SUBJECT

PALESTINIANS HELD AT A DINNER AT THE BRITISH CONSULATE GENERAL, JERUSALEM, AT 2030 ON MONDAY 26 MAY 1986

The Prime Minister

Mr. E. A. J. Fergusson

Mr. P. G. de Courcy-Ireland

Mr. Charles Powell

Mr. Bernard Ingham

Mr. V. J. Henderson

Haj Rashad Shawwa (Deposed Mayor of Gaza)
Elias Freij (Mayor of

Bethlehem)

Izzat al Alloul (Acting Mayor
 of Nablus)

Mustafa Natshe (Deposed
Acting Mayor of Hebron)
Hanna Siniora (Editor of
al-Fajr, East Jerusalem)
Fayez Abu Rahma (Gaza Lawyer)
Zuhair al-Rayyes (Gaza
Lawyer)

Basil Kan'aan (Nablus businessman)

GENERAL SESSION

The Prime Minister said that she felt a deep sympathy for the problems of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, and wanted to help improve their conditions as a prelude to an eventual settlement. It was unacceptable that Israel should apply one set of standards to her own people and lower standards to the people of the West Bank and Gaza. She had discussed these problems at length with Mr. Peres and had made a number of suggestions for improving conditions. She believed that the longer-term solution for the Occupied Territories lay in some sort of federation with Jordan.

The Palestinians invited <u>Haj Rashad Shawwa</u> to speak first. He reviewed conditions in the Gaza Strip in some detail, on familiar lines. The essential points were:

- 2 -

- (a) Israel spoke of peace but took more of the densely populated Strip's land for settlements: bulldozers were currently clearing newly confiscated land near Khan Younis. This was unacceptable on all grounds; but was made even more so when one considered that population density in Gaza was already approaching 2,000 a square kilometer, as against 140 a square kilometer in Israel.
- (b) The timescale for talks to bring about a peaceful solution was long; land confiscations should be halted immediately and not continued to prejudice the achievement of that solution. HMG should put pressure on the Israelis on this.
- (c) Gazans paid taxes to the Occupation authorities which were not spent on development of the Strip.
- (d) Financial aid was of little use to Gazans as long as the Occupation continued and they were not free to decide how it should be spent. In practice such aid ended up by flowing back into the Israeli economy.
- (e) The Strip's government hospitals were in a highly unsatisfactory condition. There was no decent education.
- (f) The authorities put restrictions on exports of citrus and other produce.
- (g) There was a one-way traffic in goods, with Israeli goods flooding the Gaza market but the Strip's own production banned from entering Israeli markets.
- (h) 50,000 Gazans travelled to Israel every day to work; the Strip was Israel's Soweto.

Mr. Abu Rahma and Mr. Rayyes supported his description, adding examples of Israeli misconduct. In answer to the Prime

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Minister's question, all three expressed their belief that the Gaza Strip could become economically viable after the Israeli occupation was ended, given Palestinian freedom to control their own affairs. Gaza had survived before 1967, principally as an entrepot centre and a citrus exporter, and would be able to manage again.

Mr. Rayyes noted with appreciation the Prime Minister's comment in her speech the previous evening that economic rights were inseparable from political rights. The Prime Minister said that they were of course interlinked; but economic development was no substitute for political movement. Mr. Rayyes believed that, although the Israelis told visiting VIPs that they were interested in improving the "quality of life" of Arab residents of the Territories, the actual facts pointed to the reverse. Meron Benvenisti, a prominent Israeli researcher, had just published a shocking report on conditions in the Strip. The facts it revealed would give everyone pause for thought.

In answer to the Prime Minister's question about how the 50,000 Gazans who worked in Israel would fare upon Israeli withdrawal, Haj Rashad Shawwa said that a transitional period could be negotiated, during which the labour force could be gradually re-absorbed into Gaza, as its own economic activity developed. Mr. Siniora said that, while the need for action to remedy the ills of the Gaza Strip could not be over-estimated, the fate of the Strip and the West Bank were closely tied together. A future independent Palestinian state would need Gaza as its Mediterranean sea port.

Mr. Siniora went on to say that Palestinians approved HMG's acceptance, as a signatory of the Venice Declaration, of their right to self-determination. However, they were realists. Hence their leadership's decision to build a bridge to peace through the Agreement with Jordan of 11 February 1985. A year of joint action had ended in failure. Palestinians in the Occupied Territories did not blame King Hussein himself for this: he had been misled by some of his

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advisers. The Prime Minister was urged to tell the King, when they next met, that people in the Occupied Territories wanted the Joint Agreement revived and the dialogue with their chosen leadership - the PLO - resumed. The Palestinians could not find a solution alone; but they could not work by proxy either. This had to be explained to the King, and to Mr. Peres and President Reagan as well.

The Prime Minister referred to the problems of living with terrorism and instanced Northern Ireland and the IRA. Although IRA members had civil rights, it did not accept the use of the ballot box, but turned instead to intimidation, to persuade people to do what they did not want. There were numerous examples of terrorist outrages, which she personally could not tolerate. She would do anything possible to help achieve a solution to the Palestinian issue, but she would not deal with terrorists.

Mr. Siniora said that he and his colleagues admired the Prime Minister's courage, and indeed shared her views. He instanced Arafat's Cairo Declaration, and expressed the hope that the Palestinians' "legitimate armed struggle" could be ended for the duration of peace negotiations. The Palestinians were ready for peace; they were undoubtedly prepared to recognise Israel, but as a result of - not before - negotiations. They needed the Prime Minister's help to get together with the Israelis around the negotiating table.

In answer to the Prime Minister's question, the

Palestinians confirmed that they had been under great pressure
to boycott the meeting, but had ignored it; she congratulated
them on having resisted intimidation.

DINNER SESSION

While sitting with the Prime Minister at dinner,

Mr. Siniora spoke on the same lines as earlier. Mr. Natshe

described at some length the growth of Israeli settlements in
and around Hebron; the Israelis' treatment of the elected

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Mayor and Municipal Council; and restrictions on agriculture and industrial development in the Occupied Territories. He recounted the history of the (abortive) Hebron cement plant project and the insistence of Mr. Rabin (the Israeli Defence Minister) and General Goren (the Co-ordinator for the Occupied Territories) that no economic venture would be approved which directly competed with Israeli producers.

As the discussion turned to the PLO's leadership of the Palestinians, the Prime Minister again referred to the need for the PLO to renounce terrorism. Mr. Siniora countered that Arafat was a man of peace, whom he was sure would stop all "armed struggle" during negotiations. The Prime Minister said that Arafat was behind Force 17, which had been implicated in many vicious attacks. The Palestinians present did not deny this, but Mr. Siniora said that the British had ultimately dealt with many statesmen with a terrorist past (e.g. Begin, Mugabe). Mr. Rayyes was glad to see, from the text of her speech, that, despite the interpretations in the Israeli press, the Prime Minister had in fact said nothing about the creation of an "alternative leadership". Mr. Siniora urged the Prime Minister to reactivate the idea of a joint delegation visit to London.

When the Prime Minister moved subsequently to Haj Rashad
Shawwa and Elias Freij, she heard a rather different point of view. Both were at pains to say, out of the hearing of their colleagues, that they were not enamoured of the PLO but believed a way forward could be found without them. But they were singularly short of ideas as to how to make progress, despite repeated attempts by the Prime Minister to draw them out.

GENERAL SESSION

The Prime Minister began to sum up what she had learned from her Palestinian guests: Israeli discrimination against Palestinians in all fields, collective punishments, continuing land expropriation, continuing expansion of settlements, no

free municipal elections, deteriorating public services, restrictions on economic and industrial development. Several Palestinians added other points: the failure of the Israeli authorities to spend in the Territories more than a small proportion of tax revenue derived from the Territories, imbalance in wages paid to Israeli and Arab workers, the operation of the security laws - which encouraged the maltreatment and even torture of those arrested, because of reliance on confessions to obtain convictions - and the general difficulties of everyday life. Mr. Abu Rahma described many of these practices as amounting to "a sort of terrorism". The Prime Minister asked to what degree such resentment might have existed before the occupation. Mr. Freij said that it had not; but others disagreed, indicating disapproval of certain Jordanian policies before 1967.

Mr. Freij blamed the US Administration for failing to take advantage of Jordan's submission last summer of the names of seven Palestinians nominated by the PLO as candidates for a dialogue with the US. If they were acceptable to King Hussein — and two were acceptable to Mr. Peres (Mr. Siniora and Mr. Abu Rahma) — why should the US Administration have any problems over them? Mr. Siniora said, to general agreement, that no Palestinian could work independently of the PLO leadership, because the people would not allow it. He added, in answer to the Prime Minister's questions, that some activity was possible behind the scenes, but that this required the green light from the PLO and the Israeli Government. He asked the Prime Minister how HMG and the Palestinians could help each other, and Mr. Freij urged her to take a leading role in the search for a peace settlement.

The Prime Minister asked how it could be brought to an end. She was worried that no negotiations were under way: without them, no progress was possible. Her Palestinian interlocutors were for the PLO, while the Israelis were dead against it. So how could one proceed? It might be necessary to find Palestinians who were prepared to renounce violence

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and accept Israel's right to exist, to take part in negotiations. Mr. Siniora repeated that the channel was joint action between the PLO and Jordan. The Palestinians simply had to get back on terms with the Jordanians. They were willing to work with King Hussein through their leadership, with recognition of their right of self-determination, however that might be qualified in the context of the Amman Agreement.

The Prime Minister said that she had taken note of all the points raised by her guests, would think about them carefully; and would see if there was not a way forward. She did not like the present vacuum, which only left room for terrorism to flourish. Mr. Freij urged her to convince President Reagan that not all Palestinians were terrorists - a fact which was demonstrable from her conversations that evening.

Finally, the Prime Minister said that it would be useful to agree in broad terms what they would say to the press about the meeting. For her part, she would repeat what she had said in her speech - that no people should be denied rights the Israelis insisted on for themselves - and would add that the Palestinian guests had explained their deep feelings about the discrimination to which they were subject; their wish for self-determination and a peaceful and negotiated settlement; and their rejection and denunciation of terrorism. She would stress that she supported self-determination, rejected terrorism, and was anxious to find a way ahead. For their part, they would refer to their common position with the leadership of the PLO.

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There was general agreement with the Prime Minister's proposition. The Palestinians concluded the meeting by thanking her warmly for sparing so much of her time to listening to their point of view; and Haj Rashad Shawwa handed over a Memorandum signed by seven of those present. The meeting ended at 2250.

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30 May 1986



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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

30 May 1986

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO ISRAEL: MEETING WITH PALESTINIANS

I enclose a fuller record of the Prime Minister's meeting with leading Palestinians in Jerusalem on 26 May. This is largely the work of the Consul-General in East Jerusalem and Mr. Henderson. Given the way in which the evening was organised, it was impossible for everyone to hear everything. But I think it is a fair account.

CHARLES POWELL

Robert Culshaw, Esq., Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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RECORD OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND LEADING PALESTINIANS HELD AT A DINNER AT THE BRITISH CONSULATE GENERAL, JERUSALEM, AT 8.30PM ON MONDAY 26 MAY 1986

Present:

The Prime Minister

Mr E A J Fergusson

Mr P G de Courcy-Ireland

Mr Bernard Ingham

Mr (C. D. Powell

Mr V J Henderson

Haj Rashad Shawwa (Deposed Mayor of Gaza)

Elias Freij (Mayor of Bethlehem)

Izzat al Alloul (Acting Mayor of Nablus)

Mustafa Natshe (Deposed Acting Mayor of Hebron)

Hanna Siniora (Editor of al-Fajr, East Jerusalem)

Fayez Abu Rahma (Gaza Lawyer)

Zuhair al-Rayyes (Gaza Lawyer)

Basil Kan'aan (Nablus businessman)

General Session

1. After brief introductory remarks by the <u>Prime Minister</u>, the Palestinians invited <u>Haj Rashad Shawwa</u> to speak first. He reviewed conditions in the Gaza Strip in some detail, on familiar lines. The essential points were:

- a) Israel spoke of peace but took more of the densely populated Strip's land for settlements: bulldozers were currently clearing newly confiscated land near Khan Younis. This was unacceptable on all grounds; but was made even more so when one considered that population density in Gaza was already approaching 2,000 a square kilometer, as against 140 a square kilometer in Israel.
- b) The timescale for talks to bring about a peaceful solution was long; land confiscations should be halted immediately and not continue to prejudice the achievement of that solution. HMG should put pressure on the Israelis on this
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- e) The Strip's government hospitals were in an unaccept-
- f) The authorities put unacceptable restrictions on exports of citrus and other produce.
- g) There was a one-way traffic in goods, with Israeli goods flooding the Gaza market but the Strip's own production banned from entering Israeli markets.
- h) 50,000 Gazans travelled to Israel every day to work; the Strip was Israel's Soweto.

Mr Abu Rahma and Mr Rayyes supported his description, adding examples of Israeli misconduct. In answer to the Prime Minister's questions, all three expressed their belief that the Gaza Strip could become economically viable after the Israeli occupation was ended, given Palestinian freedom to control their own affairs: the Strip had survived before 1967, principally as an entrepot centre and a citrus exporter, and would be able to manage again.

2. (Mr Rayyes noted with appreciation the Prime Minister's comment in her speech the previous evening that economic rights were inseparable from political rights. Prime Minister said that they were of course interlinked; but economic development was no substitute for political movement. Mr Rayyes believed that, although the Israelis told visiting VIPs that they were interested in improving the "quality of life" of Arab residents of the Territories. the actual facts pointed to the reverse. Meron Benvenisti, a prominent Israeli researcher, had just published a shocking report on conditions in the Strip. The facts it revealed would give every freedom-lover pause for thought. /In answer to the Prime Minister's question about how the 50,000 Gazans who worked in Israel would fare upon Israeli withdrawal, Haj Rashad Shawwa said that a transitional period could be negotiated, during which the labour force could be gradually re-absorbed into the Strip, as its own economic activity developed. Mr Siniora said that, while the need for action to remedy the ills of the Gaza Strip could not be over-estimated, the fate of the Strip and the West Bank were closely tied together. The future independent Palestinian state would need Gaza as its Mediterranean sea port. CONFIDENTIAL

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of their right to self-determination. However, they were
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to peace through the Agreement with Jordan of 11 February 1985.
A year of joint action had ended in failure. Palestinians in
the Occupied Territories did not blame King Hussein himself
for this: he had been misled by some of his advisers.
The Prime Minister was urged to tell the King, when they next
met, that people in the Occupied Territories wanted the Joint
Agreement revived and the dialogue with their chosen leadership - the PLO - resumed. The Palestinians could not find a
solution alone; but they could not work by proxy either. This
had to be explained to the King, wand to Mr Peres and President Reagan as well.

The Prime Minister referred to the problems of living with terrorism and instanced Northern Ireland and the IRA. Although IRA members had civil rights, it did not accept the use of the ballot box, but turned instead to intimidation, to persuade people to do what they did not want. There were numerous examples of terrorist outrages, which she personally could not tolerate. She would do anything possible to help achieve a solution to the Palestinian issue, but this could not be attained by means of terrorism. Mr Siniora said that he and his colleagues admired the Prime Minister's courage, and indeed shared her views. He instanced Arafat's Cairo Declaration, and expressed the hope that the Palestinians' "legitimate armed struggle" could be ended for the duration of peace negotiations. The Palestinians were ready for peace; they were undoubtedly prepared to recognise Israel, but as a result of - not before - negotiations. They needed the Prime Minister's help to get together with the Israelis around the negotiating table.

In answer to the Prime Minister's question, the Palestinians confirmed that they had been under great pressure to boycott the meeting, but had ignored it; she congratulated them on having resisted intimidation.

Dinner Session

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General Session

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Mr Freij blamed the US Administration for failing to take advantage of Jordan's submission last summer of the names of 7 Palestinians nominated by the PLO as candidates for a dialogue with the US. If they were acceptable to King Hussein - and two were acceptable to Mr Peres (Mr Siniora and Mr Abu Rahma) - why should the US Administration have any problems over them? Mr Siniora said, to general agreement, that no Palestinian could work independently of the PLO leadership, because the people would not allow it. He added, in answer to the Prime Minister's questions, that some activity was possible behind the scenes, but that this required the green light from the PLO and the Israeli Government. He asked the Prime Minister how HMG and the Palestinians could help each other, and Mr Freij urged her to take a leading role in the search for a peace settlement. / The Prime Minister said that she took it as read that the occupation was "hell"; but how could it be brought to an end? She was worried that no negotiations were under way: without them, no progress was possible. Her Palestinian interlocutors were for the PLO, while the Israelis were dead against it . So how could one proceed? | Mr Siniora repeated that the channel was joint action between the PLO and Jordan. The Palestinians simply had to get back on terms with the They were willing to work with King Hussein through their leadership, with recognition of their right of self-determination, however that might be qualified in the context of the Amman Agreement. The Prime Minister should be under no illusion about the strength of support for the PLO in the Territories: Zafer Al-Masri's funeral had in effect served as a national referendum demonstrating the PLO's primacy. The Prime Minister said that she had taken note of all the points raised by her guests; would think about them carefully; and would see if there was not a way forward. She did not like the present vacuum, which only left room for terrorism to Mr Freij urged her to convince President Reagan that not all Palestinians were terrorists - a fact which

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Minister's proposition. The Palestinians concluded the meeting by thanking her warmly for sparing so much of her time to listening to their point of view; and Haj Rashad Shawwa handed over a Memorandum signed by seven of those present. The meeting ended at 10.50 pm.



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C D Powell Esq 10 Downing Street BRITISH CONSULATE-GENERAL JERUSALEM

On-

29 May 1986

Dear Charles

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH PALESTINIANS

- l. As promised, I enclose a draft record of the discussions between the Prime Minister and our Palestinian guests at dinner on 26 May. It goes into a good deal more detail than I think your are wont to record. However, I thought it best to spell things out fairly fully for our purposes, as we found the fullish record we prepared of Sir Geoffrey Howe's meeting with Palestinians in October 1984 of particular value as a point of reference. It would of course be very understandable if you preferred to shortern the draft before giving it any circulation.
- 2. The draft includes all those points that Vic Henderson or I noted in the course of discussions at which the Prime Minister took part. There may be other points you or Ewen Fergusson might wish to add.

Yours ever

P G de Courcy-Ireland

cc: E A J Fergusson Esq DUSS FCO

TELNO 133

OF 262350Z MAY 86

FOLLOWING FOR PRIVATE SECRETARY FROM CHARLES POWELL, PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO ISRAEL: MEETING WITH PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES.

THE PRIME MINISTER HAD A FRIENDLY MEETING WITH EIGHT LEADING WEST BANK AND GAZA REPRESENTATIVES (MOSTLY MAYORS) THIS EVENING. THEY DESCRIBED THEIR GRIEVANCES IN STANDARD TERMS AND AT CONSIDERABLE LENGTH AND MADE NO SECRET OF THEIR UNHAPPINESS AT THE SPLIT BETWEEN KING HUSSEIN AND ARAFAT. THEY WERE NOTABLY VAGUE WHEN DISCUSSING NEXT STEPS IN THE PEACE PROCESS. THEY WERE EVIDENTLY REASSURED ABOUT OUR POSITION BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH ON 25 MAY WHICH THEY WELCOMED. WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER RECALLED THAT ISRAEL HAD COMMITTED ITSELF TO THE ELECTION OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES ON THE WEST BANK AND IN GAZA IN THE CAMP DAVID AGREEMENTS, THEY CAUTIONED ONLY AGAINST REFERRING BY NAME TO CAMP DAVID BUT THOUGHT THE POINT A USEFUL ONE.

AT THE END OF THE MEETING THERE WAS SOME DISCUSSION OF WHAT SHOULD BE SAID TO THE PRESS. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT WE WOULD SAY THAT THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES HAD GIVEN HER A FULL ACCOUNT OF THEIR VIEWS AND THEIR FEELINGS OF RESENTMENT AT THE DISCRIMINATION PRACTISED AGAINST THEM. THEY HAD ASKED FOR REASSURANCE THAT SHE SUPPORTED THEIR RIGHT TO SELFDETERMINATION AND SHE HAD GIVEN THEM THIS IN THE TERMS OF HER SPEECH ON 25 MAY. SHE WOULD ALSO RECORD THAT THEY HAD SAID

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THE PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATIVES SAID THAT THEY WERE GENERALLY CONTENT WITH THIS SUMMARY AND WOULD FOLLOW IT, BUT WOULD REFER ALSO TO THEIR COMMON POSITION WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PLO.

PLEASE REPEAT AS APPROPRIATE.

DE COURCY-IRELAND