIS) of the School of Humanities and Social Studies (Exeter, U.K.), and is a founder of the British political group Palestine Action. From exile in England, Dr. Karmi has been an impassioned Palestinian leader and activist, who, in 1977, began practicing medicine in a Palestinian refugee camp in South Lebanon. She describes that experience in *In Search of Fatima*.

Nearly two years ago, in its Oct. 23, 2009 issue,¹ EIR published an interview with Dr. Karmi in which she discussed the 1948 experience where she and her

family left Palestine when war broke out, expecting to return soon. But they and millions of other Palestinians have remained stateless ever since. She also explained the reasons that she advocates what has become known as "the one-state solution."

"I have earnestly sought to persuade the international community that there really is no way forward for this conflict," she told EIR, "unless we return the people of Palestine who were expelled, to live together with the current community in Israel, and the two of them to share the land, which must

not be partitioned."

Since EIR's Sept. 29, 2011 discussion with Dr. Karmi, events have been developing rapidly. The Executive Council of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) met in Ramallah and rejected the last-ditch call by the Quartet (U.S., Russia, UN, and EU) for the resumption of talks with Israel "with no preconditions." The PLO and Palestinian Authority (PA) rejected—again—any talks that do not begin with halting the building of Jewish settlements on Palestinian lands, and the acceptance of the 1967 borders. On Oct. 3, PA President Mahmoud Abbas embarked on an international tour to build support for Palestine's application for full United Nations membership.

Here is the interview:

Will Abbas Stand Firm?

EIR: Your article, following the UN Speech by President Mahmoud Abbas, has appeared in the *Guardian* of London and many other papers throughout the

1. http://www.larouche.org/eiw/public/2009/2009_40-49/2009_40-49/2009-41/pdf/38-47_3641.pdf

world. Can you tell us how you see what this UN action means for the future—both of negotiations, and the future of the Palestinians?

Karmi: I must say the speech that Mahmoud Abbas gave at the United Nations last Friday was really quite impressive. We were, whatever our views—and I certainly had my own reservations about the whole project—impressed. I could not help but be impressed, by the firmness of his tone, by the way that he brought up all the basic issues for the Palestinians, by the way he did not hesitate from alluding to Israel and talking about apartheid, and criticizing Israel’s policy against the Palestinians in very forthright terms.

And, it was also very moving. Not only were many of us impressed, but the speech really, really made him popular amongst Palestinians. I mean, this was a man who had enjoyed very little popularity, who was considered to be far too subservient to the Israelis and the Americans. Nobody had very much faith in him being able to speak in the way that he did.

When you ask what this will mean for the future, it really depends on how he conducts himself from now on.

Now, if Mahmoud Abbas stands firm, and he does not allow himself to be cajoled, or intimidated into returning to negotiations with the Israelis in the same way as has been happening since 1993; if he stands firm by that speech, and continues to show backbone we had not suspected, then he will continue a future that is much better, and he will continue to be popular. But if he succumbs to pressures, and undoubtedly there are huge pressures on him from the members of the Quartet, particularly the United States, particularly the Israelis—if he succumbs, then I think it would have only been a short-lived triumph, and he will sink back into the usual unpopularity, and low opinion that people have had of him all along.

Blair Should Have Been Thrown Out

EIR: According to recent press reports, the PLO appears ready to declare the Quartet’s envoy, Tony Blair, *persona non grata*. Some Palestinians say he was acting more as a diplomat for Israel than as a representative of the Quartet. What are your thoughts?

Karmi: Absolutely. Many of us have looked on with dismay at Tony Blair’s behavior in the years that

he has been this Middle East envoy. And it has been very clear that not only has he been ineffectual in helping the Palestinians, but, he has acted in a partisan way, clearly partial to the Israelis, and we do not know why this man can remain in this position. We resent it; we don’t understand why he is paid money to play around in the Middle East.

He feels very good about himself, but nobody else feels that he’s been any good at all, and he really should have been *thrown out* by the Palestinian leadership *a long time ago!*

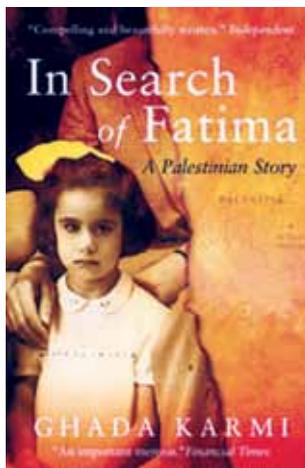
EIR: Apparently there are questions being raised in Britain about his activities. We understand that there was a Channel 4 program called “Dispatches” about how he’s become quite wealthy in this Middle East envoy shuttle diplomacy role.

Karmi: Precisely. You see, even before the exposé in this really interesting documentary on British television, there had been concern about Blair’s accumulation of wealth from various sources, and the way that his finances are opaque. That has been known for some time.

As far as the Middle East in particular is concerned, what had been striking was the way that he had not acted properly at the time of the huge assault on Gaza by the Israelis, which was widely condemned by international agencies, and humanitarian organizations. He had nothing to say. And worse still, he never even went to Gaza. . . .

Now, in view of the fact that Gaza is such an important place; it is such a place of misery and so much the victim of Israeli assaults, attacks, siege, which is really inhuman. The idea that this Middle East envoy can’t bring himself to go there, let alone speak up in defense of these helpless people, is disgraceful. So, he seemed to have no role to play, except to promote the Israeli point of view.

Blair talked many times about the fact that he helped various economic projects to get “off the ground.” Well, the one thing that he should have done, was not get economic projects going, but to remove the reason *why* the Palestinian economy is so shattered. The reason is: the Israeli checkpoints, the Israeli military restrictions on Palestinian freedom of movement, and the siege imposed on Gaza, the curfews, and the seizures that





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The suffering of 3.5 million Palestinians in Gaza under Israeli military occupation “is clearly of no importance” to President Obama, who “does not deserve the Nobel Peace Prize, and the people who conferred this on him, should really consider revoking it,” said Farmi. Here, a funeral, part of everyday life in Gaza.

happen regularly on the West Bank.

That’s what he should have been doing—trying to get those lifted, not to promote the idea that he got some mobile network to be operational in the Palestinian areas. That is neither here nor there. He was frankly, at best irrelevant, and at worst, he was actually dangerous, and a menace.

Obama Will Do Anything To Be Re-Elected

EIR: Could you give us your assessment of President Obama’s UN speech, in particular where he said that the road to peace is not through UN resolutions, and promised to veto statehood at the Security Council? Does this remove the U.S. from any role in future of Palestine?

Karmi: Well, for many of us, long before this speech, the U.S. had proven itself to be such an ally of Israel, that is, on one side of this conflict, that it is inconceivable that it could play any useful role as a mediator or as an honest broker,

Now, we all understand that there is a very powerful pro-Israel lobby, and that is why American politicians, even the President, cannot offend this lobby without paying a huge political price. We realize that this is the case. But, no matter what is the reason, the result is the same: The U.S. is not an impartial judge; it is not there

to help both sides; they’re simply there to represent the Israeli side. And these last moves by President Obama have been some of the most depressing, as long as I can remember, in the history of the U.S.-Palestinian relations.

It is quite obvious that President Obama is desperate to be elected; he will do *anything, anything at all*, not to offend the pro-Israel lobby in order to ensure the Presidential election. And whether that means that 3.5 million Palestinians continue to suffer the military occupation by the Israelis, whether their children keep dying, whether their people get shot, and whether people are starving in Gaza, is clearly of no importance to him at all in comparison. That, *baldly*, is how it is seen. The U.S. President has not distinguished

himself; quite frankly, he does not deserve the Nobel Peace Prize, and the people who conferred this on him, should really consider revoking it.

Time To ‘Stop Playing the Game’

EIR: It has been more than 20 years that the U.S. has been in the middle of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. How do you see getting to the point of Palestinian sovereignty without the U.S. being in the middle?

Karmi: Well, let us for a moment read the Abbas maneuver, or the Palestinian maneuver at the United Nations, as a sort of last throw of the dice. That is, it is the final end of a road in terms of a negotiated settlement for this conflict. And of course, it logically follows, since the negotiations have gone on for a very long time, and they have not led anywhere. On the contrary, they [the negotiations] have allowed Israel to colonize Palestinian territory, and therefore that situation had to come to an end.

Now, a Palestinian leader says to himself, “We have to go to the absolute limit of this process; we will take our case to the UN, since we are not getting a just hearing from the U.S. and we are certainly not getting any kind of agreement from the Israelis. Let us go to the international community and say, ‘Please help. This is our problem. Would you help us? Would you give us

your recognition?’ And that will improve the situation.”

Now, if, as is very likely to happen, the U.S. will veto the move at the Security Council, there will be no full membership for the Palestinians. At the General Assembly, there will be an upgrading of the status of the PLO from what had been an observer entity, to an observer state, which improves the situation for the Palestinians in diplomatic terms. But, this is not going to solve the problem.

Only a radical shift of strategy now, on the part of the Palestinians, will have any future at all. What I mean by that is, what the Palestinian leadership should do—what Abbas should do—is to resign, and to ask all the members of the Palestinian Authority to resign. Then, say to the Israelis, “Now, there is no Palestinian Authority any more. We are an occupied people, and quite frankly, you, Israel, are the sovereign here. You have not been willing to give up your sovereignty over us; therefore, the time has come for us to stop playing this game, where we are making out that we have a President and state-in-waiting, while you colonize our territory. We are colonized by you; you are the ruler, therefore, we wish to become your citizens. And what we would like to see, is equal civil and political rights for our people under Israeli sovereignty.”

EIR: That would immediately raise the apartheid question, wouldn’t it? Is this along the lines of a resolution that you and some friends drew up some time ago, to force the issue of civil rights, equal rights? There are already about 1.6 million Palestinians living inside Israel as second-class citizens.

Karmi: Exactly. Well, if you think about that, that is the cleverest thing the Palestinians could do, because what are the Israelis going to do with a thing like that? They’re faced with a very difficult situation.

Here are 3.5 million people saying, “Enough is enough; we stop playing these games. We’re fed up with the fact that you are actually ruling us, and colonizing us, and we were pretending you weren’t. We’re now saying: You are. So, we wish to be your citizens.”

So, when it becomes a struggle for civil rights, I think it then becomes a very important change in the way the struggle will be seen. It will have turned the tables on the Israelis, and, by the way, on the United States as well.

In addition, there is a movement in Israel itself, by the Palestinians living there, for equal rights, to be equal citizens. And they talk about Israel being a state

of its citizens—not a Jewish State, a state of its citizens.

So, the action that I propose to be taken by the Palestinians under military occupation currently [in the occupied territories] would be very much in coordination with that movement within Israel.

I think that would actually be a very smart move, and it’s actually very difficult to see what the Israelis could do about it. As long as the Israelis have had something called the “Palestinian Authority” that they can kick around; as long as they’ve had these presidents and prime ministers and so forth, they’ve been able to say, “You’ve got your own government, don’t talk to us. Your government’s not doing this or that.” They’ve had somebody to blame and to kick around. When you no longer have something you can do that with, you’re faced with the actual people themselves.

If you think about it, it’s the only logical way forward. After all, any time you visit the West Bank, just look at it, and you can see that it is so full of Jewish colonies—Jewish settlements—that you can’t extricate them from the surrounding population. So, in the strategy that I am suggesting, you say, “All right, we’re not going to separate. We are all of us—we’re the population.”

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