

## **A Reading in the Proceedings of the Study Day Organized by the Mada al-Carmel Center in February 2017 entitled: The Palestinians in Israel: The New Political Reality and Development of Protest Mechanisms**

In this report, we try to deal with the topics dealt with in the current issue of “Jadal” by reviewing the events of the Mada al-Carmel’s study day entitled, “The Palestinians in Israel: The New Political Reality and Development of Protest Mechanisms,” which was held on 25 February 2017.

Mada al-Carmel hosted a group of academics and political leaders from various political views, “to contribute to the provision of a space for common collective thinking in the new political reality, and to develop tools of protest.” This was stated in the inaugural speech delivered by Mrs. Einas Odeh-Haj, Mada al-Carmel’s Co-Director, who also noted that what we have witnessed in the weeks before the study day is a serious escalation in Israeli policies and practices. Practices manifested in the demolition of homes in Qalanswa and Um al-Hiran, preceded by systematic campaigns to restrict political action, such as the prohibition of the Islamic Movement and pursuit of the National Democratic Assembly in an attempt to delegitimize it. These policies are not new, particularly after the year 2000, when they evolved from containment into hostility, which made us feel that we are on the threshold of a new phase.

With regard to our collective performance, Odeh-Haj asked: Do the same tools of protest suffice, while Israel expands its colonialist practices? How do we accumulate the tools of our struggle in a way that moves us from reaction, to action and initiative? Do we have a strategy? Do we agree on specific demands we can translate collectively?

With this introduction, the floor opened for presentations and discussions on Israeli policies and the Palestinian strategies to resist these policies.

**In Summary:** In reviewing the facts of the study day, we can generalize that the participants, in addition to agreeing on the nature of the Israeli system as an exclusionary system, with repressive and violent policies part of its structure, agreed that the current phase is a phase of unprecedented appropriation and ferociousness. In their presentations, the leaders and academics presented their similar and different analyzes of this escalation. Some stressed that this escalation was due to Israel’s sense of security in all matters relating to the political reality in the territories occupied in 1967, which allowed it to engage with the question of demography and its identity by describing it as Jewish. This led to an escalation of policy development and enactment of racist laws, particularly those related to demolition and displacement. In addition to pursuing the political and cultural work of the political parties and movements that affect the Jewish character of the State. Enacting laws that legitimize the expansion of settlements, improving the settlers’ life conditions and the creeping annexation

of the territories occupied in 1967. Some pointed out that the last decade is the decade in which the extreme Right with national religious references is in control in Israel.

With regard to our role in the struggle and political activity in light of these policies, most of the participants emphasized the importance of the strategic unity that maintains the constants, and respect for pluralism within this unity. Some presented a critical reading of our current political performance, and called for re-evaluating our political behavior without self-effacement. They pointed to some of the achievements that have been made in recent years at the level of collective action, including partial agreement on the work of the Follow-up Committee and the establishment of the Joint List. The participants also stressed the importance of promoting and developing a popular and embracing reference for the High Follow-up Committee and its activities. Among the issues emphasized was the need for professionals and academics to engage in political action, from where they are, and according to their ability. That is, work to establish elected bodies, such as unions, civil society and professional unions, especially teachers, planners and lawyers, as an inlet into direct elections of the Follow-up Committee. Some also noted the importance of development of international action. This action started within civil society and was recently developed and adopted by the Follow-up Committee in parallel with global developments toward recognition of indigenous peoples and their rights. They also emphasized the need to secure what can be called a national fund, funded locally by the people. This fund would contribute to the implementation of plans the representative frameworks plan for, in order to restore meaning and respect for the existing struggle strategies, such as demonstrations, strikes, etc. As well as the need to consider using some strategies that have not been tried, such as civil disobedience and boycotts.

### **On the Nature of the Historical and Current Zionist Project**

During their presentations, some speakers addressed the nature of Israel and the Zionist project since its establishment and its current status. They emphasized it being a colonialist settlement replacement project, an illegal project. While also accentuating the fact that the Palestinians inside Israel are the indigenous people and the owners of the homeland.

Mr. Mohammad Barakeh (head of the High Follow-up Committee) pointed out that the Zionist project is basically a replacement project. Although it has adopted three other slogans: the first is the Jewishness of the State (a slogan with implications on the resolution of the cause and projections on our living, rights and existential reality). The second is linked to the fact that Israel is seeking to make the conflict religious by benefiting from anti-Islamic campaigns. While the third is to erase the Green Line and restore the slogan of “Land of Israel”, after it was dropped internationally with the proposal of the two-State solution.

Researcher Hunaida Ghanem (Director of the Madar Center – the Palestinian Center for Israeli Studies) asserted that Zionism was a national movement that used colonialist settlement as a tool. This was the only tool available to establish a State on the land of Palestine, where the Palestinian presence was an obstacle that had to be removed regardless of their stance toward them. She highlighted the fact that this obliteration is at the heart of the colonialist settlement structure, since the State can only be established on dual obliteration and replacement, which occurred “successfully” in 1948. She added that the colonialist settlement project, after 1967, and as a result of the demographic changes, was reopened, evoking the national religious dimension in the conflict, and threatening continuous religious zeal of the settlement project.

The Academic Director of Mada al-Carmel, Dr. Mohanad Mustafa's presentation dealt with the extreme Right in Israel. He approached Israel in terms of it being a colonialist project, while adding two additional layers to this framework in the current reality: First, the control of the national religious Right on Zionism, and creating an alienation of the secular trend within it. Second, the addition of another class to the two existing classes while not canceling them, is the rise of the extreme Right, as part of the rise of the extreme Right in the world. He noted that the three classes together affect the policies toward us and the Palestinian national movement as well as the Palestinian project.

Advocate and activist, Ali Haider, in his criticism of the lack of a unified leadership or a unified reference and unified political representation in any part of the Palestinian people, said that we are in a state of schism. We read reality as a colonialist reality, but do not develop tools suitable for this reading, and we have to do so. He concluded by calling us to think about proposing a one-State project.

Sheikh Raed Salah, head of the Islamic Movement outlawed by Israel, said that the Zionist project, no matter what, does not have the legitimacy of existence. This project wants us to deal with it and recognize the legitimacy of its existence, and we reject this kind of relationship. Salah emphasized that we, the Palestinians inside Israel, are the custodians of the Palestinian constants.

### **On recent Israeli policies toward the Palestinian citizens: Appropriation and Ferociousness**

While the participants accentuated the nature of the system, they agreed that there was a clear and growing escalation in racist policies, laws and practice. In this regard, Huneida Ghanem argued that there is an unprecedented escalation and adoption of laws and legislation, in order to establish the structure of the State as a Jewish State. Since the 1990s, there has been a focus on Israel as a democratic Jewish State, while today the focus is only on it being Jewish. This is in addition to the attempt to control the boundaries of political action, as we find in recent legislation aimed at restricting the work of human rights and cultural associations, as well as prohibiting dissemination of any content inconsistent with the idea of the State. Not funding Al Midan Theater is an example of this. The third issue she mentioned, was that there has been a clear and persistent policy, since the end of the obsession with Iran, to become preoccupied with the Arab leadership inside Israel, in order to delegitimize it as "extreme and irrational radicalism." On the other hand, discourse attempts on economic peace emerge in an attempt to replace and compete with the national discourse, by accentuating economic peace as an alternative to national peace.

Mr. Barakeh specifically referred to the economic plan, warning of its risks, arguing that it is being offered for negotiation on each of its provisions. Even what used to be automatically included in the budget, has been included in the plan in order to be bartered for. He asked whether civil rights are derived from loyalty to the institution, or from being owners of the homeland? He added that Israel wants to produce the new Israeli Arab.

In his presentation, Dr. Mohanad Mustafa dealt specifically with the development of the extreme Right in Israel. He argued that this Right, as an ideology, has dominated the Israeli Right in the last ten years, of the forty years, in which the Right has ruled in Israel. He added that this Right has the same five characteristics that distinguish the extreme Right in Europe

and the world, with one difference, not in its attributes, but in the extent of its domination. While the extreme Right in Europe is still - despite its rise and strength - in the opposition, and democratic forces from the Left (and even from the Right) are trying to curb it, the extreme Right in Israel is dominant and there is an attempt to adapt to it, not curb it. With regard to the characteristics of this Right, Mustafa pointed out that its political and ideological discourse, in part, is based on religion as a reference. It is hostile to the idea of immigrants and refugees. It is anti-Islam, not out of fear of radical Islam, rather from hatred of Muslims. It is exclusionary in its perception of the State, and sees it as for one group, thus is hostile to the national minorities within it.

Mustafa said that our reading of Israel's policies toward us through this class, i.e., the rise of the extreme Right, cannot be separated from the regional and international context: the collapse of the Arab world, the rise of the Right and the undemocratic forces in the world.

Israel is working - after ensuring existential security - in the direction of resolving two issues: transforming the Palestinian Authority into an alternative to the Palestinian national project and stabilizing it. Annexing Area C on one hand and reducing the citizenship boundaries of the Palestinians inside Israel on the other. Thereby replacing the policies of contempt that characterized the Labor Party (i.e., absencing and disdain of the Palestinians and dealing with them as "nice people") with the policies of evocation and incitement, i.e. provoke and incite against them by the extreme Right.

MK Haneen Zoabi emphasized the change in Israel's policies toward the Palestinians inside Israel. At the beginning of her presentation, she argued that the changes in Israeli society and policies toward the Palestinians inside Israel are unrelated to them and their performance. Rather they are associated with three other factors: the context of changes in the region; existence of dynamics in Israeli society between the Right and non-Right; and the need for the Right to conclusively reinforce its strength, as well as for their need for an enemy to shut down the non-Right. She added that when Israel felt comfortable and saw itself as a regional ruler, it began to be ruthless toward us. She also argued that - although we managed, at several stations, to break the rules of the Israeli game in exceptional circumstances - Israel responded with more repression. She added that sometimes we break the barrier of fear and the rules of the game. However, in spite of the National Democratic Assembly discourse and the presence of the Islamic Movement in al-Aqsa, we have not been able to accumulate our struggles. Since 2000, Israel has wanted to produce the new Israeli Arab. Following 2006, when Israel took complete control of the territories occupied in 1967, the Israeli concern became demographic and turned its attention to the question of identity and Jewish Statehood. Within this tactic, they politically pursued the National Democratic Assembly and the Islamic Movement as well as the points of rebellion, to eliminate the hotbeds of disobedience and differentiate between the moderates and extremists. Thus, the equation of the stick and carrot, became a guillotine and carrot.

MK Osama Saadi argued that there is a fundamental change in dealing with the Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line. This change is manifested in a series of racist laws enacted by Israel in the last two years, amounting to around sixty laws, in a fierce competition between the Likud and the Jewish Home, on which party proposes more racist bills. In particular, Saadi discussed the annexation laws in Area C, as well as some laws that encourage investment and employment in the settlements (such as prohibition of discrimination on place of work, laws granting tax benefits to settlers and others). Regarding the Green Line, he referred to some racist laws, including the Entry into Israel Law, which

authorizes the Interior Minister to prevent anyone supporting the boycott from entering Israel. The citizenship law, also known as the Azmi Bishara law, and the Kamenetz Law that speeds up the process of house demolitions without having to wait for the courts' ruling. In addition to other laws that strip the power from the courts and transfer it to the executive authority.

In his presentation, Dr. Ahmad Amara dealt with the Israeli policies toward land in the Naqab, and the Arabs there, since the establishment of Israel. He referred to the first mechanisms adopted by Israel starting from the 1950s, when it decided to only retain ten thousand people in the Naqab. These tactics were either to displace them all, build three towns to amass them, or house them in the North in the mixed cities or the Triangle. He added that Israel has used all three techniques. Amara then referred to the laws and plans with which Israel confiscated the vast majority of the Naqab lands. They used the Ottoman and Mandate Fallow Lands Law extensively, and then through various government committees, tried to negotiate deportation and compensation with different equations. Since 2000, they have dealt with the Naqab as if it is land that must be saved and freed from the Bedouin. Successive governments have tried to end the Naqab case, beginning with the Praver Plan, and currently with the Uri Ariel plans. Amara pointed out that to date, there are still more than 2,500 proprietary claims by the Naqab Arabs, confirming that the deportation project of the Naqab inhabitants has not succeeded and will not succeed. When the proprietary claims were filed in 1981, the Arab population in the Naqab was 39,000, while today the population is 239,000.

### **Struggle Action Strategies: Unity, Self-criticism, and Acceptance of Pluralism**

As noted above, participants emphasized the need for unity and maintaining the constants with respect for pluralism. They called for the strengthening of the inclusive, representative and elected frameworks in particular; pushing for the promotion of the popular support and inclusion of the leadership, so everyone can bear the common concern together. In addition, they called for the development of public funding for our political action, as well as development of global action to hold Israel internationally accountable for its policies. The participants also addressed self-criticism as a necessary mechanism of action.

Advocate Ali Haider, stressed the importance of establishing a high council for the Arabs. Progress toward this council can be started by establishing professional unions and frameworks that combine professional and national affiliation: lawyers, planners, artisans and artists. He also stressed the need to establish an Arab Center for Strategic Planning. He proposed ten work strategies, including: developing local and international advocacy, working opposite the media, developing research to provide position papers and policy papers, developing struggle mechanisms, adopting civil disobedience, boycotts, car convoys and hunger strikes. He also called for the development of volunteerism.

Dr. Mansour Abbas, Deputy Head of the Islamic Movement, stressed the need to move away from regionalism, while paying attention in our current context by theorizing and thinking for collective and not partisan interest. He emphasized that - as an Islamist – he believes that theorizing should be for the people and not for a particular faction. Therefore, it is necessary to review the investment of party and ideological thought in theorizing for the people and a Palestinian national project. He accentuated that the critiquing mechanism is a necessary strategy of action, specifically pointing out the need to criticize the work of **the Local Authorities in planning and building as well as obtaining budgets. He called for transparency, avoiding corruption and holding those who are corrupt accountable.** He called for the review of the work of the Joint List, to examine whether it is acting as a new

institution, or is a reflection of the crises of parliamentary and individual action within each party. He further stressed that we must build the institutions to be self-sufficient without being dependent on a person and bound to him.

Sheikh Raed Salah began his presentation by asserting that the Palestinians inside Israel – due to their location – are the custodians of the Palestinian constants and Palestinian memory. They defend Jerusalem, its holy sites and Al Aqsa Mosque, because in the present circumstances, they are the only ones who can play this role. He stressed the importance of respecting the components of the Palestinians inside Israel, and their geographical and political diversity under the umbrella of the Follow-up Committee. This Committee needs to be the reference for our process, not just a framework for coordination of positions. He also stressed that in order for the Committee to be this reference, we must provide it with the conditions for its success, (including financial capacity), starting with the revitalization of its ten committees. He emphasized the importance of building a popular incubator that will bear our concerns and contribute to our success, by establishing a national fund to support the Follow-up Committee. He added that we must work on a project of moral mobilization, and offer a discourse of optimism for our people. There is also a need to prepare a charter of the principles and constants that unite us in order to challenge the Zionist project with it.

The final speaker, MK Yousef Jabareen, noted that building a shared work culture is as important as building a common framework. We have gone a long way in building these frameworks. This is manifested in the creation of the Joint List, which we frequently called for, and was formed recently. There is some consensus on the performance of the Follow-up Committee. However, the challenge, in his opinion, is not only to put forward the theoretical framework, but also in our ability to adopt a culture of joint building and action. He added that the Joint List, which brings together the parties, could work with a unitary work culture or just be an electoral alliance. He also pointed out that the challenge in the broader sense remains the umbrella institution that can build a free and national will - the Follow-up Committee. He urged that one of the recommendations that needs to result from this study day, is the existence of self-financed inclusive institutions as grounds for this umbrella institution. That is, in order to reach a publicly elected Follow-up Committee, previous steps should be taken. This includes providing financial and logistical support, and developing the participation and presence of professional unions, such as teachers, lawyers and civil society frameworks. With this, the unified framework will have a prepared structure, and will be able to reach a stage of national, popular and struggle maturity to establish such frameworks. In his presentation, he also accentuated the international recognition of the rights of indigenous minorities to organize themselves and establish their institutions.