

Empowering Palestinians means delivering on promises

Wed, 2019-06-26 23:58

MANAMA: Jared Kushner's "Peace to Prosperity" plan, unveiled this week at a conference in Bahrain, sets ambitious goals, including doubling Palestine's gross domestic product and reducing its high unemployment rate to under 10 percent.

Unemployment is at 30 percent in the West Bank and 50 percent in the Gaza Strip, according to Christine Lagarde, managing director and chairman of the International Monetary Fund, who spoke at the conference.

Kushner's plan proposes investments of nearly \$30 billion in the occupied Palestinian territories, and \$20 billion in Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan.

But money alone will not be enough if people are not given opportunities to work and develop their own entrepreneurial skills, business leaders warned during a panel discussion entitled "Empowering the People."

LIVE: Shiv Khemka vice chairman of SUN group says "I believe that while Palestine has a particular history and context, there are lots of lessons to learn from their youth" <https://t.co/vYZ0GT3s7x> [#PeaceToProsperity](#) [#BahrainConference](#) pic.twitter.com/pwIDJg5MLk

– Arab News (@arabnews) [June 26, 2019](#)

Arab News Editor-in-Chief Faisal Abbas moderated the panel, which featured four distinguished business leaders: Osama Al-Absi, CEO of the Bahrain Labor Market Regulatory Authority; Amadou Diallo, DHL's CEO for the Middle East and Africa; Shiv Khemka, vice chairman of SUN Group Global; and Luis Alberto Moreno, president of the Inter-American Development Bank.

Abbas praised Kushner's "impressive and detailed" plan, but said "the political will must be there" for it to succeed.

Khemka said India has overcome similar challenges that Palestine faces, and "if the challenges can be overcome in India, they can be overcome anywhere."

He added: "In India, we have 1.3 billion people, so we need to create 1.3 million jobs per month for the next 30 years. We have extreme poverty and wealth. We have all kinds of conflicts and all kinds of issues. If you start off with the assumption that the political will is there, then I think there's no reason at all why this plan can't succeed."

LIVE: [@ArabNews](#) EIC [@FaisalJAbbas](#) says “It will definitely require a lot of work but it is definitely achievable”
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<pic.twitter.com/2uGtwQyPC1>

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Moreno said based on his visit to the West Bank, he believes that “the political will is present and can be nurtured” among Palestinians.

“A plan like this is only as good as the people who are willing to implement it,” he added. “The more important thing, in any case, is the political will to get behind something where people will eventually really build the potential for developing their own country.”

FASTFACTS

- Unemployment in West Bank is at 30 percent and 50 percent in the Gaza Strip.
- Jared Kushner’s plan proposes investments of nearly \$30 billion in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- The plan also seeks investments worth \$20 billion in Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan.

Al-Absi, who helped reduce Bahrain’s unemployment rate from 17 percent to about 4 percent over 11 years, cautioned that the worst thing to do is to raise expectations and then not follow through.

“A pessimist is what an optimist calls a realist, and I’m a realist. It’s doable, but you have to approach this with a lot of practicality,” he said, describing Kushner’s plan as “very ambitious.”

Al-Absi added: “You’re going to come up with ... a peace plan and an economic plan. You’re going to raise their (Palestinians’) expectations. You have to prepare them, otherwise, this can all go south.”

LIVE: [@DHLGlobal](#) CEO Amadou Diallo says “our job is to create platforms so that people in Palestine can be able to work and help people in Mozambique” <https://t.co/vYZ0GT3s7x> [#PeaceToProsperity](#) [#BahrainConference](#) <pic.twitter.com/5xgwDiCgsW>

– Arab News (@arabnews) [June 26, 2019](#)

Diallo said: “How you create opportunity is by having leadership that has aspirations to change the way people live in their own communities.”

He added: “That has to be done locally because it can’t be done from outside. The people have to fight for that. I’ve seen that happen in Asia, in Pakistan, but also here in the region.”

He said: “How do you open up opportunities so people can fly in and out easily? How do you open up opportunities so goods can move in and out easily? You create entrepreneurs who have opportunities that are beyond their village and their city and are competing with everyone else, competing in the global world. That’s what I call inclusion.”



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Kushner: Door still open to Palestinians despite Bahrain boycottMedia blitz as Palestinians oppose ‘Deal of the Century’

[Survey reveals plight of Syrian refugee children](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-06-26 23:38

BEIRUT: A survey on child labor among Syrian refugees in Lebanon has revealed that 4,592 of the 6,972 children in the study work – and many have been injured while on the job.

The children, aged four to 18, live in refugee camps in Hermel, Baalbek, Central Bekaa and Zahle.

Dr. Rima Habib, chair of the Environmental Health Department at the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) of the American University of Beirut (AUB), supervised the survey conducted by the Ministry of Labor in collaboration with AUB in 2017.

“There are reasons for child labor among Syrians, but we were surprised that 30 percent of those children get injured on the job,” Dr. Habib told Arab News.

“The survey, which began in August 2017 until today’s report, does not mean that things have changed. The situation is still the same, if not worse, and the study was presented to the concerned Ministry of Labor which will fight against this kind of labor,” she said.

Based on the report, “55.2 percent of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are under 18 years old, and out of 938,531 refugees registered at the High Commission for Refugee Affairs, 341,234 of them live in the Bekaa area close to the Syrian border.”

The report describes Syrian refugees’ status in Lebanon as “complicated.” Lebanon does not use the word “refugee” but prefers the term “displaced.”

Lebanon has not signed the Geneva Convention, which binds states to provide refugees with basic rights. There are also no national laws for the fair treatment of refugees.

The Lebanese security authorities require Syrians to have a sponsor to enter Lebanon and work, and to have a permit costing \$200 annually per individual. Many Syrians avoid this and live in Lebanon illegally.

As a result, Syrians who do not meet the conditions of employment are forced to make their children who are under 18 work since they are less likely to be arrested and investigated.

Based on the survey, 74.8 percent of children work in agriculture, 50.5 percent do not attend school because they are working, 37.8 percent of children are not paid on time, and 43 percent of boys and 41 percent of girls are humiliated while working. Syrian children work in jobs such as waste-picking, construction, shoe cleaning, car washing and mechanics.

The survey shows that 78.8 percent of children work for a Lebanese employer and 19.5 percent for a Syrian employer. About 58 percent said that they give their pay to their parents, and most of them worked in unsuitable professions for children and under harsh conditions.

“The challenges Syrian refugee families face in Bekaa are interlinked with

social, political and economic factors and since returning to Syria at this stage will take a long time, it is necessary to work on securing adequate support for the refugees to provide them with a decent life, prohibit child labor, protect them and support their education,” Dr. Habib said.



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In Lebanon, Syrian refugees face new pressure to go homeMade homeless by war, Syrians sell furniture to survive

[Media blitz as Palestinians oppose 'Deal of the Century'](#)

Author:

Wed, 2019-06-26 01:38

AMMAN: Palestinian officials, activists and the public at large stood unusually united on Tuesday in their opposition to the US-led, economic-based Israeli-Palestinian peace effort. They launched a wide-ranging public and media blitz in protest against the start of the two-day Peace to Prosperity economic workshop in Bahrain.

Palestinian government spokesman Ibrahim Milhem told Arab News that watching Jared Kushner make his opening speech at the workshop about the so-called "Deal of the Century" reminded him of the financial machinations of Wall Street.

"I saw a salesman trying to push a particular product, talking about numbers and opportunities without the slightest interest in the fact that he was talking about our lives and our situation," he said.

Milhem and other Palestinian officials talked to a number of media outlets in an attempt to counter the US narrative. President Mahmoud Abbas, who presides over a divided authority that is in perpetual financial crisis and depends on donor nations, invited members of the Foreign Press Association to his Ramallah headquarters. "We need the money and, really, we need assistance," he told them. "But before everything, there is a political solution."

Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh appeared on the Christiane Amanpour program on CNN International and wrote a column for the Washington Post headlined "Palestinians want freedom not Trump administration bribes."

After Kushner's speech, political analyst Lamis Andoni said that Palestinians are being asked to accept that if the prison conditions under which they live are to improve, the occupation will continue. The US proposal is designed to silence Palestinians by giving them enough to survive, while giving a minority the chance to get rich, he said. "It didn't work before and will not work now," he added.

Husam Zulmot, head of the Palestine mission in the UK and former head of the Washington DC mission, said: "Palestine is not for sale." He described Kushner's plan as "deceptive" and "disingenuous," arguing that it does not address the core issue: the occupation.

In Nablus, the deputy head of Fatah, Mahmoud Aloul, issued a stern warning to Arab participants in the Bahrain workshop: "We tell our brothers that they have stabbed us in the back and your intervention in our cause has gone overboard and we will not allow that." He qualified this by adding: "The US and Israel will continue to be our enemy but we will not consider you enemies; we will leave you to your own people and hope that your hibernation will not last long."

The Palestinian Al Quds daily newspaper ran the front page headline "Opposition to the Deal of the Century hold protests throughout the homeland and the diaspora," with a photo of the demonstrations in Ramallah covering the rest of the front page. It also published a two-page supplement quoting politicians from a number of movements, including Fatah and Hamas, along with analysts and pundits, all criticizing the Manama workshop.

Hani Elmasri, the head of the Masarat think tank in Ramallah, wrote an article in which he said that the "Trump deal will not succeed without a Palestinian cover, and will fail sooner or later, but while the plan has not succeed in liquidating Palestinian nationalism it has succeeded in stressing the facts of the occupation and made the possibility of a Palestinian

struggle much more difficult. This means that it is not enough for Palestinians to reject this plan but they need to respond with a holistic strategy that must be political, economic and has to be a struggle by the people on all levels.”



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Kushner urges Palestinians to take the “Opportunity of the Century” Kushner’s Peace to Prosperity plan met with guarded enthusiasm

[Kushner’s Peace to Prosperity plan met with guarded enthusiasm](#)

Wed, 2019-06-26 01:20

MANAMA: Business leaders from the US and the Middle East reacted with guarded enthusiasm to the Peace to Prosperity plan presented by White House special adviser Jared Kushner to an audience of global decision-makers in Bahrain’s capital Manama.

Stephen Schwarzman, chairman and CEO of the big investment business Blackstone Group, said the plan “could happen in the right circumstances. We all have to have a dream, and this is a very sensible dream.”

Mohamed Alabbar, chairman of the UAE property and leisure group Emaar, said Palestine is very important for all Arabs.

“The issue is very close to our hearts. Everyone of us is Palestinian at heart, and I feel I represent them here tonight,” he said in reference to the absence of Palestinian Authority delegates at the event.

Earlier, the audience of business leaders and policymakers from around the world listened attentively as Kushner unveiled details of the \$50 billion plan to revive the Palestinian and regional economy.

He is hoping to attract investment from Middle Eastern and other governments, as well as private enterprise from around the world, for the proposals, which are designed to revive the Palestinian economy, create 1 million jobs and cut the poverty rate in the occupied territories.

HIGHLIGHT

The audience of business leaders and policymakers from around the world listened attentively as Kushner unveiled details of the \$50 billion plan to revive the Palestinian and regional economy.

About \$27 billion of the total is earmarked for Palestine, and only 20 percent of that will be straight equity.

“That’s only \$5.5 billion, and it’s not that much money. It’s a good-sized proposal you’d expect to be financing at the World Bank,” Schwarzman said.

“This type of transformation is financially doable. It’s a question of whether there’s the political will.”

Alabbar said he had been a big investor in the region around Palestine for 12 years, and in some ways it was easier to do business in the Middle East than in North America, where getting planning permission for big developments could take as long as seven years.

He pointed to Emaar’s successful developments in Serbia as an example of “a war-torn region that has come good.”

Schwarzman gave examples from his firm’s investments in Uganda and Poland as the kind of transformational investments Palestine needs.

Both men were asked what effect Kushner’s proposals would have shown in two years’ time. “I think we’d all be overjoyed if this situation was normalized,” Schwarzman replied. Alabbar said: “I think the velocity of the change could surprise us all positively.”



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Kushner urges Palestinians to take the “Opportunity of the Century” Long line of Israeli-Palestinian peace bids precedes Trump administration’s push

[Long line of Israeli-Palestinian peace bids precedes Trump administration’s push](#)

Wed, 2019-06-26 01:04

The economic conference in Bahrain follows a history of peace efforts that have failed to overcome decades of distrust and violence.

Here is a list of the main plans and initiatives undertaken by the parties themselves and international mediators since the 1967 Middle East war, when Israel captured the Jordanian-held West Bank and East Jerusalem, Egypt’s Sinai peninsula and the Egyptian-run Gaza Strip and Syria’s Golan Heights.

- **1967 – UN Security Council Resolution 242**

After the Six-Day War, UN Security Council Resolution 242 calls for the

“withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict” in return for all states in the area to respect each other’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence.

The resolution is the foundation for many peace initiatives but its imprecise phrasing – is the reference to all territories or just some? – has complicated efforts for decades.

- **1969 -1971 – The Rogers Plans**

US Secretary of State William Rogers proposes three plans that focused on ending warfare between Israel and Egypt, whose forces were then glaring at one another across the Suez Canal. It urged that Jerusalem be a “unified city” with roles for Israel and Jordan in its civic, economic and religious life. It also called for a “just settlement” for Palestinian refugees.

- **1978 – Camp David agreement**

Five years after the 1973 Middle East war, which began with Egyptian and Syrian offensives to regain the Sinai and the Golan Heights and ended with Israel still in control of the two territories, US President Jimmy Carter brings Israel’s Menachem Begin and Egypt’s Anwar Sadat to Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland, to negotiate peace.

In 1977, after a series of disengagement of forces agreements between Israel and Egypt, Sadat had become the first Arab leader to visit Israel. At Camp David, he and Begin agree on a Framework for Peace in the Middle East. It calls for an Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, an Israeli withdrawal in stages from the Sinai and a transitional Palestinian self-government in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

- **1979 – Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty**

Signed on the White House lawn, it is the first peace treaty between Israel and an Arab country. It set out plans for a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai within three years.

- **1981 – Fahd Plan**

Saudi Crown Prince Fahd proposes plan calling for complete Israeli withdrawal from territories captured in 1967, creation of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital and a right of return or compensation for Palestinian refugees.

- **1982 – The Reagan Plan**

After Israel’s invasion of Lebanon, US President Ronald Regan urges a “fresh start” in resolving the wider Israeli-Arab conflict. He proposes a five-year transitional period of Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and negotiations leading to self-government by the Palestinians in association with Jordan.

- **1991 – Madrid summit**

Four years after a Palestinian Intifada, or uprising, erupted in the West Bank and Gaza, an international peace conference convenes in Madrid.

Representatives of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) attend, a historic first. No agreements are reached but scene is set for direct Israeli-Palestinian contacts.

- **1993-1995 – Declaration of Principles/Oslo Accords**

Israel and the PLO hold secret talks in Norway that result in interim peace agreements. The accords call for a Palestinian interim self-government and an elected council in the West Bank and Gaza for a transitional period not exceeding five years, along with Israeli troop withdrawals. Negotiations would begin no later than the third year of the interim period on a permanent Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

- **2000 – Camp David summit**

With Israel and the Palestinians unable to resolve core issues, US President Bill Clinton convenes Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak at Camp David. They fail to reach a final agreement and another Palestinian uprising ensues.

- **2002-2003 – Bush Declaration/Arab peace initiative/Road Map**

George W. Bush becomes first US president to call for creation of a Palestinian state, living side-by-side with Israel “in peace and security.” Saudi Arabia presents Arab League-endorsed peace plan for full Israeli withdrawal from territory occupied in 1967 and Israel’s acceptance of a Palestinian state in return for normal relations with Arab countries.

Quartet of mediators – the US, the EU, the UN and Russia – presents a roadmap to a permanent two-state solution to the conflict.

Amid the Palestinian uprising, the plan calls for an “end of terror and violence,” Israeli troop pullbacks and an Israeli settlement freeze, all leading to final-status negotiations.

- **2007 – Annapolis summit**

In the most intense US peace push since Israeli-Palestinian talks collapsed in 2000, Bush hosts a Middle East summit in Annapolis, Maryland. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert attend and agree to resume talks, with the declared aim of crafting a peace treaty by 2008. Olmert later says they were close to a deal but a corruption investigation against him and a Gaza war in 2008 caused the negotiations to end.

- **2009 – Netanyahu’s Bar-Ilan address**

In a speech at Israel’s Bar-Ilan University, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he would be prepared to reach a peace agreement that includes establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state. He also sets another

condition: Palestinian recognition of Israel as the “state of the Jewish people.”

- **2010 – Israeli settlement freeze/talks resume – and end**

Under pressure from US President Barack Obama, Netanyahu imposes a 10-month partial moratorium on settlement construction in the West Bank. Peace talks resume just before the freeze ends, and then break down within weeks after Netanyahu refuses to extend the moratorium.

- **2013 – 2014 – Washington peace talks/negotiations collapse**

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, coaxed to resume talks by US Secretary of State John Kerry, meet in Washington. Kerry says the objective is to reach a final-status agreement within nine months. Talks go nowhere and Israel suspends them in April 2014, citing its opposition to a unity pact between President Mahmoud Abbas’s Fatah group and Hamas.

- **2019 – Netanyahu says he intends to annex West Bank settlements**



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