

An Interview with Khalida Jarrar of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)

Source: Alternative Information Center

Khalida Jarrar is a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Palestinian Legislative Council.

Q. Let's start with the PFLP opinion about the Obama administration and the new Israeli government. Do you think that the new US administration will bring any change to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

A. We do not think individuals can do a lot for the policy of a country. I believe that Obama will not bring any substantial change, at least with regard to the American foreign policy.

We are talking about institutional policies, not those of individuals. Of course, each President, each party has a different approach on how to implement foreign policy, and there will be no crazy policies anymore like Bush did, but Obama cannot change the system, and the contradictions are within the system itself: the capitalist economic system, the imperialist view that led to the military occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.



Toward the Middle East and especially the Palestinian cause, they are still talking about the “peace process,” that does not mean anything for us, it is not a real peace process.

And I think the priority for the US now will be the financial crisis and the economic problems inside the capitalistic system itself.

Therefore, we are not optimistic, Obama will not alter the system and consequently for the Palestinians, the situation will not change a lot.

Q. What about the Israeli government? It seems they will not even be engaged to the two-state solution...

A. The Israeli government!?! The elections show the Israeli government is going more and more to the far right-wing. The new thing is that Lieberman succeeded to gain more [consensuses] and a seat in the government as Foreign Minister.

He himself clearly represents, now at official level, the racism, the ethnic cleansing policies of the Israeli government towards the Palestinians. They are increasing the number of settlements, the



house demolitions in Jerusalem; so, talk or not to talk with them?

I belong to a party that has been saying from the beginning that this peace process will not lead to any peace or justice for the Palestinians. We have been asking to stop any kind of negotiation with the Israeli governments, especially with this one. We do not believe in a peace process based on personal individual talks, without really implementing the international resolutions related to the Palestinian cause and recognizing the fundamental rights of the Palestinians.

I am not just talking about the right to create a fully independent Palestinian State, but also the right to self-determination and the right of return for the Palestinian refugees. There is no need to discuss or compromise on such fundamental inalienable rights; they should be just implemented through an international conference according to the international law and the relevant UN Resolutions.

Q. Cairo talks: do you think any kind of reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah will be realistic?

A. I am pessimistic about the possibility of a reunification. I do not think there are real talks between the two parties on national reunification, but individual talks. Each party will use its power to create

mechanisms to gain more power and rule the area it already controls.

We think there should be an overall discussion without any external preconditions and interferences on how should be formed the new government. As Palestinian political parties, we share the situation of being under occupation: for that we should respect each other and use only democratic instruments to solve out problems, instead of controlling things through the use of force.

We need to hold elections, change the electoral law in order to give all the political parties the opportunity to participate. We should stop this terrible mechanism where Hamas-Fatah feud, also thanks to external interferences, controls everything.

Q. An increasing number of critics and dissidents of the PA leadership is becoming a target for the PA's security apparatus in the West Bank. Do you think the PA are becoming increasingly authoritarian and the security forces militarized? What about the coordination between them and the Israelis?

A. This aspect is part of the Road Map agreement. We totally refuse the coordination between the Palestinian security forces and the Israelis and we think it should be immediately stopped.

Any security forces should help the Palestinians in their struggle and implement their citizens' rights, instead of collaborate

with the occupier. This is one of the issues now on the table of the dialogue. We are against any kind of security forces related to political parties, as it is now in the West Bank and Gaza.

I am really concerned about the violation of the human rights of the Palestinians: both in West Bank and Gaza there are political prisoners, assassinations, closure of institutions of the rival party. In Gaza Hamas does not allow Fatah to hold normal political activities, and vice versa in the Fatah-controlled West Bank.

The first victims of these policies are the human rights of the Palestinians themselves.

Q. The Palestinian Authority still believes that the peace negotiations are the best way to achieve peace and justice for the Palestinians. Do you think the PNA represents the interest of the Palestinians people?

A. I am member of a party that has opposed the so called peace process from the beginning. We do not agree on the track of individual and continuous negotiations and we call on the PA to end this policy that leads nowhere. We see that Israel uses the peace negotiations as a tool and a cover for their actions on the ground, their constant aggression and attacks against Palestinians and their land.

Q. Is there the need for another form of representation for the Palestinians? Is not even the PLO behind the times?

A. We do not need to create another institution. We see the PLO as a political representation of the Palestinians both inside and outside Palestine and a symbol of their struggle.

PNA does not represent all the Palestinians, the majority of whom are the refugees outside, it should just be an institution to help the Palestinians surviving under occupation. So, we need a political representation: I think we should save the PLO by reforming it.

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First of all a political review is needed: we have to learn the lesson from the past and stop the political approach of the futile peace negotiations and agreements. Second, there should be a democratic reform inside the PLO itself. Elections for a Palestinian Nation

Conference should be held in order to give all the Palestinian people the opportunity to be adequately represented. From this election a Central Committee and an Executive Committee will be created.

You see, another aspect of the conflict between Hamas and Fatah is the issue of representation: Fatah does not want Hamas to enter the PLO in order to maintain the hegemony over it. On the contrary, Hamas wants to have an alternative form of representation because they won the elections. We see that PLO is the home of all the Palestinians and an instrument for

their representation in the struggle for the self determination.

Q. Let's turn the discussion on the Palestinian Left. Can a divided Left represent a realistic third way between Hamas and Fatah?

A. The criticism on the fragmentation of the leftist parties is right, that is a great weakness. We think the Left should be unified. I am not talking about a new party or an immediate unification, but a coalition of all the leftist and progressive groups, grassroots organizations and individuals around a minimum political platform. This could be the first step toward a process that might lead towards a unified Left. Otherwise this situation in which Hamas and Fatah control everything will guide us for a long time.

Only if the Palestinian democratic and leftist parties, along with individuals, unify in one coalition, the Left can represent a third way. We are working hard on that. In some student councils they have already held election together; the leftist women movements are discussing a paper to form a coalition...

Q. Which are the concrete obstacles against the unification of the Left?

A. The main obstacles are political. For examples we have different views on the

peace process: some parties agree with the Oslo agreements, the Road Map, etc., others not. However, as I said before, this should not prevent us from agreeing on a minimum political agenda.

Q. It seems to me that the leftist groups in general, and the PFLP, are facing a crisis of consensus in the Palestinian society: Why? Where has the Left gone? What are you doing to be more present and visible in Palestinian civil society (NGOs, grassroots organizations, popular movements)?

A. This is the challenge: no leftist political party can do a lot by itself. Now the leftists are facing a difficult situation: we have no power, no money, no international support. Even in the Arab world, the Islamic groups are now getting the lion's share. We are facing internal problems, like the economic one. We are poor parties, and if you want to raise social programs, you need money to do it. How can we compete against Hamas that has a lot of infrastructure and funds? People do not want just talks, but actions on social level.

We also need to rely on voluntarism. Here comes the question: how to encourage voluntarism when you have to face so many geographical obstacles?

At the international level, especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we lost support, coverage, and any kind of protection. We feel vulnerable: if you say you are a member of the PFLP, you end up in prison the same day. But your criticism is right; we should review our policy, come back in the grassroots movements, be more present...like in the nonviolent popular

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resistance against the Wall...We already share the activities in Bil'in, Ni'lin, al-Ma'sara, we are in these popular committees.

Q. Have you got relations with the Israeli and international anti-occupation movement?

A. We think that our national struggle needs the active support of the international solidarity movement. With regard to the Israeli movements, we ask them for the full recognition of the Palestinian rights...

Q. Do not you think the time has come for the PFLP to put more efforts on the grassroots and popular struggle, and attach less importance on the military confrontation?

A. PFLP believes in all kinds of resistance, and of course the main resistance is the popular one (the boycott of goods, the cultural and academic boycott, the peaceful demonstrations against Wall and the settlements).

No party is supporting only the military resistance. The armed struggle can be shared just by individuals, and it changes according to the situation, but the popular struggle is the great part and can be joined by a lot of people.

I do not criticize in principle the armed resistance, because we are not facing a nice occupation at all, this is a military one. I

agree we should increase our popular resistance against Wall, the settlements, etc. There is a linkage between the two kinds of resistance.

Maybe it is not the right time for a third Intifada, also seeing that the reaction in the West Bank during the Israeli attack on Gaza was not so strong as one could have expected...The reaction was not strong because of the role played by the Palestinian security forces and because, and this is the main reason, we are divided at the national level.

Listen, an Intifada needs leaders, but we do not have leaders. And it needs us to be united, but there is no unity at all. I think the moment for a third Intifada will come, the people will not wait the situation to worsen forever, but now the priority is to be united as Palestinians.

Q. The PFLP is a secular and Marxist party, but you have political positions much closer to a religious party like Hamas than to other secular parties. How do you explain that contradiction?

A. I do not think politically we are so close to Hamas. For example, we criticize its political approach and its belief on a long-term ceasefire as a way to put an end to the occupation.

There are similarities, of course: we are both against the Oslo agreements, the Road Map, the trap of the peace negotiations. And like other revolutionary movements, for instances in Latin America, there can be in

certain historical moments some kinds of relations between Marxism and religion. We should define the stage in which we find ourselves, in order to set priorities: as Palestinians, we are facing a national and democratic struggle.

You should look at the political agenda related to the occupation: now our national united struggle must be the priority, other times the social and democratic issues will be at the top of the political agenda. First of all, I think we should work to create a united national front among all the parties to immediately end the occupation.

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