

# Palestinians consider next step in opposition to US plan

Thu, 2020-01-30 01:39

AMMAN: As the details of Washington's peace plan becomes clear, Palestinian leaders are searching for a way forward that avoids acquiescing to US and Israeli demands.

Veteran Jordanian-Palestinian writer Lamas Andon told Arab News that while Palestinian leaders have a right to reject the plan, they must look inward to find a way forward.

"Palestinians have an opportunity to lead and set the tone of their own future because they are in charge now and can't wait on anyone else to help."

Palestinians believe that the huge US document demonstrates America's bias. The terms "Jews" and "Jewish" are mentioned 1,806 times, compared to just 303 and 473 for "Muslim" and "Christian" respectively.

Israel is mentioned nearly five times more than Palestine. Palestine will have its borders, its airspace and its international waters controlled by Israel, which will, at certain times, "have the right to enter the areas earmarked for the state of Palestine."

Andoni told Arab News that the other option available to Palestinians is international law: "The International criminal court and the court of criminal justice have shown interest in supporting Palestinian rights. Therefore, all legal battles must be waged against Israel."

Nabil Shaath, an adviser to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, told the US-based Al-Monitor news site that Abbas has approved a possible major confrontation with Israel.

"The president has re-emphasized the need for national unity, and has agreed to a request to go to Gaza to attend a unity meeting, he has supported the need for popular struggle and has called for the revisit of the functions of the Palestinian Authority.

"The move to implement the decisions of the Palestine National and Central Councils will obviously include the decision to suspend security coordination."

But Israeli media reported that the security coordination has not been suspended, despite suggestions from Abbas's office.

In addition to the legal front, Andoni believes that supporters of Palestinians must step up their efforts with the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement.

He added that he hoped that an intifada would erupt.

Andoni's call was also echoed by Abbas, who has agreed to a call for a national unity conference in Gaza with the participation of all factions including Hamas, Fatah and Islamic Jihad as well as independents.

Mufid Abed Rabo, a Fatah activist and one of the leaders of the first intifada, told Arab News that the unity efforts that were seen in the Tuesday night meeting in Ramallah must be followed up with serious and strategic steps.

Palestinian supporters have responded angrily to the US plans with demonstrations and public strikes throughout the occupied Palestinian territories.

In his speech carried live on Palestine TV, Abbas also spoke about the popular struggle, but it was not clear how serious the Palestinian leadership is willing to commit to an escalation of unarmed attacks against Israel.

The nonviolent struggle has long been discussed and debated among Palestinians without a clear guideline. In Gaza, unarmed attacks in the form of the Great March of Return were often politically manipulated and failed to stay totally nonviolent.

The new frontier for the coming months will be the Jordan Valley, where about 50,000 Palestinians live, as opposition grows to the possibility of an Israeli annexation of these lands.



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## [Mandela rights group slams Palestine plan](#)

Author:

Thu, 2020-01-30 01:32

LONDON: The Elders, an international human rights NGO founded by the late Nelson Mandela, has slammed US President Donald Trump's "peace plan" to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The plan "cannot provide a workable solution" to the conflict, said the NGO, which is led by former Irish President Mary Robinson.

The Elders added that implementing the plan "would make the two-state solution impossible, entrenching deep inequality along ethnic lines and moving the decades-old conflict into a new phase."

In a statement, the group – previously chaired by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Archbishop Desmond Tutu – urged the international community to "emphasize – urgently – that the acquisition of territory through force is illegal, and would result in countermeasures beyond rhetorical condemnation."

The Elders said: "The proposed annexation of further occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank ... creates a dangerous precedent for the acquisition of territory by force, with implications well beyond the region."

It added: "The unilateral effort to redefine the status of Jerusalem in favor of one side is provocative and dangerous. Moreover, the absence of any credible plan for Gaza means a major element of the conflict is simply unaddressed."

Ban Ki-moon, deputy chair of The Elders and former UN secretary-general, said: "The best, most logical and just solution is to provide two states for the two peoples, based on the internationally recognized 1967 borders."

He added: "Unilateral declarations that exclude and humiliate one party to the conflict are counter-productive."

Another Elder, Lakhdar Brahimi – former UN and Arab League special envoy to Syria, former Algerian foreign minister and a veteran of his country's liberation struggle – said: "This is a conflict rooted in injustice, dispossession and disdain for rights and law. Abandoning negotiations and imposing annexation will only entrench these problems. The international

community knows this is a unilateral act of folly.”

Trump’s plan has faced heavy international scrutiny, with no Palestinian leaders supporting it.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called it a “conspiracy” that “will not pass.” Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhr said: “Palestine will prevail, and Trump and the deal will go to the dustbin of history.”



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## [Thousands flee as fighting rages between Yemen government and Houthis](#)

Author:

Thu, 2020-01-30 01:16

AL-MUKALLA: Thousands of Yemenis in Marib province and Nehim district, near



Sanaa, have been displaced as fighting rages between government forces and the Iran-backed Houthis, a local human rights organization and aid workers said on Wednesday.

As many as 1,484 families have fled their homes in Majazer district in northern Marib, and 1,870 families have deserted Al-Khaneq camp in Nehim, according to Yemen's National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms (HOOD).

The displacement began on Jan. 19; all those who fled headed to the city of Marib, and only 60 families managed to find shelter, the organization said in a statement seen by Arab News.

HOOD urged local and international organizations, and authorities in Marib and Sanaa, to provide the displaced with food, shelter, drinking water and medication.

Aid workers who visited displaced people in Marib said they are enduring miserable conditions and are sleeping out in the open amid a harsh winter.

Locals said people carrying belongings in pickup trucks and on foot are still heading to the city.

Abdul Khaliq bin Mousalem, director of Etilaf Al-Khair's office in Marib, said the aid organization has set up 50 camps and provided blankets to the displaced. It will set up 250 camps when local authorities allocate the necessary land, he added.

Etilaf Al-Khair is an umbrella group of local charities that provides aid on behalf of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief).

"People are in desperate need of humanitarian aid. The priority should be building shelters," Bin Mousalem told Arab News, adding that Al-Khaneq camp was deserted after it was shelled.

"People escaped to Marib with clothes and valuables, leaving behind less important things. The number of displaced people is big, and all aid organizations should quickly support them."

Due to its stability and location, the city of Marib has been hosting tens of thousands of displaced people since late 2014, when the Houthi militia seized Sanaa.

The displacement from Nehim and Marib province comes as government forces press their offensive, under air cover from Saudi-led coalition warplanes, in an attempt to recapture territories seized by the Houthis in recent days.

Yemen's Defense Ministry said the army traded mortar fire with the Houthis, and coalition warplanes pounded their locations in the mountainous Nehim district.

Defense Minister Mohammed Al-Maqdahi and Abdul Hamid Al-Muzayni, commander of the Saudi-led coalition in Marib, visited the frontlines in Nehim, the

ministry's official news site reported.

They met the newly appointed commander of the 7th Military Region, Ahmad Hassan Jebran, and soldiers.

Al-Maqdadhi said the army's military operations in Nehim and elsewhere will continue until the Houthis are defeated.

In the southern city of Taiz, government troops recaptured a number of hilly locations on its western edges.



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**'Palestinians have to work and fight together,' Middle East's elder**

# statesman Lakhdar Brahimi tells Arab News

Thu, 2020-01-30 00:42

PARIS: Former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi is a member of The Elders, an independent group of global leaders working for peace, justice and human rights. He has also served as UN special envoy to Syria and Lebanon.

A day after US President Donald Trump unveiled the political component of his long-awaited vision for Israeli-Palestinian peace, Brahimi told Arab News that the proposals amount to an “annexation, domination and apartheid plan.”

Calling for unity among Palestinians, he said they need to be “supported to the best of everyone’s ability.”

**Q: What do you think of the US peace plan?**

**A:** The manner in which the plan has been presented was really a stage for (Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu, who’s facing an election very soon ... It has to do with the election in the US, the impeachment (of Trump), with the election in Israel. It’s part of the campaign of both President Trump and Netanyahu. It’s also part of trying to solve their personal problems with justice: Impeachment in one case, a threat of going to jail in the other. It has very little to do with peace in the Middle East.

**Q: What does the future hold for the Palestinians if they reject the plan and this US administration is re-elected?**

**A:** The Palestinians are facing extremely serious problems. They’ve been occupied for 70 years now. They’ve been dispossessed. They will continue to be humiliated and dispossessed in all sorts of ways. This condition is very familiar to people who have lived the colonial experience, whether it’s in Algeria or South Africa. This is a situation we’re familiar with, that people don’t listen to you, don’t care about you.

This “deal of the century” considers the Palestinians as sub-humans, or that they don’t exist at all. Netanyahu is going to start implementing decisions he thinks the US president has taken, in particular the annexation of all the settlements, the bank of the Jordan River on the west side.

What Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said yesterday is correct – 22 percent of historic Palestine is what’s called the West Bank and Gaza. The Israelis are immediately going to take of that about two-thirds, and perhaps they’ll negotiate with the Palestinians on the one-third left. This isn’t a plan of peace but one of annexation and domination. It’s a colonial plan – apartheid at its worst.

**Q: What about Jordan in this plan?**

**A:** Both President Trump and Netanyahu spoke with some respect about Jordan.

But to people who have had the chance to read the full text ... it seems that even the holy sites, and in particular Al-Aqsa Mosque, aren't treated with the respect that they said they will be.

**Q: Do you think the Trump plan will trigger another Palestinian uprising?**

**A:** I think the Palestinians will have to weigh their options, and how they're going to resist this brutal additional attack on their aspirations, rights and needs. I don't know how they'll do it, but I think we have to understand their position and their difficulties.

**Q: Do you think the right of return for Palestinian refugees in other countries is doomed?**

**A:** Let us see what the Arab governments will say in their Arab League meeting. As an Arab, a retired diplomat, I'll say that the Palestinians are going through extremely difficult times. They have rights that are inalienable, no matter what Mr. Netanyahu does or President Trump says. These rights won't go away. It's a long struggle. They (Palestinians) will have to choose the methods of this struggle.

I think the boycott is one of the good things the Palestinians are doing, but they have to make it smart. There are a lot of Israelis who shouldn't be boycotted; there are a lot of Jews supporting them (Palestinians) in the world. They have to take that into consideration. I think they should look at what the South Africans did and do the same.

Perhaps one thing we have the right to tell our Palestinian friends and brothers (is) to have unity. (Palestinians) have to work together and fight together.

**Q: The Palestinian leadership is criticized by the Palestinian diaspora. Is this not because of the leadership's divisions and corruption? Does it not bear responsibility for the future of the Palestinian people?**

**A:** This isn't perhaps the time to speak of the failings of some of the leaders of the Palestinian liberation movement. The liberation movement in Palestine has always been divided. It has never been one movement like it was with the Algerians. At times, they (Palestinians) have been able to work together; at other times not so much. Lately, their divisions have been a little too much.

There is a lot of unhappiness among the people about the manner in which the leadership has behaved. There is a lot of talk about corruption. Definitely this has to change. The Arab Spring has been a reality. If it has failed here or there, this doesn't mean it was a mistake or it wasn't needed. I don't think it's really over. There are legitimate aspirations, and people won't give up on their aspirations.

**Q: What do you think of the European reaction to Trump's plan?**

**A:** I think an important part of public opinion in Europe is very much aware of what's happening, and it isn't happy with what's happening to the



Palestinians. But I'm sure my Palestinian friends won't mind me saying it's the level of the struggle in Palestine that will decide how much support they'll have outside, both in the Arab world and in the West.

If they raise the level of their struggle, organize themselves better, if there's unity again in their liberation movement, they'll have much more support (not only) in the Muslim world and in Europe, but also in the US. In university campuses in the US, and among young Jews in particular, there's more and more sympathy for the Palestinian struggle.

**Q: Do you think we will ever see two states – one Palestine, another Israel?**

**A:** I don't know. What I know is that Palestinians have rights that can be achieved in a two-state solution, or indeed a one-state solution, but not (under) apartheid. The Palestinians are being pushed, funnily enough by the Israelis and President Trump, to a struggle for their rights within one state.



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# Yemen president dismisses army commander after battlefield setbacks

Author:

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AL-MUKALLA: Yemen's President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi has dismissed an army general following a series of military setbacks in Nehim district, near Houthi-held Sanaa.

The official Saba News agency reported on Monday that Hadi had appointed Maj. Gen. Ahmad Hassan Jebran as the commander of the 7th Military Region, replacing Maj. Gen. Mohsen Al-Khubi.

Al-Khubi has been commanding government forces in Nehim and neighboring battlefields since August 2018. The Nehim battlefield has endured a military stalemate as government forces could not make major gains.

The dismissal comes amid reports that the Iranian-backed Houthis have seized control of Fardhat Nehim military base, a large swathe of the mountainous district and a strategic road that links Marib city with the northern province of Jawf.

The rebels expanded in Nehim following heavy clashes with government forces, backed by air support from Saudi-led coalition warplanes.

Last week, Yemen's minister of defense said that army troops carried out a "tactical retreat" in Nehim to allow forces to regroup before pushing back into the battlefield. Fighting in Nehim escalated on Jan. 19, a day after a Houthi missile and drone attack killed more than 110 soldiers and civilians at a military base mosque in the city of Marib.

The attack prompted senior government officials to threaten to pull out of the Stockholm Agreement, which largely ended hostilities in the western province of Hodeida. Dozens of Houthis and loyalist forces, including commanders, have been killed since the Marib attack.

## **HIGHLIGHT**

**The dismissal comes amid reports that the Houthis have seized control of Fardhat Nehim military base.**

Saba reported on Monday that Hadi telephoned the minister of defense and the governors of Marib, Jawf and Sana'a, hailing "victories" on the battlefields and ordering his forces to escalate military activities until they purged the Houthis from areas under their control.

Fighting also continued in Abyan's Lawder district when the Houthis attacked government forces.

Similar clashes were also reported in Jawf, Marib's Serwah and Taiz. UN envoy to Yemen urges recommitment to Stockholm Agreement

The UN envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, has urged the Houthis and the internationally recognized government to adhere to the Stockholm Agreement and to stop hostilities on the battlefields as the Yemeni government

reiterated threats to pull out of the deal.

“The parties in Yemen must de-escalate violence and renew their commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Yemeni people deserve better than a life of perpetual war,” he said on Tuesday, urging both sides to commit to keeping Hodeida safe and releasing detainees.

“More than a year ago in Stockholm, the parties promised the Yemeni people to keep Hodeida safe, to use port revenues to pay salaries and to return detainees to their loved ones. They must fulfill these promises and build a conducive environment for the peace process,” he added.

Yemeni government officials argue that the Houthis exploited a cessation of fighting in Hodeida to strengthen their forces in Nehim and Taiz.



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