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Please see page 3.

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH PALESTINIANS

SUMMARY

1. IN THE FACE OF RADICAL OPPOSITION, 8 LEADING PALESTINIANS FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES MET THE PRIME MINISTER ON 26 MAY. UNANIMOUS COMMITMENT TO A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AND REJECTION OF TERRORISM. UNANIMOUS SUPPORT FOR ARAFAT, AND FOR REVIVAL OF THE JOINT JORDANIAN / PALESTINIAN ACCORD. ALL GREATLY APPRECIATED THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET MRS THATCHER, AND HER COMPREHENSION OF THEIR CONCERNS. THE BASIC OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING ACHIEVED.

DETAIL

2. THE PRIME MINISTER MET 8 LEADING PALESTINIANS FROM ONE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES OVER DINNER AT MY HOUSE ON 26 MAY. THEY WERE:

1. HAJ RASHAD SHAWWA (DEPOSED MAYOR OF GAZA)
2. ELIAS FREIJ (MAYOR OF BETHLEHEM)
3. HIZAT AL ALLOUL (ACTING MAYOR OF NABLUS)
4. MUSTAFA NATSHE (DEPOSED ACTING MAYOR OF HEBRON)
5. HANNA SINIORA (EDITOR OF AL-FAJR, EAST JERUSALEM)
6. FAYEZ ABU RAHMA (GAZA LAWYER)

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7. ZUHAIR AL-RAYYES (GAZA LAWYER)

8. BASHIL KAN'AAN (NABLUS BUSINESSMAN)

OTHERS INITIALLY INVITED, BUT UNABLE TO ATTEND WERE:

HIKMAT AL-MASRI (DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE JORDAN SENATE AND GRAND OLD MAN OF WEST BANK POLITICS)

HAFEZ TOUQAN (MAYOR OF NABLUS SINCE THE ASSASSINATION OF HIKMAT'S YOUNGER BROTHER ZAFER AL-MASRI) AND

DR GABI BARAMKI (ACTING PRESIDENT OF BEIR ZEIT UNIVERSITY)

3. THERE WAS DOUBT UNTIL ALMOST THE LAST MINUTE WHETHER ALL THE GUESTS WOULD ATTEND. THERE WERE 2 PROBLEMS: THE INITIAL INSISTENCE OF THE MODERATE SUPPORTERS OF ARAFAT (NOS 4 - 7 ABOVE) THAT ALL THOSE INVITED SHOULD SIGN A MEMORANDUM FOR PRESENTATION TO THE PRIME MINISTER: AND AN INCREASINGLY ENERGETIC CAMPAIGN BY RADICAL ARAFAT SUPPORTERS (LED BY ASH-SHAAB NEWSPAPER) AND THE REJECTIONISTS, FOR A TOTAL BOYCOTT. SHAWWA EVENTUALLY DECIDED TO SIGN, BUT FREIJ'S CONSISTENT REFUSAL WAS IN THE END RESPECTED. ALL REFUSED TO BOW TO THE CAMPAIGN OF INTIMIDATION, WHICH INCLUDED STRONG REPRESENTATIONS AT A COORDINATION MEETING HELD IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THE DINNER. NATSHE WAS THE SPOKESMAN OF THE GUESTS. HE SAID THAT KHALIL AL WAZIR (ABU JIHAD) HAD PERSONALLY CONFIRMED TO HIM IN AMMAN 10 DAYS EARLIER THAT THE PLO LEADERSHIP APPROVED THE IDEA OF A MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER (PROVIDED THAT A SUITABLE MEMORANDUM WAS SUBMITTED): THOSE WHO WERE NOW DEMANDING A BOYCOTT SEEMED TO BE SEEKING TO SET THEMSELVES UP IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AS AN 'ALTERNATIVE' TO THE LEGITIMATE LEADERSHIP.

4. THE MEETING LASTED NEARLY 2 1/2 HOURS. THE PALESTINIANS DESCRIBED THE DIFFICULTIES OF LIFE UNDER OCCUPATION IN SOME DETAIL. FULL REPORT BY EAG. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT POINTS WERE:

A) REJECTION OF TERRORISM BY ALL PRESENT

B) THEIR UNANIMOUS COMMITMENT TO A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT

C) THEIR UNANIMOUS SUPPORT FOR THE PLO UNDER ARAFAT

D) MRS THATCHER SHOULD TELL KING HUSSEIN THAT PEOPLE IN THE TERRITORIES WANTED THE AMMAN AGREEMENT REVIVED AND THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN JORDAN AND THE 'CHOSEZ LEADERSHIP' OF THE PLO RESUMED

E) ISRAEL SHOULD STOP LAND EXPROPRIATION, SETTLEMENTS ETC, AND GRANT THE TERRITORIES DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS (FREE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ETC) AND FREEDOM OF ECONOMIC AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

5. A MEMORANDUM WAS HANDED OVER (BY SHAWWA) AT THE VERY END OF THE MEETING (TEXT SENT TO NENAD). IT CONTAINED CRITICISM (IN MILD TERMS) OF BRITISH SUPPORT FOR THE US ATTACK ON LIBYA, WHICH WAS NOT MEN-

OF BRITISH SUPPORT FOR THE US ATTACK ON LIBYA, WHICH WAS NOT MENTIONED AT ANY POINT IN THE MEETING. IT WAS CLEARLY INTENDED TO BE POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE IN TONE AND APPROACH - AND IN THIS RESPECT, GOT MUCH CLOSER TO ITS OBJECTIVE THAN ANY SIMILAR EFFORT SEEN HERE IN RECENT YEARS.

6. I SAW FRENJ, SHIMIORA, NATSHE AND RAYYES AT A DINNER LAST NIGHT. AT THE PERSONAL LEVEL, THE MEETING WAS CLEARLY A RESOUNDING SUCCESS. THEY HAD ALL FELT HONOURED THAT A STATESMAN OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S STANDING HAD BEEN PREPARED TO DEVOTE SO MUCH TIME TO LISTENING TO PALESTINIANS WHILE ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO ISRAEL. --, ~~to~~ ~~to~~ SHOWED SUCH ATTENTION TO AND COMPREHENSION OF THEIR CONCERNS. POLITICALLY, THEY REGARDED THE FIRST EVER MEETING OF THE HEAD OF A MAJOR WESTERN GOVERNMENT WITH A REPRESENTATIVE GROUP OF PALESTINIANS AS A VERY SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT, IN DEMONSTRATING THAT THE PALESTINIANS CASE HAD A RIGHT TO BE HEARD. THEY HOPED THAT IT WOULD LEAD TO POSITIVE RESULTS IN DUE COURSE, BY HELPING TO REACTIVATE THE PEACE PROCESS. BUT THEY RECOGNISED CHANGE COULD NOT COME OVERNIGHT.

7. MY TELNO 135 DESCRIBES PUBLIC REACTIONS TO THE MEETING, AND TOO THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE. ALTHOUGH THESE DETRACT FROM THE INITIAL FAVOURABLE IMPACT OF THE MEETING, I REGARD IT AS HAVING SUCCESSFULLY ACHIEVED ITS BASIC OBJECTIVES.

DE COURCY-IRELAND

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