



PALESTINE AND THE ARAB SPRING

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MODERATOR:

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MARWAN MUASHER: Good afternoon, and welcome to another event on the Arab Spring that we have at Carnegie. It's a particular pleasure of mine to welcome to Carnegie Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, who is not only – you know, not known to you, to the rest of the world, but is also someone I can claim as a close friend. Hanan needs no introduction. She's the founder and executive committee chair of the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy. She's an elected member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Palestinian Executive Authority, PLO Executive Authority. She's more things than I can even start to count.

But one particular trait that I truly like about Hanan is that she is someone who has always spoken truth to power and someone who always was interested not just in peace, but also in democracy, in reform, in institution building, and someone who has devoted all her life for these noble goals. And so it is a particular pleasure of mine to introduce Hanan. She will talk to us about the Arab Spring, and then we can all engage in a conversation about this and other issues that I'm sure you – you're concerned with. So Hanan, welcome to Carnegie.

HANAN ASHRAWI: Thank you. Thank you, Marwan. (Applause.) Thank you. I thought the topic was Palestine in the context of the Arab Spring, but –

MR. MUASHER: Yes. (Chuckles.)

MS. ASHRAWI: – I forgot. That's, you know, the elephant and the Palestine question. You're not going to avoid Palestine – (chuckles) –

MR. MUASHER: Exactly.

MS. ASHRAWI: – especially in the Arab Spring. Well, it is certainly a pleasure to be here and to be with you, and particularly to be with Marwan. If by now you haven't read his book, those of you who haven't read it very carefully, should read it because you would have been prepared for the Arab Spring, because what was wrong with the Arab Center was that they moderated their political agenda on peace, but they certainly did not adopt a reform agenda on human rights and democracy. It seems to me that book certainly forecast what's wrong with the Arab world. And it would have been a very good introduction for what's happening.

Also, those of you who haven't read his national reform plan in Jordan, the first time I saw that I felt that it was something that could be the basis for national reform plans all over the Arab world. And we tried to cooperate in our national reform plan and Palestine. So, again, Marwan, you are a pioneer, and you have a sense of foresight that should have been listened to very, very carefully throughout the Arab world. And I thank you for being a good friend and for being such a person with astute insights and foresight. Thank you.

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Again, those of you who've read the U.N. development, human development reports – remember the UNDP reports – should not have been surprised by the rise of the youth, by the young generation, people feel disenfranchised, excluded, oppressed and so on by the freedom deficit, by many other deficits, democracy deficit in the Arab world. And we knew that with the demographic changes there certainly would be serious upheavals

before long in the Arab world. All these things were in the making, yet unfortunately most people were taken by surprise, even though certain currents were beneath the surface and movements brewing with a certain inevitability. However, again, people were surprised.

We're used to talking about the Arab world as a polarized world, Arab systems as polarized in the sense that you have a national regime that is often seen as corrupt or inept, or autocratic, dictatorial and so on. And the only other alternative being the opposite pole, which is political Islam, and that people who get crushed in the middle generally are the democratic forces. This certainly is true. We had hoped in Palestine that we would avoid this, but ultimately the Arab rift also reflected on Palestine. We can talk about that later. And again, client regimes that relied on external recognition also were losing credibility and standing, and they were seen by their own people as being despotic, autocratic and repressive.

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But certainly, another aspect which has been ignored was the fact that they were seen to be helpless before Israeli violations and before the ongoing injustice done to the Palestinians. They were seen to be incapable of standing up to Arab rights, Arab causes, and they were seen as doing the bidding of others, external forces. And many of these were seen as using the security excuse, that we have an external enemy in order to avoid any kind of internal reform to evade democracy and human rights and accountability and of course to persist with a system of abuse of power and corruption and misallocation of funds.

And all these, within the Arab context, contributed to the deepening rift in Palestine, because the Arab rift and competition and polarization reflected themselves within Palestine, particularly in the '90s after the rise of Hamas, and it was – the rift was used for the – and abused actually for personal or national self-interest by different countries.

Now, when we talk about the Arab Spring, of course we know that it is not monolithic. This is a broad term. And we know that each country has its different conditions, and there is a great deal of diversity within the Arab world, and also a major feature is that we are in the midst of a period of flux, of change, of transition, which means by definition that it is painful. And in many cases the outcome is not certain, the specifics of the outcome, but what is certain is that we are seeing a sea change, a definite break with the past and a definite – in many countries a breaking of the barrier of fear, which is very important within the context of the Arab peoples or the Arab masses.

Now, many people look at it as receiving the internal reform and change, a cry, of course, for dignity, for freedom, for economic reform, for empowerment, for sharing and the resources and wealth for participatory democracy. But still, as we said, a great deal of Arab dignity, a great deal of the national Arab dignity, has been affected by – in the face of the continuing indignity of the occupation. So Palestine has never been absent from the contemporary discourse in the Arab Spring. It remains vocal and emotive, even though many people say that the regimes exploited the issue of Palestine for their own sake. But yet the people have a very emotive, visceral relationship to Palestine, much more so than people thought. And they held their regimes accountable for being unable to do anything about it.

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And we had several meetings with some youth groups from Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Tunis, Syria, several places, and it was amazing how the young were really committed to the cause of Palestine. They said putting our own house in order is a way of liberating Palestine. And this is something that people like Netanyahu and Israel tried not only to ignore, but to affect a forced de-linkage, dissociation by saying ah, the Arab Spring has nothing to do with

Palestine. Those who know better know that the fate of Palestine and the heart of the Arab world has had a lot to do with the disaffection and the anger brewing in the Arab world, and now the sense of reform and empowerment will reflect on Palestine.

And again, any emerging representative democratic government will respond to people's priorities, of course – (aside) – oh, yeah, I have some – thank you – both internally as well as on the national level Palestinian case. And the same principles apply to all, which bodes well for energizing, which bodes well for energizing future Arab engagement in the Palestinian question and then rectifying the previous perceived ordeal enfeeblement, which means that they are standing up to the – to their marginalization.

Now, this awakening resonated within Palestine and among the Palestinian people as a whole. In many ways it was seen as reminiscent of the first intifada, where you saw the public spirit, where you saw solidarity, a spontaneous uprising, a sense of self-respect, dignity, standing up, unarmed protest movements, men, women and children facing heavily armed Israeli soldiers. This is the kind of invigorating energy that Palestinians went through in the late '80s, early '90s. And they saw in the Arab Spring as something that's not entirely repetitive, but that is reminiscent of that kind of movement, and it resonated with the Palestinian youth, the Arab youth and the Palestinian youth, and within Palestinian public opinion.

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And, of course, all the means of communication, networking, sharing information, providing tools of mobilization have come to be used not just by the Arab youth, but by Palestine. Palestinians have always relied on the Internet because we are divided, separated, subject to checkpoints, besieged and so on. So cyberspace has always been very expansive, and the Arab Spring provided motivation, but also in a sense a common means of mobilization and sharing of information, identification and solidarity, and it triggered further action.

The thing is Palestine is unique because we are still under occupation. That's the thing, people saying well, when are you going to rise? And we say rise where, against what, against – (chuckles) – whom? Now, the movement for reform in Palestine is a very, very active movement, and the movement for change is still a very active movement. And civil society has always been among the most intrusive and critical of all civil societies in Palestine, as you know. So there is that sense. And people were looking for the right objectives, the right slogans at this time. Some young people talked about – focused on the need to end the division, ending the rift. This became a slogan, a rallying cry, end the rift, and as a means of ending the occupation.

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So under occupation you have the internal domestic needs of putting one's house in order and so on, of also democratizing and reforming. But you also have the need to stand up to the occupation and to get rid of the occupation. And they saw the rift and the division as one way in which the Palestinians were weakened and could not place the occupation the way they should have.

So among the first visible effects or result of the Arab reform is reconciliation and unity within Palestine for many reasons. The Arab Spring is contributing to the healing of the Palestinian rift, first, because of the pressure of public opinion and the youth and so on, two, because of the energized role of Egypt and a different role of – within Egypt – we can talk about that – and three, of course, because of the Syrian crisis and what that is doing to Hamas and one aspect. And there's a recognition, of course, that neither – and we can talk about this later – neither agenda really delivered. Neither Hamas's agenda of armed resistance could deliver, nor the agenda of total commitment to negotiations could deliver. So there was this affection with both.

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Now, the Arab Spring also enhanced the massive, popular nonviolent protest movement. This gave people the sense that this kind of approach would produce results where other approaches did not or could not produce results. And the most visible, I think, outcome is the example of the May 15th marches and the commemoration of the Nakba, not just within Palestine, but outside Palestine as a result, again, of the communication and mobilization. May 15 proved that there is an additional aspect, which is the popular unity of the Palestinian people, even in exile and in refugee camps. The one aspect was that people always looked at the Palestinians under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza and Jerusalem, of course, and divisions and so on.

But May 15th mobilized everybody, even with the Palestinians within Israel. So there was a sense of collectivity, of cohesion among Palestinians, that anywhere we are we can present the same message. This is something new, and, of course, is part of the Arab Spring, regardless of the fact that some people try to stop it or some people try to exploit it. But this is important, and I think you will see a growing movement there.

Again, another outcome of the awakening of the Arabs is the redefining of Arab nationalism. I think we need hours to discuss this, but I think this is important to at least allude to so we can explore it further. In a sense, this is a new bottom-up grassroots movement, coalitions on the basis of shared values and aspirations, probably global in nature, but also claimed by the Arabs within the Arab world as part of their own people's rights.

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So particularly, in discussing issues like participatory democracy, dignity, freedom, human rights self-determination, a system of good governance, accountability and transparency and so on, these were seen as a means of reactivating the Arab world and resolving long-standing grievances, problems, and injustices within the Arab system, but also not just intra-Arab, but intrastate, but interstate, inter-Arab issues. This was seen to be more effective and resonating globally than the tired clichés of traditional slogans and clichés of the political elites and the regimes that kept bashing everybody in the name of Arab nationalism.

Now, there is a new sense of a very active redefinition of Arab nationalism, which is closely connected to the sense of Arab identity, Arab dignity, and so on, that we are not left behind, that we are not part of the 19th century, but really catching up with the 20th, 21st century. Another redefinition, of course, is the redefinition of leadership and the source of legitimacy and credibility. Quite often Arab regimes and leaders use their external connections and approval by Western countries and so on as the source of their power and legitimacy and credibility rather than their own constituency, rather than responding to their own people's needs and rights.

So this is shifting. Again, leadership and credibility do not come as a result of security, control, or monopoly over the sources of power, be they wealth or natural resources or control over information and media, or even arms and so on, all the traditional sources of power. There are new sources of power and legitimacy now available, accessible. People no longer accept inherited positions or connections or a sense of distinction and privilege and wealth and so on within society. Also, they reject the ruling party. Egypt and Tunisia demonstrated that membership in the ruling party, which is corrupt and controlling and monolithic, is a liability in the long run.

In Palestine, again, it's going to be a greater sort of more complex situation because it's no longer just belonging to different factions. It's even no longer just being part of the historical national struggle, or membership in any faction, or how many times have you been to jail, or the usual sort of nationalistic credentials. But there are new

elements, again, based on the new definition of credentials as being a meritocracy, access to information, and tools of mobilization, as well as national commitment and being part of the struggle.

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So this meant, by definition again, that the new leadership does not have the access of the old leadership to the streets, so to speak, to grassroots movements, to connections and mobility and street action. They haven't been engaging in actual organization on the ground or in party politics, which has become a major weakness, because they have theoretical know-how. They have meritocracy. They have the ideas. They're not all entirely true, but at least they have those. And at the same time they still don't have the experience of organization, of building parties, of building real movements and so on, which you need in order to participate in elections and so on, and to bring about a leadership that can really take over.

So with the weakness of the traditional opposition, as we saw in Egypt and other places and even in Palestine, and still the lack of total preparedness of the new – there is going to be a period of transition. But we know that this transition certainly is moving ahead in favor of the new definitions of leadership we talked about. And also, there is a new coordination with and identification with civil society, whose role is growing and whose influence is growing throughout the Arab world because it was the most oppressed in many ways, or it was the most co-opted in the Arab world. Now, it can sort of be part of be part of shaping the agenda.

And Palestine, as I said earlier – the – it exposed the failure of the two agendas, as we show the armed resistance and the unilateral cease fire in Gaza and changes in – within the political agenda of Hamas, and, of course, the ineffectiveness of only negotiations as a means of a solution given the fact that tremendous, tremendous pressure was exercised on the leadership in order to carry out or to accept certain things that totally undermined them in the eyes and minds of their own people.

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Now, there's a new agenda of empowerment, of popular action and resistance, but also a need for innovative political programs linking to the energized Arab world and engaging the international community as an equal, reengaging, so to speak. It's not enough just to say we have popular empowerment. You do have to have an agenda that works. You have to have a political vision of where you're going. And this is important if the new leadership wants to succeed.

There's an agenda here that – in Palestine that is committed to going to the U.N., for example, but in itself it's not an end; it's a means. Going to the U.N. to get membership and international organizations is a way of validation and is a way of trying to achieve recognition, to – of your borders, of your capital, and, of course, get access to international organizations that would hold Israel accountable, whether judicial, legal, or other forms of accountability. And certainly, our agenda should involve national building and good governance.

Regionally, again, the Arab Spring showed the limitations of the role of non-Arab players. I think it was in many cases exaggerated. That, again, bears further study, but we believe that it weakened the influence of non-Arab – (inaudible) – or receding influence, and, of course, it exposed Israel's failure and non-democratic agenda, something we knew all along. An occupation cannot be really democratic, but they were called – they were caught entirely off-guard in the sense that they were desperately trying to resistance change.

Remember when people were for calling for regime change and getting rid of Mubarak? It was Netanyahu who was calling the Americans and saying keep him. (Chuckles.) You know, don't – make sure that you protect him. Make

sure that he doesn't get – so how democratic are you if you're asking the U.S. to intervene in a domestic, democratic, popular movement in Egypt to try to maintain – because the whole approach of Israel is only what's good for Israel, and how can it subjugate the countries around and the leadership in order to maintain the status quo, which is an impossible task, because if they have any sense, they know that the status quo is certainly not sustainable. It cannot be maintained at all.

Even in Syria, I mean, there were voices coming out and saying look, we have a very calm border with Syria. Not a fire was – not a shot was fired and so on. And everybody was telling them don't do that. Don't say that – (chuckles) – because you will condemn the Syrian regime if you say we want Syria. Rather than understanding why they're being isolated or why the occupation is delegitimizing Israeli policies, they started claiming that this movement within the Arab world is a movement to delegitimize and isolate Israel, and this is absolutely misguided.

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Instead of looking at themselves and understanding that the occupation, the repression, the violence, the brutality and so on are the worst instruments that Israel could use and are in themselves being exposed, as even Obama said, themselves exposed the true nature of Israel too and international public opinion that now is watching and that follows what's happening.

So Netanyahu, in a sense, presented himself and his policies as being very regressive, out of step with the times, trying to hold on to obsolete forms of power and control, trying to maintain in place a system of domination that has no place in the modern and the contemporary realities of the Arab world. And his Washington performance – we can talk about that later if you will – certainly missed an opportunity to catch up, to engage by presenting a bold vision, a plan, just present a peace plan, rather than this sense of presenting a petty, overbearing, deceptive smear campaign and engaging in evasive tactics and so on and trying to really cloud the issues. His agenda certainly is totally in contradiction with everything that is emerging now in the region.

So he front-loaded his position with all sorts of preconditions, including the Palestinians have to become Zionist, and all the Arabs have to become not just Zionist, but extreme right-wing Zionist by acknowledging the Jewishness of the state. When we are struggling for a pluralistic, tolerant, inclusive democracy, we are being asked to deny our history and our past and the rights of Palestinians and Israel and so on by saying no, now we will accept an exclusivity in Israel, which is – and knowing that it's not going to be done.

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So he has a prerequisite, a precondition that is not going to be accepted. He presented a security for Israel agenda where security is the defining principle. He wanted to maintain military presence in the Jordan Valley, of course, control over the borders and crossing points, space, territorial waters, early warning stations, demilitarized Palestinian state, et cetera, and then unilaterally decided on the outcome, on the shape of peace, as he said, the outcome of negotiations by saying no to the refugees' right of return, no to Jerusalem, and by deciding single-handedly, unilaterally, that they're going to annex all the settlement blocks.

And, of course, by condemning Israel, Palestinian unity, and saying – while on the one hand he said the Palestinians – he used to say the Palestinians are divided. In Gaza we don't talk to Hamas. All they have to do is just keep security. In the West Bank we talked to – Mahmoud Abbas doesn't present all the – represent all the Palestinians, so we have no partner. Now they're saying if you – you're uniting, this means that you are having this unity with the – what did he call it – the Palestinian equivalent of al-Qaida.

Now, this is just so entirely wrong and misleading and such a flimsy excuse for avoiding any kind of engagement, because first of all, you don't ask every single party to recognize a state or to adopt a political platform that is consistent with what Israel wants. And two, we have a formula for – (chuckles) – our reunification, which puts together a government that is not a political address, but a government that is an address for providing services to the Palestinian people, building institutions and so on. And it's going to be made up of independents, not card-carrying members of any party. And besides, nobody's asking them to negotiate with this government. The PLO remains the political address for negotiations, and the political program has not changed at all.

So it's – for anybody who knows anything about the situation – and probably these are not on the Hill – you would know that this is just a very flimsy pretext. It's an excuse that it baseless actually. It's a non-argument, and I don't see why it was presented or why it was believed even. So Palestinian unity was another pretext that he used. And, of course, he entered into this – I don't know. Maybe in our society we tend to be much more polite, but it was a very – (chuckles) – rude confrontation with the U.S. administration. I don't know if you can go to the White House and keep repeating insults and keep insulting the American president and get away with it. Of course, he's always worked on this issue as having tactical gains at the expense of long-term strategic goals and aims.

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So he may have, you know, scored another point against President Obama, but I doubt whether this is going to bode well for the future relationship or even for his own standing in Israel, because he thought this is one way in which he could address the Likud and the right of Likud constituency in Israel. I don't think that in the long run this is going to work. I think it has – it's already beginning to backfire. We're hearing voices within Israel and even within the U.S. that he really – it's a clear case of overkill, and you don't get away with insulting the president like this, and with lecturing people and coming to the States as though you own the place. I doubt whether he would get such a reception anywhere in the world, including the Knesset, that he got in Congress.

Anyway, now, another feature of the ICT revolution and cyberspace that we're talking about is the compression and acceleration of time. And I'm saying this just to emphasize that there is a very pressing need within these changes in the Arab world and region. Either we move fast, decisively, and seriously and substantively on the issues and conclude a just peace, a real peace, or you lose the opportunity for a very long time. I don't think that this is open-ended. I think there's a very strict timeframe.

Ironically, here Obama was trying to persuade Israel that that peace is in its own interests. He gave three reasons, remember? The demographic argument that the Palestinians aren't going to stay, you know, a minority, that they will be a majority in the long run. Then he talked about the Arab Spring and regional developments, that Israel has to read them carefully. And then, of course, he talked about the – with the technological revolution the knowledge that the whole world now sees what's happening, and Israel is being isolated or criticized, and it's losing its friends, so to speak. But even that did not move Israel.

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One thing that we did not see is a bold vision or a real plan that is workable. First of all, we need to contextualize the Palestinian question within the Arab Spring, within the Arab world. This has to happen. If they don't understand it – you cannot constantly talk about, let's say, self-determination, dignity, freedom and so on, and then put that aside and talk about the Palestinians, because the Palestinians are part of this move. We are part of the need for freedom, for self-determination. The same principles should apply.

And, again, things like the rejection of going to the U.N., postponing Jerusalem and refugees, accepting the Jewishness of the state, the total identification, I mean, with Israel and Israeli values and guaranteeing as security and so on. All these things we heard, we'd seen.

But I doubt whether Obama said anything new when he talked about 1967 boundaries. And I'm really shocked that Netanyahu reacted with such hysterical abandon. It's just totally unthinkable because every president in the last, what, 20-some years has been talking about '67. George Bush said the occupation which began in 1967 has to end, remember? It's even in the roadmap. It's in the Annapolis agreement. It's everywhere by – it means that Netanyahu doesn't read or doesn't listen, because the '67 boundaries is nothing new. And to Netanyahu Obama had the audacity of talking about '67, and it's unacceptable because it's Israel that has to shape the agenda and the boundaries unilaterally.

So if you don't want that, what do you want? Where do we go from here? More negotiations? That's not an option. Two decades of negotiations produced more settlements, produced more suffering, more loss of land, ethnic cleansing in Jerusalem, changing the character of Jerusalem. And so what we need would be either a clear, bold plan that would change the dynamic on the ground and come to grips with the requirements of peace, or you have to go with the Palestinians for positive, constructive alternatives. If you block us from the U.N., from getting accountability for Israel, from trying to get protection for the Palestinians by peaceful means, by nonviolent means, then it seems to me you leave us with the option of violence only as the only thing that works, even though we believe that violence is a non-option.

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But at the same time you cannot block a whole nation, keep it in captivity under Israeli domination, which is, by the way, much worse than having your own regime oppress you, because this is the type of oppression that is so pervasive that it affects every aspect of your life. And it has to stop. It's time that it stops.

Now, we have a timeframe. People have to understand the gravity of the situation between now and September. Either we move ahead, or the opportunity is lost and we have either a breakout of violence or a breakdown. The voices that have been unleashed cannot be contained, and the momentum is there. People are also acting with a new sense of self-respect, confidence, hope. This is what it takes to make peace, not a sense of defeatism or being broken.

And so we think that the next move, again, that we need to discuss further has to be a collective, multilateral, global effort, perhaps with Europe, an expanded quartet with an Arab initiative that would produce new language and a new vision in time before matters get out of hand. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. MUASHER: Thank you. Hanan – (inaudible) – can put the microphone on. Let me start by picking up on your last comments about Mr. Netanyahu and what has taken place in this town in the last few weeks.

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MS. ASHRAWI: Yeah.

MR. MUASHER: It is obvious that this town has witnessed a debate, maybe behind closed doors, inside the administration between those who wanted to move more proactively and, in fact, suggest a package maybe along

the lines that you have outlined and between those that thought this was too risky of an approach and that the president better wait until maybe after the presidential elections.

MS. ASHRAWI: Elections, yeah.

MR. MUASHER: Obviously, the debate has been decided in favor of the second approach.

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MS. ASHRAWI: Yeah.

MR. MUASHER: The president did not have any actionable steps outlined in his speech, and even the general principles that he outlined received, as you said, a lot of criticism, both from Mr. Netanyahu and from the Hill as well.

What is on everybody's mind is what will the Palestinian response be in the context of the Arab uprising? In other words, the issue of the Arab street, as you also have pointed out, has not been a factor in U.S. decision-making. People in this town feel that there is time and that we can wait until the U.S. presidential campaign before we pick this up, you know, later on. Do you – you know, what is your assessment of this? Why has the Palestinian street not moved maybe in, you know, the way that people thought it would, and is it September, and what is your sense about –

MS. ASHRAWI: I think you have five questions – (laughter) – in one. (Chuckles.)

MR. MUASHER: All of them. What is your sense of the future – of the future, particularly given the context of the Arab Spring?

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MS. ASHRAWI: That's why – that's why I was trying to press a sense of urgency, to say that we do not have unlimited time. And within what's happening in the Arab world, there is certainly an acceleration of time. I mean, things are moving very rapidly, and what you can take for granted today you cannot take for granted tomorrow. You can't take anything for granted actually except change, the fact that we are undergoing a period of change and the way people react to it. Some react to it by shooting their own citizens and killing people at will, some trying to preempt them by carrying out a reform plan and so on. Others, you know, sort of stepping down like in Egypt and Tunisia before the face of overwhelming popular uprisings.

So in a sense, there is change. Now, what the U.S. used to rely on, the client regimes, so to speak, it cannot rely on anymore. They are not going to carry out the bidding of the U.S. anymore. Even those who traditionally have done it have seen what happened to regimes who were seen as only clients of the U.S. rather than leaders who are genuinely doing the bidding of their own people or responding to the needs of their own people. So that's a way in which these regimes were discredited and ultimately dislodged. Whether the U.S. is willing to understand that or not is a serious issue. You do not have time.

Now, any new regime, as I said, that's coming up will have, of course, on its plate a – really have a domestic agenda, much of it having to do with the economic reform, economic prosperity, job creation and so on. But it also will need to signal to its own people that it's a departure from the old pattern of behavior with the West. And therefore, it's going to stand up. We saw that in Egypt because the Mubarak regime was procrastinating, was told we don't

need Palestinian unity. So they didn't really engage effectively, as you know. The Mubarak closed the borders and so on in Gaza.

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And this – many Egyptians were telling us this is a source of shame for us, of humiliation. They wanted a regime that did what was good for Palestine, for their own people also, not what that regime or leader was told to do by the West and by Israel and so on. So any older new regimes coming up, it seems to me, will try to carry out a domestic agenda, reform and so on, and will try to reestablish Arab national credentials along the new lines we were talking about, and to take steps pertaining to Palestine. And these steps are not going to be to accommodate priorities by the U.S. or others or to put pressure on the Palestinians to accept what the U.S. needs or wants the way we saw things happening before.

And that's a real change. That's one part of – and it seems to me that's why we said the U.S. has to contextualize what it's doing in the region, has to understand that Palestine is not outside the equation the way Netanyahu said. They were not demonstrating for Palestine or against Israel. But if you really look hard and deep and see the – (inaudible) – into issues, you know that's a real motivating factor and a real change pertaining to us.

Two, there is a timeframe. We cannot afford to wait 'til 2012. We cannot afford to wait until election campaigns and so on run. There's a choice. You could either have a bold vision and a clear plan of action and be willing to spend or – (chuckles) – expend your credibility and your credit on affecting genuine change and making real peace, or you could tread water and allow the dynamic to run its course. These are the two options. And choosing to tread water means that the situation is going to deteriorate. It's not going to get any better.

The other factor here is the Israeli factor. You have in Israel one of the most extreme, hard-line militaristic coalitions with basest, of course, policies in the history of Israel. I don't know. It certainly has an anti-peace agenda. Any of you heard Netanyahu and who thought that he is coming with a peace agenda certainly has not heard him clearly, because he came to say I'm closing all doors. That's it. There's no peace, unless you succumb, unless you capitulate, you in the U.S. and we in Palestine, and accept what Netanyahu thinks is best for everybody.

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This is certainly a recipe for disaster and for instability and for conflict and for violence. If this government in Israel – now there are voices. There are people writing in Israel and here saying that this is a very dangerous and irresponsible approach. Relying on PR tricks and campaigns and deception and scoring points against the president and so on and showing him that you can go over his head to the Congress, and, you know, this is your playing field, playing – fine, but what next? Where do you go from here? Nothing. You have nothing to offer except more of the same of a situation that has cost the U.S. a great deal. It has cost the U.S. its credibility, its standing, and a great deal of interest in the Arab world among the Arab public. Even if it managed to tame a few leaders, it did not manage to tame the Arab public as a whole. So it's a new ballgame, I think, and they have to see that.

MR. MUASHER: Another question in this town a few months ago was that Mr. Abbas was weak because he did not represent all the Palestinians, and therefore, any solution that did not include Hamas was a solution that would not last. Now that he has made an agreement with Hamas, the debate has shifted –

MS. ASHRAWI: Yes.

MR. MUASHER: – as you also have said. How do you see the next steps moving forward after a unity government is established with Hamas? Do you see this as a positive or a negative development on the peace process?

MS. ASHRAWI: No, I think this is extremely positive and a very badly needed step. We talked about empowerment. We talked about responding to the Palestinian people's needs. The people as a whole, not just the young. We talked about repairing our democracy. We talked about resuscitating a really active, pluralistic system, putting Hamas as part of the system, not as a replacement or a substitute for the PLO. Remember, I've always said that Hamas belongs within this democratic, pluralistic system, not as a substitute for it or a replacement or an alternative. And that's the only way you can have a functioning political system that can lay claim to democracy in Palestine.

[00:46:15]

So we started that unity, of course, with structured, technical steps, OK? We need a government that is a government of independents, of professionals and so on that will deliver the services, as I said, and that will build the institutions and so on and take care of people's needs. It has also additional tasks, prepare for elections. This is very important. So long as we are divided, we couldn't have elections, whether local government or legislative elections or presidential elections or even national PNC elections, or the PLO. We needed these elections because, first of all, the rift has brought into question the legitimacy of all our institutions. The PLC was dated. We needed elections, the legislative council.

The presidential elections were delayed as well, and everybody was, you know, sort of attacking everybody else. Hamas was saying well, the president is now no longer legitimate. Everybody was saying well, the legislative council is no longer now legitimate because it's – it has run its course, so to speak. Elections were delayed. And people were saying well, the PLO is now obsolete because it hasn't had elections and it needs to have elections in order to represent all the Palestinians, including Hamas and others, and it has to be done in a way as to include Palestinians in exile and not just in the West Bank and Gaza.

So to do that, which is a real requirement for a democratic system in Palestine, a representative system, political system – I don't want to say government because we are unique in the sense that our government is not political – that meant that we needed to move ahead and we needed to have this unity to carry out elections. Otherwise, it's very easy to disrupt and to stop elections. We said local government elections. Hamas said no, it prevented the Central Elections Commission from working in Gaza. That's it. You cannot have elections in one place and not the other. And the same thing with presidential and so on.

[00:48:21]

So that's one thing. And the other important task is rebuilding Gaza. The situation there is absolutely drastic. It's inhuman. Gaza has been destroyed, devastated, and yet under siege and without the ability and the materials and the funding and so on to rebuild it. Now we can start rebuilding, and already there are moves and steps to start rebuilding Gaza and to get the funding. The problem is that there were lots of funds pledged for Gaza, to rebuild Gaza, but they were not delivered. They did not materialize. And because of the siege of closure, nobody could work. And because of the rift and the division, nobody was willing to start rebuilding Gaza.

Now we can. The alleviation of the human suffering, which is very real in Gaza, is very crucial, very important. And then you move from there, and you have to have a plan for the reunification of the institutions within the West Bank and Gaza, and other than the elections as well. And paramount among this would be the – not just the

service departments, but the security. We have a reform plan, as you know. (Chuckles.) We've had a couple of them that we worked on very hard since the '90s and 2010 and so on in which we said the security forces have to be reformed in a sense that they have to be merged. We need no more than three, and they need to be held in – they need to be totally depoliticized and totally subject to the political – of the executive authority and not themselves play a political role and be factionalized.

That's why we have to guard our own unity. We have to tell both Hamas and Fatah that this is not a sharing of the spoils and a repoliticization of the security. That unification doesn't mean I have so many Hamas and you have so many Fatah and so on. It means that you repair your reform, your security forces and system by depoliticizing them and putting in the professionals. It's a long agenda and it's difficult, and we are going to see problems. I mean, we already have problems about choosing even the names and the prime minister and so on, because you do everything by consensus. And – (chuckles) – whenever you're doing anything by consensus, you know, you're going to have people objecting here and there.

[00:50:44]

But I think there's enough determination and will to understand that if we do not succeed that it could be suicidal domestically for us. Now, this message has to be understood by the rest of the world. And I think the Americans are beginning to see this, the fact that Hamas has moderated its political discourse, the fact that it has accepted the requirements of unity and elections and so on, and that it has designated, you know, the presidency as the political – and the PLO as the political address and so on – would, in a sense, allow for the Palestinians to take decisions that are binding on everybody. And after all, ultimately, whatever decision you take when it comes to negotiations, we have to be presented for a referendum by the public.

MR. MUASHER: Let's open it up, please. And, Adnan – and if you can identify yourself.

Q: Yes, my name is Adnan Abu-Odeh. I come from the International Crisis Group. Well, I have two questions.

MS. ASHRAWI: (Inaudible.)

Q: Number one is are you suggesting in your analysis that the strategy of buying time, which Israel has adopted for 40 years now, is coming to an end?

MS. ASHRAWI: Yes.

Q: My second question is at the PLO are you considering seriously one way or another how to stimulate the dormant potential of influence of Saudi Arabia on the United States? Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: We're going to take a number of questions, and then – please. So we have a chance to ask as many questions as possible.

[00:52:35]

MR. MICHAEL LAME: Michael Lame, Re-Think the Middle East. Marwan introduced you by saying that you're someone who speaks truth to power. It seems to me it might also be useful speak truth to the powerless. And I'm speaking particularly to Palestinian refugees. Whether there is or is not a universal right to return, regardless of the language of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194, it seems that the Israeli public across the political spectrum is united against the fact of many Palestinians returning.

So at what point is it time to have a conversation with Palestinian refugees about alternative futures so there is not another generation or more generations of people languishing in refugee camps in Lebanon or wherever? Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: Yes. Yes, please. Yes, yes –

[00:53:34]

Q: My name is Abraham Hasin (ph). I am Egyptian-American living here. You describe Prime Minister Netanyahu's visit, and even after he offended the president publicly on television and he gave his awful speech at the joint Congress, I'm really sad. I'd like to hear how you feel about the joint session of Congress, senators and representative, giving the guy – I was going to say a dirty word but I would not – giving him 26 standing ovations.

MR. MUASHER: Fifty-nine. (Chuckles.)

Q: Twenty-nine or fifty-nine, incredible. (Chuckles.)

MS. ASHRAWI: I heard various numbers. I didn't count them, you know.

[00:54:14]

Q: It is really sad. I mean, you were saying that the American public opinion is changing. I don't think it is. If these are the people – and the media, again – everything was talked about. Obama's first speech talked about the whole Middle East, and everybody talked about how bad Obama is for mentioning the dirty word, the '76 (sic). I'd like to see how you feel, you guys, and there is hope for – to change the American public about this important subject.

MR. MUASHER: Let's take one more question from Barbara. Then I'm going to move to the back after we give Hanan a chance to respond.

Q: Barbara Slavin, a recovering journalist from the Atlantic Council. Whenever I see you two, I remember meeting you 20 years ago when there were the post-Madrid talks in Washington and you were dueling spokesmen.

MS. ASHRAWI: The negotiations.

MR. MUASHER: The good – (inaudible).

MS. ASHRAWI: We were a good team, I thought.

(Laughter.)

MS. SLAVIN: You were a very good team, very good team. The question is about not violence that could break out, but nonviolence. You spoke about the new tactics that are being used. Is there a thought to trying to mobilize Palestinians to March in East Jerusalem, to march in the old city, and not to throw rocks at Israelis, but to truly use nonviolence to try to press their case?

[00:55:31]

And when you talk about September, you know the United States will veto in the Security Council any declaration of independence. So in this going to be just kabuki? I mean, the PLO already has representation around the world, proto-embassies around the world. So what's the point of pushing it this far? Thanks.

MR. MUASHER: OK.

MS. ASHRAWI: OK. Well, Adnan, your first question is absolutely right, yes. Of course, buying time is – we have no more time, and the conditions on the ground certainly make any solution impossible if they're allowed to continue. That's it. Because when you talk about the two-state solution coming to an end, the de facto option is not a one-state solution. That's not something we can work on and so on. It's going to perpetuation of the occupation and more confrontation and more control and more land theft and so on.

So would that generate more violence or not? Would that also incite a republican opinion or not? Would that change the relationship, even between governments that have agreements with Israel or not? There are all sorts of questions that are going to be raised if Israel does not understand that there is no more time to be bought, to create more prejudice of the facts. That's it.

[00:56:53]

On the issue of the PLO and Saudi Arabia, it's not just Saudi Arabia. The whole Arab world has power, has traction, has resources, and should be able to use all these, and not just its relations with U.S., but in everything. The problem is that so far they were neutralized in many ways. Now, Saudi Arabia probably understands that the next phase is different, and the next phase requires engagement. There are people talking about a new alignment in the Arab world – I don't want to talk about this – whether it's the monarchical system versus non-monarchical systems and so on, as opposed to remember the axis of evil and – (chuckles) – so on, or the axis of – (in Arabic) – and the axis of moderation.

So it's still too early to predict, but there are certain realignments within the region. And I think Saudi Arabia understands that any – the role of any leading country in the Arab world, be it Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or others, has to in many ways use the inherent power in order to try to do justice to the – Palestine, and to bring about a just peace. We're not asking for them to invade Israel and liberate us. We're saying we need a just peace that can last before it's too late.

Speaking truth to the powerless. It seems to me you cannot make it a precondition to abandon the rights of Palestinians and get the Palestinian leaders to say that we will violate international law, we will violate the rights of our own people, and we will tell them you have no rights. No. I think the only way to deal with the refugee – Palestinian refugee question is the triple-tiered approach. First of all, you have to acknowledge their narrative, their history, their suffering. Israel has to acknowledge its responsibility and culpability vis-a-vis the Palestinian refugees. They didn't just happen like that, and they didn't become refugees because the Arab world told them, you know, leave. We know what happened. '48 is clear, and there is a clear narrative that has to be acknowledged.

That is the first essential step, plus Israel's culpability. The second step is acknowledging their rights. You can never exclude a people from the protection of international law and say OK, you're the exception. Because the Israelis are afraid, you don't have any rights. You can't do that. Otherwise, we could say we're afraid Israel has no right to exist. That's not the issue. The issue is you have to acknowledge their right within international law, 194, U.N. charter, everything. All refugees have these rights. The Palestinians are no exception. You cannot constantly cast them outside the protection of the law.

[00:59:38]

But then when you have the third option, when you do these two steps, then you can discuss alternatives and options provided you give them the right to choose. Once there are – once these two steps are done, then you can discuss all sorts of options and alternatives and so on and give them the right to choose. That's the only way, I think, that it will be solved. But for Israel to sit back and say no, no, no, you have to deny this, it means you're telling every Palestinian leader violate your own people's rights. Negate your own legitimacy with your own people in order to be able to talk to us.

Now, the Arab initiative, as you very well know, had a formula that it is a mutually agreed solution to the refugee question based on U.N. Resolution 194.

MR. : An agreed solution based on 194, yes.

MS. ASHRAWI: – an agreed solution based on 194. OK. Now, let's look at the different ways in which that can be implemented to safeguard refugee rights and to give them the options once they know that they are not being totally bereft of any right or of any recognition of their narrative. These three steps are essential. And that's the truth. That has to be said to everybody, I think.

The joint meeting – it's not joint session, I'm told. It should be joint meeting because – right? Something legal about –

MR. : Joint – (inaudible) –

MS. ASHRAWI: – session versus – no, it's a joint meeting of Congress. A joint session convenes only when the president is there, unless Netanyahu thinks he's become president or – (laughter) – but it's – (chuckles) – a joint meeting.

[01:01:25]

Look, I'll give you my point of view. I don't want to insult anybody, but I felt it was extremely demeaning. It was extremely demeaning. If I were an American, an American lawmaker, I certainly would not accept this type of treatment, where somebody who is insulting the president, who is defying the whole American national interest – (chuckles) – and system – I mean, there is such a thing as a national insult after all. I don't know if we take this or not, but we do take this very seriously, going to the representatives of the public and getting them to cheer him against their president, regardless of party politics or anything. There is such a thing as national dignity which Arab Spring is talking about.

I felt that that was extremely insulting and demeaning, and if I were a congresswoman, whether Senate or House, I certainly wouldn't have done that, and I would have been very careful about safeguarding my national interests as opposed to Israel's overriding and overbearing attitude. Public opinion is shifting in the U.S. I think if you go to universities, if you talk to public, if you have public lectures, people are learning more. They have access to different information sources. They are seeing what's happening. They are engaging more. They are expressing a will to challenge the process language and the problems they were fed all these years by the mainstream media that totally distorted reality. They obscured the facts and the truth.

Once they know American public generally is motivated by a sense of fair play – and I get asked all the time how come we didn't know these things? How come, you know? And once they know, they move, and they will – they have to hold their representatives accountable, and fortunately, the representatives think that they can, you know, take policy decisions and foreign policy decisions on behalf of the executive rather than understanding what their role is. So it's their public that has to hold them accountable, not just on issues of education and healthcare and so on, but also on issues where they're meddling in areas that are extremely dangerous and that could threaten, as even the American military said, the American national interests and American security and the safety of American boys and girls in the region, no?

[01:03:55]

So this sort of blind allegiance and adulation and so on is – (chuckles) – but what's funny – now – look, there are certain people who are apologists and who will take whatever Netanyahu says and turn it into the gospel truth. There are people like that. But there are also thinking, critical people in the media. And I've been reading all sorts of articles and op-eds and so on that are questioning this kind of attitude and are also criticizing the fact that when you do things that go against your own national interest and that, you know, are for short-term gratification, but not long-term interests – that this is, again, a very serious indulgence that could backfire.

But I think in the long run, yes, the American public will make a difference. Think tanks will make a difference. Access to information will make – but we have to keep at it. It's not going to change by itself, and there is an inherent, built-in bias against the Palestinians. We've always been the other, the strange, the terrorists, this and that. People don't even know us for what we are. So we have to present ourselves – we have to challenge misconceptions, stereotypes, preconceptions. I mean, there's very cheap language that presents us to the Americans the way Netanyahu did as terrorists and al-Qaida and all that.

Maybe it resonates with the ignorant, but sooner or later people know the truth. You cannot hide it. This is not 1948 or '47. This is, you know, the 21st century. People can get to the facts, can get to the truth. And we should make sure that they do. It's our greatest ally, the truth. We need it. Might not be enough to set us free, but at least it's the beginning.

[01:05:43]

If nonviolence would break out – nonviolence did break out. As you remember, the early intifada and how nonviolent it was? As I said, we were beaten up. We were shot at. We were, you know, arrested. But we went day after day after day, and we faced a very strong, fully armed Israeli army. And we exposed the limits of power of the military occupation, of the army, when faced with a people's will to be free.

The problem is with the second intifada, militarization, acts of violence and so on. That's the whole phase, the whole era that's extremely painful, that really changed the equation, and that was exploited against us. And we stood up and we condemned violence, particularly against civilians. The problem is it was used as a pretext – sorry – to carry out violence against us and to justify everything that happened afterwards. So mobilization – yes, it will happen. You saw how Palestinians mobilized. As I said on May 15th, this is something new. It's not just Palestinians and the West Bank and Gaza and Jerusalem. It's Palestinians, and within '48 it's Palestinians in Lebanon and Syria and Jordan, even in the States, expatriates.

There's a sense of solidarity and identification and a sense of the spirit, the pride of the Palestinians. We will not be silenced anymore. We will not be oppressed and suppressed and excluded. We have a message and we will press it. Now, this is something that Israel has to understand and the U.S. has to understand, both, that there is an

opportunity to resolve this honorably. And we gave them that opportunity, and the Arab world gave them that opportunity. If you don't take it, then the resolution will not be to anybody's liking. It's going to take time. It'll be painful. But you will see that the Palestinians will resort to popular nonviolent action and resistance.

As for the September and the U.S. veto, yes, of course – look, can anything be worse than the U.S. vetoing the settlements resolution? The U.S. constantly said settlements are illegal, right? They told Israel the settlements have to stop, right? And yet when we went to the U.N. to get a resolution using American language, the U.S. was in a very awkward and sheepish situation of having to veto a resolution that is based on their own policy and using their own language for the sake of Israel. That's something that is – it's something I can't believe. I mean, this is the greatest power in the world so far. Might not stay that for long, but still you're violating your own policy on international law in order to subject it to Israeli illegal actions of the occupation.

[01:08:45]

This is something unheard of, but they did it. Not only did they do it, but they put so much pressure on all of us using also their Arab allies not to go to the U.N., and the pressure was very great. But we still did, and they used all our friends to tell us we shouldn't. We didn't. And we're going to go. We have to have access. We have to have recourse. We cannot constantly be shut out. And this strategic alliance between the U.S. and Israel is playing against peace, against our rights, but also against the interests of the U.S. and the region and throughout the world.

So we will go – if they want to veto – they're trying to persuade the Europeans now not to – (chuckles) – support our bid for recognition. But I want to explain this clearly. What we're asking for from the U.N. is not recognition. States recognize states. We do have, what, 116 countries that recognize us, 120 that recognize Palestine. So that kind of recognition we're getting, and we will accumulate recognitions, whether Latin America – we're trying to get it from Europe. We have it from the Arab world, non-aligned and so on, Africa. So we will accumulate recognitions. We want to safeguard our land, our borders.

We go to the U.N. in a multilateral act. It is not a unilateral declaration of independence at all. It's going to the international, multilateral address of international law. We're going to the U.N., for heaven's sakes. Where are we going? We keep saying it's unilateral – it's not unilateral. We, as the victims, as Palestinians under occupation, who have had no support from anybody on the issue of our own freedom and dignity and independence and self-determination, are going to the source of international law and human rights. This is where the international community is, isn't it? And we're going to tell them please accept us as a member. We're going to apply for membership. We are an observer, you know, permanent observer.

[01:10:49]

But we're always punished because we are a non-state, so we don't have the rights or the access to international organizations. Once you get membership, it means you have access. You have access to all the judicial accountability you need within the U.N. system. And then you have the recognition that you do have boundaries, that – 1967 are your boundaries, that East Jerusalem is your capitol, that you do have rights, including the right to self-determination. If the U.S. vetoes in the Security Council, we will resort to the Uniting for Peace provision and go to the General Assembly and ask for a two-thirds majority to accept us as a member of the U.N. General Assembly. That's what we need to do.

After all, Uniting for Peace is an American invention during the Cold War, during the Korean crisis, right, to prevent the Soviet Union from constantly vetoing. So we've been slapped with about 30-some vetoes so far by the Americans only for the sake of Israel. It's time that there's a recognition that the Palestinians have some rights and

some humanity. And there's a consensus emerging in the international community. You cannot keep stopping the flood. You cannot keep holding back recognition and knowledge and human rights and awareness and solidarity for the sake of all the wrong things that Israel is doing in Palestine and to the U.S. as well.

MR. MUASHER: Let's take a question in the back. Yes, sir..

Q: Osama Kanaan from the IMF. We have seen from what has happened as an outcome of the Arab Spring that nonviolence has been one of the factors for the effectiveness of the – of the protests and for the backing of the international community to those movements. You have spoken about the U.N. and the possibility of acceptance by the General Council of Palestine and the state. Let's say this happens. There will be still a problem of the occupation. How do you – (audio break) – the occupation? Somebody in the audience mentioned the effectiveness of nonviolence. You yourself – you were very active during the first intifada in motivating and indeed in organizing, inspiring at least, the nonviolent demonstrations that happened. And they were quite effective. And by the way, I liked your poetry that you wrote at that time.

[01:13:24]

MS. ASHRAWI: Ah – (chuckles) – thank you.

Q: So what would be now your message to the power – to those who are – to the average Palestinian, to the ordinary Palestinians, who are asking what shall we do after September? In the best scenario let's say the – there's acceptance by the international community of Palestine. And then the question is what to do with the occupation. How should we resist the occupation? Would you be yourself willing to participate in such a nonviolent movement? Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: I'll take two more questions because we don't have much time. So please, Ambassador – please.

[01:14:03]

Q: Landrum Bolling. I apologize for not having got advanced permission, but I brought along copies of the DVD of a film that I did three or four years – in which you have an interview as a key part.

MS. ASHRAWI: Thank you.

Q: And I brought some copies so people can help themselves.

MS. ASHRAWI: Well, thank you, Landrum, yeah.

Q: Film called "Searching for Peace in the Middle East." And Hanan, you did a beautiful, succinct job of summarizing some of the key – and they're just as relevant when you spoke them three or four years ago.

MS. ASHRAWI: Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: Thank you. Thank you.

Q: Thank you.

[01:14:35]

MS. ASHRAWI: Thank you, Landrum.

MR. MUASHER: Professor Oweiss.

Q: Ibrahim Oweiss. I apologize for having been late beyond – for reasons beyond my control. But I wish to greet you here. The last time I greeted you was in Qatar a few years ago. I have really two comments, and I need your input in this. The first one is that Israel under the help of the United States is pursuing a policy of racism by – I just heard George Mitchell yesterday talking about the Jewishness of Israel. That is pure racism. And this has been expelled first by a second-rate president of the United States, George W. Bush, when he called it the Jewish state. And ever since it has been repeated.

The second thing is that Israel had been conducting a policy of armed robbery ever since it was created, and it has become isolated in the world with the exception of the United States. How can we spell out this armed robbery notion to the world, everywhere? Because this is very essential. Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: Maybe one more question. We really are out of time. Yes, sir.

[01:16:31]

Q: My name is Sumar Chatterdy (ph) from SAVE Foundation (ph). You've mentioned that from 1967 you've been asking the United States for help to resolve this, and with the assumption that the United States was a kind of a mediator or a disinterested mediator, but that was not true. Wouldn't it have been better if you – if, as Palestinians, you were in a situation like Syria, at least have the protection of the Russians, who say any resolution in the Security Council against Syria would be vetoed, or for that matter when India and Pakistan were in conflict, United States was blindly supporting Pakistan and Soviet Union was supporting India, and that's how India was able to get a upper hand.

So wouldn't it be better now for you to look for somebody like Russia, China, or whoever is willing to back you far better than just verbal support that you are getting from United States and a runaround for all these years, from 1967 to now? I mean, this is one problem which has lingered on for too long, and it is really sad that the United States have been able to bluff everybody and still continues to veto some just resolutions in the Security Council.

MS. ASHRAWI: No, thank you.

MR. MUASHER: Please.

MS. ASHRAWI: Oh. (Chuckles.) I agree. I'm sorry, I didn't get your name, from IMF, that –

MR. : Somar Chatterdy (ph).

MS. ASHRAWI: No, no, IMF, the first question.

MS. : Osama Kanaan.

[01:18:17]

MS. ASHRAWI: Osama. Osama, thank you very much. I'm so glad that you read my poetry. (Chuckles.) It means a lot to me because I believe you really need poetry to be able to deal with this situation. Nonviolence, as far as I'm concerned, has always been the most effective means, and we use that, as you very well know. And I've been involved, and I continue to be involved, because there are many ways of expressing resistance by nonviolent means in which the human spirit is paramount, in which you have the moral high ground, in which you expose and you defy power and militarism and you expose the limits of power and the immortality of the occupation by being more moral than they are, of course, not by adopting their means.

And I really think that we can relegitimize and reenergize the nonviolent movement in Palestine, which has been going on actually for years now, as you know, in Neharlih (ph) and Bildahin (ph) and Massara (ph) and Nabisaleh (ph), in Jerusalem and so on, even in Silwan (ph) and in Cheterjadra (ph). There are constant nonviolent protests that are being faced with extreme violence, and many internationals were injured and killed and so on. Many Americans, of course, were – there's this young woman who wrote a song who – I'm sorry. I forget her name. I shouldn't have forgotten because she lost an eye at the Qalandia checkpoint protesting against the treatment of the Palestinians. And then she got no protection even from her own government, but she wrote a beautiful song, "An Eye for Palestine" or something.

But there are many people of good conscience who have joined us in nonviolent resistance. I certainly will continue to be engaged in it and work with it. After September I think we cannot give up. I mean, we have to continue and we have to pursue alternative means. We talked about means like going to the international community, holding Israel accountable, working within a new Arab consensus and so on, trying to articulate a new political agenda. But if all these efforts are thwarted, then you cannot control everybody or everything. You cannot say keep using the same means if nobody reacts positively to you or listens to you.

Then the others that went – the occupation is by definition violent, very violent, because you have to use violence to oppress a whole people. We are a captive nation. And so when you're facing it with nonviolence, of course, if you produce results, if you expose it the way we did before, then that's fine. Then people see results. But if you don't, then people start picking up the same attitude as their oppressor, the same means, and this is where you begin to lose, unfortunately. But you do not control all the elements, and you do not control how everybody reacts. You have to constantly explain. You have to mobilize. You have to show that you're there, and you have to be able to show results. That's what works.

[01:21:28]

Landrum, thank you very much. You have always been a great advocate of justice and peace and a just peace. And I think we should acknowledge your effort for decades and decades. You've stood up and you've spoken up.

Now, the question of the Jewishness for – of Israel – this is a new precondition. We were never asked throughout our negotiations – do you remember – I don't remember ever being told you have to recognize the Jewishness of the state of Israel, or Israel as a Jewish state. We were asked to recognize Israel. In 1994 in the exchange of letters between Yasser Arafat and Rabin we recognized – and, of course, after the meeting of the PNC in 1988 we accepted the two-state solution and we recognized the state of Israel, which is what we thought, you know, generally happens. You recognize states. And Israel recognized the PLO, not Palestine. We recognize the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

[01:22:34]

So that was a condition that was met. And then suddenly Netanyahu is the person who came up with the idea that if the Palestinians do not recognize the Jewishness of the state, it means that they want to destroy – they don't recognize the state. But we have recognized the state. That's the point. I don't see any other country that asks for the ethnic or religious character of the state to be mentioned in a legal or political recognition, except maybe Iran, right?

[01:23:07]

MR. MUASHER: I'm not sure even them. (Chuckles.)

MS. ASHRAWI: Islamic Republic of Iran.

MR. MUASHER: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MR. : Because that is part of the name.

MS. ASHRAWI: Yeah, that's part of the –

MR. : (Inaudible.)

(Laughter.)

MS. ASHRAWI: That's not part of Israel's name. So this is unique. Now, we as Palestinians have been – I told you that we've been struggling for a tolerant, pluralistic, inclusive democracy. Israel is the only country in the world that if you say it's a state for all its citizens you're accused of being a traitor. Remember the Palestinians in Israel who say this should be a state for all its citizens? They say you want to destroy Israel. Well, what is a state for? For all its noncitizens, for the Americans and – if Israel doesn't want to be a state for its – all its citizens, then it has to say so because there are non-Jewish citizens.

Now, you cannot be exclusive. The Palestinians have been there for centuries before the creation of the state of Israel. You can't nullify them. You can't negate their presence. You can't say if you're not Jewish, then you have no rights and no citizenship, which is what Lieberman is saying now. He wants to expel Palestinians from the state of Israel as well as from the West Bank, and there are voices now calling for Gaza and Egypt and the West Bank and to Jordan and so on. There are all sorts of, you know, otherworldly solutions being presented based on racism.

[01:24:31]

That will not work. Anything that is based on exclusivity and racism and the discrimination and so on will not work. You have to accept the fact that we live in a world that does not close up itself and that does accept the other and that does recognize that we are not all monolithic and one character and one type and one ethnic group and one religion and so on. And that's it.

Now, we say to us as Palestinians this is a negation of our history, negation of the rights of non-Jewish Palestinians in Israel, and, of course, it's a negation of the right of return of the Palestinian people whose narrative has to be acknowledged as well as their rights. But I doubt whether Obama or anybody else would ever use the term – let's say this is the Christian United States of America or ask us to recognize the Muslim kingdom of Jordan or whatever. No, nobody would do that for any other – the exceptionalism of Israel is something that will eventually backfire.

Israel has to be treated like a country like other countries. It cannot constantly be the exception with a sense of entitlement, with a sense of a special consideration.

Once it becomes a real state like other states, then maybe it will relax and act with confidence and interact with the region as an equal, not as a dominating power. And the same – the issue of land confiscation and land theft, yes? I mean, settlements are based on land theft. They have taken other people's land. The thing is Israel also defines state land as belonging to the Israeli state, not state land as belonging to the Palestinian people for whom this land is – and to – the land should be used for their own benefit.

[01:26:26]

And the issue of '67 – we didn't ask for the – to the U.S. for help. Actually, the U.S. is the only country that supposedly Israel listens to, but now we know better. (Laughter.) It's the other way around. The U.S. – we didn't – during the Cold War, of course – (chuckles) – we tried very hard not to take sides. We were not – we were always under occupation, as you know, since '67. So we couldn't go and say OK, now we want to be within the satellite of the Soviet Union, or we want to be with the – we just wanted the international community to end the occupation on the basis of legality and justice. That's all we want.

So unfortunately now with the monopolar world since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, you do have – you do have one power. You do have the U.S. And the U.S. has adopted a policy since '91, even though before Shultz and others, you know, tried to find the solution, a policy of ending the conflict and bringing about peace to the region. And so far –

MR. MUASHER: It might be a smokescreen too. It might be a smokescreen.

MS. ASHRAWI: It might be a – look, when I said years ago – I hate to repeat myself, but I – (chuckles) – I'm quoting myself, the worst thing a professor can do. (Laughter.) I said that by no stretch of the imagination can you ever accuse the U.S. of being evenhanded – (laughter) – never. We know there's a strategic alliance with Israel. If you heard Obama speech, you know this is long-standing policy and so on.

But when the issue of the – all this lip service and effusion of support and so on to the point where it becomes nauseous – when all this – when the chips are down, ultimately every country is going to look out for its own interests. Israel is becoming a liability for everybody, to itself even. The occupation is the liability. This blindness to the needs of – and the rights of people around and the Palestinian rights is going to backfire. It's going to draw the whole region – and it's going to cost the U.S. a great deal.

Earlier on last year we talked about how the American military was saying that Israel is a liability in the sense that what it does in the region reflects on the U.S., and it affects American standing, American interests, and so – and American lives. So it cannot constantly do things and use this alliance with the U.S. to cover its illegal acts and its violations. And I think it's up to the U.S. to decide sooner or later where, you know, its real interests lie in the long run rather than just, you know, appeasing and accommodating Israel.

[01:29:21]

So we're not asking for support. We're asking for the implementation of the law. We're asking for justice. That's all. And we will go wherever it is needed. We don't want to be part of any axis or alliance or whatever. We have a cause that has its own integrity, that is based on justice and legality. And that's what we want. And I think you have

lots of people now who are seeing this and who are in support, whether in Europe, Latin America and the Arab world and so on.

But here there will be a change, not – (chuckles) – I know how frustrating it can be to come here. Look, I've been coming here since I was a student, and it is like, you know, Sisyphus. You keep pushing that rock uphill and it keeps coming back at – but you have to keep trying because ultimately you cannot rely on the ignorance of people. This is a very fickle base. Ignorance is easily dispelled if you have the truth and the facts. Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: And on that note, please – (applause) – join me in thanking Hanan for an excellent presentation.

MS. ASHRAWI: Thank you.

MR. MUASHER: Thank you.

[01:30:30]

(END)