

---

---

**MEMORANDUM**

---

---

**TO:** DR. SAEB ERAKAT  
**FROM:** NSU  
**SUBJECT:** IDEAS & RECOMMENDATIONS DISCUSSED IN JUNE 16 2009 BRIEFING  
**DATE:** JUNE 18

---

**I. Heads of Committees' Comments**Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh

- 1) AM must deliver a speech and he should use the opportunity of the graduation of the Arab-American University in Jenin to deliver it from there.
- 2) We need to have a diplomatic campaign across the world to explain what was misleading and false in BN's speech and what our positions are.
- 3) We have to give BN a hard time in the international arena.
- 4) We need to summon the Consuls General and brief them so they will deliver the message to (their) respective capitals before BN goes to Europe.
- 5) We must not give the impression that we are dealing with this Israeli government. This is a very wise decision. Limit interactions to a minimum and to the most urgent. We need to focus our time away from negotiations and on our internal affairs.

We don't need a spokesperson, we need a media machine. We want to launch this campaign – not have the journalists come to us or wait for us. We have to think of our objective: What is the purpose of this? A) isolate BN, B) make him resign, or C) or make him change his position.

Dr. Samih Al-Abed

Maybe part of our strategy should depend on and take into account what answers Israel comes up with by July 1.

I agree that AM needs to give a speech.

Ms. Hiba Hussein (HH)

- 1) A proactive approach is what we've been lacking. We need to focus on that. If the US position says that we are okay, we shouldn't relax. Opportunities are short-lived.

2) Our government is a promising government but it needs to be more legitimate. Service has been lacking. We need serious institutional development. The Israelis always ask if our institutions are ready for statehood and we give them the opportunity to undermine us.

On the street, there is no sense of hope remaining with Palestinians. Among all Palestinians – in the business community, in the professional community, and among cab drivers – they see limited change on the ground. They see Fatah and Hamas disagreeing and don't believe in our leadership.

3) BN gave a repetitive “no.” We should demonstrate our position on Jerusalem and refugees. The street thinks we're so helpless that the Israeli will is always imposed on us. People are critical. They need to hear a counter argument. This is not just for the international community; this is for a domestic audience as well.

#### Mr. Issa Kassissieh

1) We need better communication with ordinary people. There is still a negative impression on the street, especially after the events in Qalqilya;

2) With respect to the Israeli side, we need to work with those Israelis that are opposed to BN.

3) We not only need to get the Consuls General together; we need to visit capitals as well to defend our position.

4) Regarding BN speech, we shouldn't just say the speech is bad. There is this perception that Palestinians always say “no.”

## **II. NSU Advisors' Comments**

### Alex Kouttab

I strongly agree about being proactive. We should build on the work we have done and the success we have over the last 6 months in setting the terms of debate/defining the criteria for a return to negotiations (3 asks, restore credibility of peace process, create an environment conducive to negotiations). This foundation is out there and we can draw upon it. We shouldn't drop it. Our initial response to BN's speech also stands – a) by taking most permanent status issues off table (refugees, Jerusalem, security), BN left us with nothing to negotiate, b) the conditions BN used to qualify his support for a Palestinian state (demilitarized etc) make a viable, independent and sovereign Palestinian state impossible c) BN unilaterally imposing a solution, rather than negotiating a peace. We need to now add an extra layer to continue to set the terms of the debate as the environment evolves. BN set a trap. He wants to say that he's “charting the middle course.” We're in danger of being marginalized and isolated as rejectionists. Rather than say ‘no’ (why say no to an offer to a non-starter), we need to proactively define what Palestinian statehood means, using the PS issues as guidelines. We should never debate within BN's framework. Re: AM's speech - he needs to ground the conflict in its historical context (challenge without referring to BN Jewish state claims). He

also needs to lay out Palestinian position clearly (not just criteria for return to negotiations). And about incitement, we need to know whether the Israelis are stepping up their incursions into the WB and Gaza. We should advertise if they are.

#### Ashraf Khatib

Engage the Arab states and be sure they emphasize the API so our messages coincide.

#### Azem Bishara

The American response wasn't the one we were looking for. We should give the US the opportunity to demonstrate their change of policy in actions after the Cairo speech and in response to Netanyahu's speech. For example, we could table draft a resolution on Jerusalem and settlements to the Security Council and build expectations from the international community, and the US in particular, to endorse the resolution and not veto it as a way to demonstrate their change of policy. We can take similar steps to ensure U.S administration makes good on his promises.

#### Bader Rock

BN is weak. He has lots of problems in-house. Serious economic problems have him giving more and more to Shas. He will have to make serious changes. Stagnation in the political sphere will work more against him than it will work against us. BN's 1996 economic policy of privatization is very different from BN's policy in 2009 of spending to have a government with Shas.

A bus exploding in Tel Aviv or Haifa is what BN is dreaming about. It will give them an argument for the Americans. We need to understand that and exert all possible efforts to not get to the point where organizations are planning this. A terrorist attack is not against Israelis; it is against the Palestinian people.

#### Enas Abu Laban

Today we contacted the Blair team to ask about Wataniya because Tony Blair was supposed to have a conversation with BN. There was nothing done on the Wataniya issue and BN cut Blair short on the phone. BN is putting all requests together in a package to the Americans. He is offering this package as a trade for changing the American position regarding settlements.

We want the Americans to keep the focus on the permanent status issues and not to be dragged into the day to day issues. Israel with its new approach of the "package" is throwing the ball in the American court and putting pressure on them to change their policy regarding Israeli settlements. BN is putting pressure on the US by trying to make the Americans responsible for the daily suffering of Palestinians: if the US holds its position on settlements, Israel will deliver on the package.

The PA and PLO need to have a clear position in this regard and communicate this position to the Americans to ensure the continuation of the US pressure on Israel regarding the settlement freeze as a priority and delink it from Israel's obligation to implement previous agreements.

#### Gabriel Fabel

Regarding the speech, the theme should be similar in tone to Arafat's speech to the General Assembly at Geneva. "Ever since I was elected, I have pursued an agenda to achieve peace." Reframe the issue; don't respond to BN. Focus on the Palestinian offer that has been extended since 1988 and the API gesture of peace that has been extended since 2002. Since 1988, the Palestinian hand has always been extended to Israel to achieve peace on the basis of the 1967 green line, with East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital and a resolution to the right of return consistent with international law. We must reframe the debate so that is clear that the Arabs have had their hand extended for many years and we welcome BN to engage in the discussion – whether it is in Beirut, Damascus, Amman, Jerusalem – we have discussed this issue in capitals around the world. It is time for decisions and deeds. We have always welcomed an Israeli partner that is prepared to accept a Palestinian state on the green line with East Jerusalem as its capital.

#### Hala Rashed

We should not be too quick to resume negotiations with the Netanyahu government. Negotiations would give a huge boost to his government's stature with the "moderates" in Israel and with the international community, when we know that we would get nothing in return (since he's not approaching negotiations in good faith).

Instead, we should be going on the offensive to explain our permanent status positions, and to explain why we won't negotiate in the current circumstances. On permanent status issues, the goal in the coming period should be to convince the US and the international community of our positions and the reasonableness of them. Let's try to pocket international agreement on our positions in the way that the Israelis pocketed the settlement 'blocs' through the 2004 Bush letter of assurances. This is especially important given the rumours that Obama is likely to present the parties with his permanent status vision in the summer.

With respect to why we won't negotiate in the current circumstances, we need to convey widely our Annapolis experience: We sat in the best of faith with the Israelis for a whole year at the negotiating table, while they accelerated settlement activity and capped the year off by slaughtering 1,300 Palestinians. No one should reasonably expect us to deal with the Israelis in light of this recent experience, especially when there are no signs that this Israeli government will be any different. On the contrary, this Israeli government is the same or worse than the last government. We absolutely need a dramatic demonstration of intent by Israel that it is changing its stripes. It would be a strategic mistake to say that the current Israeli government is the problem. Israeli *policies* are the problem.

President Abbas' current position is the right one. We just need to be patient, and we need more of it. Let's go on the diplomatic and media offensive with the sett freeze, with our permanent status positions, and with the API.

On a separate issue, there is a real risk that someone will derail the gains we have made recently with a suicide attack. One way to mitigate the fall-out from such an event is to go on the offensive with our achievements in security and reform. We should also go on the offensive with incitement, showing the Americans that we are more than willing to re-engage in the trilateral committee to audit Palestinian and Israeli media and education for incitement. A point person who is not involved in permanent status issues should be appointed for this role, so that focus is not detracted from the endgame. We should also seek assurances from the Americans that our engagement on this issue will not detract from their efforts on the endgame.

#### Omar Tufaha

I agree that we need to coordinate our message through our embassies abroad. We need to keep the message proactive instead of reactive.

#### Rami Dajani

BN negated the key aspects of a sovereign and viable state. Rather than focus on negating a negative, we should convey the message in a positive way: what does a two state solution actually require to objectively and practically succeed? This way we set the agenda and the narrative. We should do this both at the diplomatic level and the public (media) communications level. The basic elements that we should emphasize are:

- East Jerusalem as the capital: we should explain why that is critical
- “Demilitarized state”: We should explain why this term is meaningless and contradictory; that Palestine may accept some limitations on its military capability but not to become a demilitarized zone.
- Refugees: ignoring their rights and their plight will only perpetuate the conflict notwithstanding the creation of a Palestinian state

#### Sharif Hamadeh

1) Netanyahu had a choice: to accede to the demands of the US vis-à-vis settlement activity freeze or to maintain his coalition. He chose to maintain his coalition, probably believing that the US will water-down its demands on a settlement freeze. But he phrased his response to the overtures the Obama administration made to the Arab and Islamic worlds in a smart way – he managed to utter the phrase “Palestinian state” through gritted teeth and without eroding his position at all. The maximalist positions he adopted in the speech contrasted strongly with the intl consensus. In spite of this – or perhaps because of it - the content of his speech reflected the consensus in Israeli society, allowing him to gain a strong approval rating. This places him in a very strong bargaining position vis-à-vis the US, vis-à-vis the intl community and vis-à-vis the Palestinians because his domestic legitimacy is assured.

2) The entrenchment of the GoI position provides an opportune moment for Palestinians to get our own house in order. There is no longer any convincing argument that Palestinian disunity may serve the cause of negotiations with Israel. A wise Palestinian response would

be to follow Netanyahu in privileging national unity over external pressure – particularly now that the US has signalled less ideological opposition to the reality of Hamas and to its involvement in a national unity government. A renewed Palestinian political leadership and a revived PLO with fair representation of the major political parties would have the legitimacy required to return to negotiations - at the right time and under the right conditions - with the broad support of its people.

3) In his Cairo speech, President Obama referred to the success of other non-violent movements and thereby hinted that the US would have sympathy with this approach. In this context, and given the belligerence of the GoI, the Palestinian leadership would be wise to formulate, announce and implement a serious programme of non-violent resistance to the Israeli occupation.

4) Any speech that President Abbas may wish to make should be framed to represent the President as a statesman and leader of national unity who is above the petty squabbles of political parties. It should therefore reflect the Palestinian consensus. Ideally, it would occur following an agreement between Hamas and Fatah, but in any case it should reach out to Hamas and its sympathizers as well as to Gaza residents generally. It should also make clear to Israel and the intl community that Palestinians do not seek statehood as an end game in and of itself, but as the means to an end: namely the regaining of our legitimate national and human rights. If Palestinians conclude that the pursuit of statehood no longer serves these interests, they will not hesitate to alter the character of their struggle accordingly.

#### Tarek Hamam

President Abbas needs to address the Palestinian domestic audience. BN's policy speech included a direct attack on refugee rights. We need to answer this – but by speaking in the affirmative not in response to him.

#### Thomas Dallal

1) The American political landscape is different than it has ever been, or at least since '48. American Jews are increasingly divided. Organized Jewish voices from other than the far-right/AIPAC wing are louder than ever (contrast the '82 Lebanon war, when no similar trend was evidenced for more than a fleeting moment - and despite outrageous Israeli conduct then at issue). That said, American Jewry will circle the wagons and come back swinging at the US Congress if we give them anything to seize on. So we to show TOTAL restraint. If we can show BO that we continue to mobilize public opinion in the US in our favor, thereby restocking the political capital he has already spent trying to push our position into the political mainstream, we should – nay, must - do this. Giving BO political cover to keep the heat on BN is the primary battleground now in the US. BO's honeymoon with Congress may not last much longer. Indeed, the sniping from Congress has begun. Whatever BO and the administration say publicly, I would wager they are kicking BN very hard under the table; because to do so is in the crystal clear American strategic interest. This rare window of opportunity to firmly plant the justice of the Palestinian plight in the US mainstream must be nurtured and exploited to the max. BO has given us an extraordinary opening. On the downside – I repeat: all efforts must be made to avoid giving the right wing of the Jewish lobby in the US anything at all that will allow them to regain mainstream credibility or make

Congress fearful of espousing a (modestly) more balanced line. AIPAC & Co. power is waning because, among other things, the Neocons thoroughly discredited the 'Israel right or wrongers' – yet, we must beware: Elliot Abrams can still command space on the editorial page of the NY Times. In short, the momentum in the US can better be harnessed in our favor now than ever before – if we exploit it deftly – and the success of our efforts in this vein will be an enormous strength to BO. We should play the media/US-Western public opinion game now - and remain hard to get without appearing rejectionist - until BO forces GoI to come to the table and talk SUBSTANCE on the long ago agreed PS issue terms.

2) AM has an extraordinary opportunity to do two things at once; his speech must unify our own people and massage 'western opinion' simultaneously. AM has the eyes and ears of the world to present the justice of our plight IN OUR OWN TERMS (at most he might allude to BN - "some would provoke our suffering people – in Gaza, in the refugee camps and all over the region and the world. We will not rise to this bait. The injustice we have endured for the past 61 years speaks for itself. Against all odds, we have kept our dignity in the face of ongoing calamity. We will keep our dignity. As the proud people we are. Justice is on our side. My Palestinian brothers and sisters: in the name of our righteous cause and all who have sacrificed to achieve the legitimate aims of our epic struggle, we must unify now and proudly show the depth of our collective strength, I implore you all. We stand at a critical juncture. To speak and act as one now and to exercise complete restraint and calm is our greatest strength. We are a family, you all are my family. Whatever internal differences we have - like every family in the history of mankind has had - we must discuss amongst ourselves. Let the world see our strength.")

#### Wassim Khazmo

Any speech needs to talk about internal divisions.

#### Xavier Abueid

Although we responded on time to Netanyahu's speech, almost all international media is now talking about Netanyahu's acceptance of a Palestinian state rather than talking about what he really said; that shows that although we manage to react on time, we still have to develop an effective communications strategy.

This is the time to implement a real media campaign. We have no 24-hour available spokespeople like the Israelis do. This is an important issue you should raise with AM.