

# Nabil Shaath: Does Stopping Vaccines For Children Help Israeli Security?

*Palestinian Authority Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Dr. Nabil Shaath spoke before the Center for Policy Analysis on Palestine, on June 21. His account today confirms reports that the Sharon government in Israel has created conditions—without international protest—far worse than those that existed prior to the Oslo Accords.*

*Dr. Shaath is also a member of the Palestinian Legislative Assembly, to which he was elected in 1996, representing the town of Khan Younis in Gaza. He was a member of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks in Madrid, in Oslo, and in Washington. He headed the first delegation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to the UN in 1974.*

*His speech, excerpted below, was given in the midst of his talks with Bush Administration officials, including Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, prior to President Bush's June 24 speech on Mideast policy. It was a moral challenge Bush wouldn't hear.*

*Subheads have been added.*

It has been a very difficult conflict, . . . one of the three remaining conflicts of settler colonialism with ethnic religious factors built into them—South Africa, Ireland, and Palestine. Many times we thought that [peace in] Palestine would come first. In fact, I was invited several times to lecture in Ireland about the success of the Palestinian peace process. . . .

Palestine remains a major problem for settler colonialism . . . and the Palestinian people remain a people occupied, their country occupied and the majority of their people in exile, refugees all around the world. And, whatever the Palestinians have achieved so far, is being vitiated by reoccupation of the Palestinian territories. As you probably know, the Israelis declared they are going to reoccupy, and *remain* in reoccupation for up to six months, and they will follow what their Shin Beth director Avi Dichter has been telling them for the last three to four months, that they should remain in full occupation until they build that infamous fence, to fence in the Palestinians in the West Bank, as they think they have already fenced in the Palestinians inside Gaza.

The occupation is now almost total and complete, and the Israelis, on top of that, have divided the West Bank into *eight bantustans*, eight cantons, eight regions which are totally boxed in and surrounded. . . . A truck moving from Hebron to Nablus would probably have to unload and make transshipment two or three times to carry a load from Hebron to Nablus,

going through international-like checkpoints between every zone and the other.

Under these eight zones of exclusion—Jerusalem is another one, with another Berlin Wall around it—there are four in Gaza, making a total of 13 between the West Bank and Gaza. But in the West Bank alone, inside these eight cantons, there are 262 sub-exclusion areas, that are totally boxed in, with checkpoints, tanks, artillery, heavy Israeli army presence, that have almost ended mobility of Palestinians between towns and made life absolutely impossible.

Israelis today are not only keeping people in, but they are going in with their tanks as they did in the Jenin market, where six kids, all under the age of 12, were killed by Israeli tanks. The Israelis once again come up with this horrible euphemism of “collateral damage.” . . . When the Israelis kill Palestinians it is “self-defense.” . . . It is “collateral damage” . . . when they kill Palestinian civilians. It may be by “mistake,” but mistakes in the Israeli army are never corrected, and never taken to court. The famous killing of three Bedouin women in Gaza. . . : the perpetrators were never even taken to disciplinary court. The killing of the five children [of one family] in Khan Younis, with mines that were planted on their road to school *just the night before*, again went totally unpunished. And so on, and so on, and so on. What happened in Jenin in the first invasion in March, again, the Israelis kept everybody out, as you know, and refused a board of inquiry from the United Nations.

## ‘An Economy That Is Shattered’

This is really part of the lot of Palestinians at this time. . . . We lost at least 55% of our GDP; 70% of our people are unemployed, and are under the poverty line of \$2 per day, per family, using Israeli prices; this is not Yemen or Bangladesh; this is Palestinian territory that lives on products that are [at] Israeli prices, Israeli taxes, and Israeli standards of living; and therefore \$2 per day per family is—devastation, actually. An economy that is shattered and destroyed.

A police force—in the West Bank at least—that has been totally destroyed. . . . 8,000 Palestinian policemen were arrested and kept in Israeli custody, and kept in Israeli military camps; . . . 2,000 Palestinian policemen in the West Bank were decommissioned, sent back under the Israeli army to their villages, and told, if you ever go back to join the police force, you will be considered terrorists and you will be shot on sight.



*Palestinian Authority  
Planning Minister Dr. Nabil  
Shaath.*

Every single Palestinian barracks, police station, prison, vehicle, communications equipment—*totally* destroyed by the Israeli army on the West Bank. And most of the physical structures were destroyed in Gaza also by F16s and Apache helicopter gunships. . . . That also includes the medical hospitals of the Palestinian security forces in Gaza and the West Bank.

One cannot but ask. . . : How could you destroy . . . the very police force you are urging to come forth and take action to protect Israelis? . . .

### **Extra-Judicial Murders**

[Shaath described in detail how, in 1996, after three “suicide bombings,” Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian police forces completely stopped bombings for three and a half years, based on the optimism engendered by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) withdrawing from 40% of the occupied territories, by the successful first local, legislative, and Presidential elections. However, today, the Palestinians experience constant “Israeli occupations, and reoccupations, and sieges, and curfews, and killings, and assassinations,” which *engender* violence. He stressed the travesty of the assassinations policy.]

Israeli has no capital punishment. . . . Even if the court establishes your guilt, you get at most prison for life. To assassinate 300 Palestinians during the last two years, [and] the world euphemistically calls this extra-judicial killing. In other words, these are assassinations made without any rule of law, or order, of people whom the Israeli security agencies deem a security risk to Israel. *They get assassinated, in a country that claims it has no capital punishment.*

### **Why Camp David Failed**

This is the situation as we stand. . . . We want to have two states side by side. We spent at least ten years negotiating. . . . The fact that [peace] failed at the nick, at the beginning of the permanent settlement negotiations at Camp David and Taba, is not unusual. We have seen this happen in Ireland . . . [and] in South Africa. When you come so close to the conclusion, every party thinks that, if I sign now, that is end of all my

effort to achieve what I want. . . . And the Palestinians could not have possibly signed on to Camp David, with 79% of the West Bank; with nothing in Jerusalem; nothing on the refugees; with no sovereignty for their skies, or their underground water, or sea. With Israeli Zionists occupying all their borders. . . . What kind of sovereignty is this? A country without borders, without capital, without rights even in its own water and skies? Camp David would have *never* been accepted by Palestinians. . . .

Camp David would have been an excellent opportunity, had it been considered the first round in negotiations, leading eventually to a peace process. . . .

And so, with Mr. Sharon, we went into the abyss, and the confrontation went into cycle of violence after cycle of violence. Horrible. Devastating, in every way. And instead of exchanging land for peace, we have now more occupation, and deeper occupation of that land, and of course a very dim view of the possibility of peace. . . .

The settlements are also the problem with security. When the Israelis talk about walls, they want to snake around the settlements . . . but they cannot, so they have to have, besides the walls, very heavy physical and military presence in order to protect the settlements inside. When the Israelis talk about security, they are thinking about the 200 settlements and the 400,000 settlers. The settlements *doubled* during the Oslo agreements. How can you possibly make an agreement on the basis of exchange of land for peace, and ending occupation, and yet, during that period, deepen your occupation by 200,000 more settlers. . . ?

Choking the Palestinian people with sieges in the name of security. How, for example, is security enhanced for Israel when you prevent child vaccinations. . . ? Up till this year, Palestine had 94% of the children vaccinated every year, and we got 4.5 million worth of vaccines from Japan every year. This year the Israelis prevented polio vaccine and other vaccines from being distributed. How does this protect their security? The Israelis in the last four days destroyed the only medical oxygen factories in Gaza and the West Bank, so Gaza today is without any oxygen for its hospitals. And since the Israelis prevent any oxygen tanks from getting into Gaza across any borders, what does this mean—you mean, killing any patients who need oxygen, in intensive care, or in an operation. . . . It’s this *pretext* of security . . . expanded with the presence of 200 settlements. Because, then you don’t know where the borders are. . . . They are wherever an Israeli is. And that is a situation that cannot be protected, except with a mad mind of reoccupying and destroying everything the Palestinians have built.

### **‘Go Back To Hope’**

Well, go back to hope. I want to conclude with hope, because I don’t see, really, any solution based on more violence. . . . Any more Israeli violence is a pretext for more Palestinian violence. There is no way, and this cannot be stopped until you utterly do what the lunatics in Israel say:

Transfer the whole Palestinian people outside—it *won't* happen; it won't happen.

But some Israeli lunatics think so, that if you can't beat the Palestinians into submission, drive them into the sea. How ironic.

Therefore, you have to look for peace. I came with a paper [which I gave to Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice]. I started talking about three requirements.

One, was the necessity of positing 1967 borders as the borders of a future Palestinian state; as the borders that would set the territorial terms of reference for all this peace process.

Number two, timetable. We cannot go on forever without a fixed time. . . . We suggested a year for finishing negotiations, and a year for implementing them. . . . Please take it from me: A year is quite sufficient, if there is the political will.

And thirdly, a serious involvement by the United States and the international community, with the will to pressure and persuade, and the presence on the ground to protect and safeguard . . . international troops on the ground. . . . It has happened and it has worked, at least temporarily . . . until there are agreements. . . .

Despite all, I remain hopeful, and I think it still can be done. *It has to be done, because the alternative is utter disaster.*

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