

# General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific



## ANNUAL REPORT 2015

### **The General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific**

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**Izzat Saleh Abdulhadi**

## Ambassador's Address

Ambassador of the State of Palestine, Izzat Saleh Abdulhadi, reflects on the highlights of 2015.

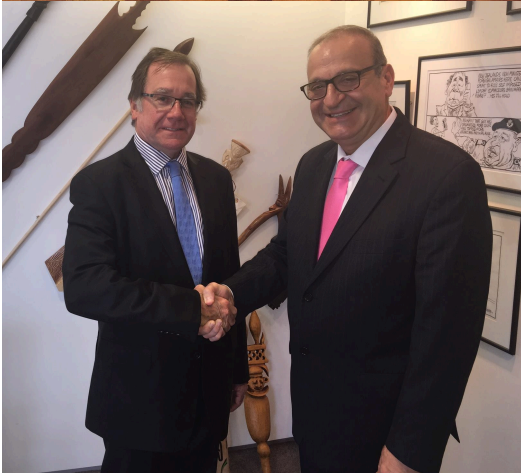
2015 witnessed a number of important developments and events that played a great role in the work and advancement of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. Of these, of particular significance was the first official visit of the Palestinian Foreign Minister, Dr Riad al-Malki, where he met with the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms Julie Bishop in Sydney on April 30, 2015. The frank discussion between both parties focused on the Palestinian vision of recognised statehood, with the visiting Minister explaining Palestinian policy based on the establishment of the State of Palestine within 1967 borders existing alongside the State of Israel. Al-Malki also elaborated on the present Palestinian strategy to bring about the two state solution through implementing international law and international sovereignty, as well as the continued building of

Palestinian state institutions.

Within the same timeframe, Dr Riad al-Malki met his New Zealand counterpart in Auckland, where both parties discussed the New Zealand initiative to end the Israeli conflict, and the role of the United Nations Security Council in this regard. They further focused on the prospect of developing the bilateral relationship between New Zealand and Palestine.

A further development this year was the national conference of the Australian Labor Party, currently in opposition, which was convened in Melbourne on July 25, 2015. At this conference, the party adopted an historic decision, acknowledging Israeli settlements as illegal in accordance with international law. An important decision was also made to consider full Australian recognition of the State of Palestine should they win the 2016 federal election. This comes after consultation with several nations that share political and intellectual perspectives similar to Australia.

Despite a decrease in Australian international aid during 2015 by 40% as



compared to previous years, the Australian government has pledged \$42.8 million to the Palestinian people, with the bulk of this money supporting Palestinian refugees and Palestinian NGOs. A number of scholarships supporting Palestinian students studying in Australia are also in place.

2015 witnessed three important visits made by the Palestinian Ambassador to New Zealand, Fiji and Timor-Leste. These visits reached important outcomes, including the possibility of Fiji recognising the State of Palestine and the initiation of a process to develop a professional cooperation program between Palestine and Timor-Leste.

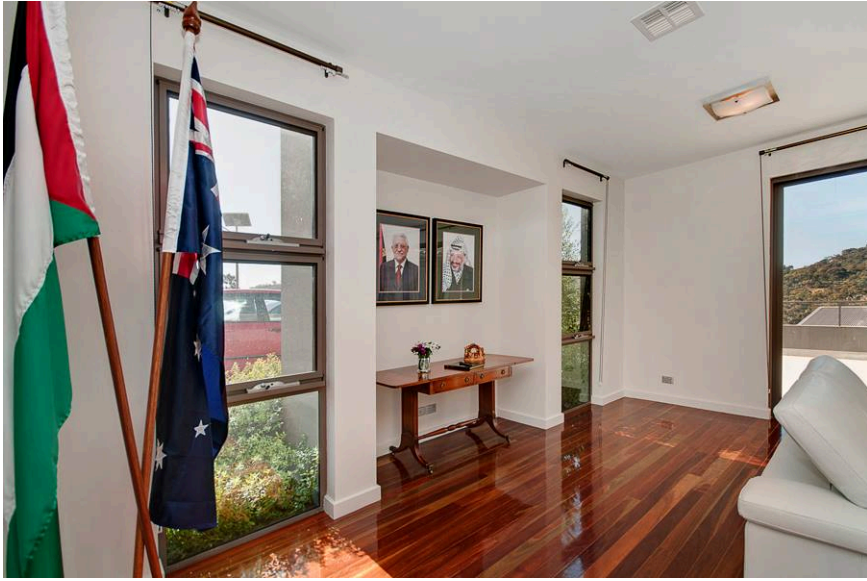
Additionally, 2015 saw the continuation of an excellent relationship between the General Delegation of Palestine and Australian civil society organisations. This was achieved through several visits and consultative meetings, as well as mutual visits of Palestinian organisations. Furthermore, the diplomatic role of the General Delegation of Palestine was fostered by effective

participation in activities hosted by the international and Arab diplomatic corps, furthering respect for the delegation in its role.

This year was recognised for the delegation's continued participation in a number of activities with the Palestinian community in Australia, in particular commemorating Al-Nakba Day and International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Of most importance, however, was the welcoming of the Palestinian soccer team to Australia, which was greatly supported by the Palestinian community in Australia. On this occasion I would like to express my deep gratitude to the community in Australia that supported our players, helping to raise their morale. Their efforts were highly appreciated by the General Delegation of Palestine.

Lastly, I am looking forward to 2016, which I hope will witness further good news regarding the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people seeking a just and peaceful resolution as well as increasing international support for recognition of an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

H.E. Ambassador Izzat Abdulhadi, Head of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific



## Political Context



## Australia

“the visit enriched the bilateral relationship between Australia and Palestine”

2015 was marked by several key events, which had important ramifications for the bilateral relationship between Australia and Palestine. In this context, the Palestinian Authority and the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia continues to maintain strategic engagement with the Australian government and will continue to enhance an excellent relationship between the two countries.

### **Visit of Riad al-Malki:**

The first of these was the successful visit of the Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister, Riad al-Malki, the first such visit to Australia coming from a high-ranking Palestinian official. He met the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop, as well as the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms. Tanya Plibersek. The visit enriched the bilateral relationship between Australia and Palestine and clarified the positions of both countries regarding issues of high mutual importance, especially in regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, regional conflicts in the Middle East and the international agenda countering terrorism.

These meetings and discussions also focused on explaining and elaborating on the new Palestinian strategy adopted by the Palestinian political leadership regarding internationalisation of the Palestinian-Israeli struggle and taking the issue to the United Nations after the failure of the bilateral negotiations between the two parties. The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs have extensively furthered the discussion regarding the new Palestinian

diplomacy in this regard, which is based on multilateral diplomacy and approach in solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as well as principals of international law and UN resolutions. The Palestinian Authority's initiative of going to the International Court of Justice also played an important role in the discussions of the Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister, and he explained the importance of joining international United Nations organisations to protect the Palestinian people and their national rights from the atrocity of the Israeli occupation and its systematic and constant violence against the Palestinian people.

At the conclusion of their meeting, Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister Riad al-Malki invited Julie Bishop for a reciprocal visit to Palestine.

### **Turnbull as PM:**

A further development in Australian domestic politics with the potential to impact Australian-Palestinian relations was the internal leadership reshuffle led by Malcolm Turnbull, the former Minister for Communications and a leading member of the Liberal Party. Former Prime Minister Tony Abbott was ousted on 25 September 2015. After an internal leadership ballot within the Liberal Party, Turnbull became Prime Minister and formed a new cabinet. The previous leadership had been performing poorly both politically and economically based on various public opinion polls, and the public lack of support for the Liberal Party under Abbott's leadership put them in an impossible position to win the next election. Malcolm Turnbull, in assembling his new cabinet, relegated a number of traditional leading figures within the Liberal Party who had previously held portfolios.

The General Delegation of Palestine does not expect any substantial policy change regarding the Australian government's strong support of Israel. Although it is premature to reach final conclusions of the position of Australian government towards the Israel-Palestine conflict the coming period may herald broader support of Israeli policies in light of the appointment of Malcolm Turnbull as Prime Minister. Turnbull's electorate has the largest Jewish population in Sydney, so he may be susceptible to pressure from Jewish lobby groups. In addition, Julie Bishop has been retained as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and her known position as a strong supporter of Israel does not make us optimistic of any substantial change towards an evenhanded policy relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, she has

“the General Delegation does not expect any substantial policy change”

previously affirmed her support for a two-state solution and the establishment of a Palestinian state. Having said that, the approach of Mr Turnbull in dealing with regional and global issues seems different and more liberal of his predecessor, Tony Abbott.

## **ALP Palestinian position:**

An important development regarding Australian foreign policy towards Palestine occurred at the federal conference of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), the main opposition party in Australia. The conference which was held in Melbourne, July 2015 recognized that Israeli settlements are illegal under international law, and also considered (although did not adopt) the possibility that an ALP-led government in the future would fully recognize the State of Palestine should it win the upcoming election due in 2016. In addition, the decision taken by the ALP gave full support to the two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within 1967 borders. The importance of this decisions places the Palestinian cause on the internal agenda of the ALP as one of the principal issues in Australian foreign policy. That the motion supporting Palestine passed was also significant, as a counter proposal more strongly supporting the Israeli vision of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was able to be defeated.

The General Delegation of Palestine made great efforts throughout 2015 to ensure that this decision would be taken in favour of recognition of Palestine and Palestinian rights. Several meetings were held with Tanya Plibersek, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as maintaining a special relationship with Bob Carr, former senator and Minister for Foreign Affairs, who strongly supports the Palestinian cause and retains influence within the ALP. This decision of the ALP is considered an important foundation that can be built upon to develop an even more substantial policy based on the principles of the international law, and the General Delegation of Palestine will continue to work closely with the ALP members within federal parliament.

At a state and territory level, progress towards a just solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was also made. At the Queensland, South Australian and New South Wales state Labor conferences, resolutions were passed to immediately recognise the State of Palestine. Several Labor premiers also directed their state members of parliament to spend equal time in Palestine as





any time they spend in Israel as a result of sponsored travel.

### **Australian financial assistance:**

The Australian government's financial assistance to Palestine was cut this year, as a result of overall cuts to Australia's international aid budget. The Australian government determined its financial assistance for Palestine in 2015 amounting to AUD\$42.5 million, which is 40% less than the financial assistance afforded to Palestine in 2014. The Australian aid to Palestine includes its assistance to the agricultural sector in Palestine through Palestinian non-governmental organisations, limited assistance to the Palestinian National Authority budget and through the World Bank. There is also funding devoted to UNRWA. It is expected that Australian aid will be further decreased in the coming years in light of the cessation of the peace process, which is perceived by the Australian government as one of the most important reasons for continuing its support to the Palestinian National Authority.

### **Australia at the UN:**

Internationally, Australia continued its traditional support of Israel in international forums such as the United Nations. Australia was one of eight countries to vote against the Palestinian proposal to allow non-member observer state flags to be raised at the United Nations, along with Israel, the United States and Canada.

Australia has also abstained on two important resolutions with regards to Palestine in the General Assembly of the United Nation this year; the first was the condemnation of the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) as illegal by International law and the second was the implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the OPT. Furthermore, Australian Government continues its negative voting patterns on other resolutions. Australia voting pattern in the UN has raised many questions within the Australian Federal Parliament and the Australian public on Australia's respect of international law.

### **Australian responses to terrorism:**

The threat of terrorism prevails in Australia, and was highlighted in October 2015 when an Australian teenager of Kurdish-Muslim background carried out a fatal shooting at a police station in western Sydney. In addition, the Australian government is concerned by the number of Australians joining the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq and the ongoing potential for youth

# Australia



radicalisation. As a result of this, the Australian government has made increased efforts to host meetings bringing government agencies and Australian Muslim community leaders together. Additionally, there is a renewed focus on fostering integration of Muslim communities within Australia and reducing the level of extremism among Muslim youth in Australia. In this context the Islamic leadership in Australia has demonstrated strong coordination with the Australian government and has issued a number of communiqués that condemn terrorism and call for peaceful coexistence and tolerance within Australian society. The issue of countering extremism in Australia has received bipartisan support, with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull expressing his desire that Australia's rich mosaic of cultures be protected.

### **Other developments:**

2015 witnessed Palestinian participation in the Asian Football Confederation's Asian Cup, which this year was held in Australia. The Palestinian soccer team visiting Australia in January played three games in the cities of Newcastle, Melbourne and Canberra. Assisted by support from the General Delegation of Palestine, these significant matches raised the profile of Palestine in Australia as well as generated significant public goodwill towards the Palestinian team. Despite all three games ending in losses for the Palestinians, the team enjoyed disproportionate media coverage and helped raise support for Palestinian causes more broadly.





## New Zealand

The position of the New Zealand government towards Palestine has been predominantly steady this year, but has been marked by its continuing strong support for the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people.

### **New Zealand on the UN Security Council:**

In January 2015, New Zealand took up a two-year non-permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council. It is anticipated that New Zealand will play an effective role at this level, and it is also important to note the strong support for Palestine that New Zealand has expressed. In light of New Zealand's seat at the Security Council, the General Delegation of Palestine is presently working on a strategic document outlining areas in which Palestinian-New Zealand relations can be strengthened during their term on the Security Council.

In its voting at the United Nations, this year New Zealand continued to demonstrate support for Palestine in voting decisions made in the General Assembly. This included voting in favour of raising the Palestinian flag at United Nations premises.

In October 2015 New Zealand proposed a draft resolution in its capacity as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, which was greeted with a variety of responses. Among the proposals of the resolution was that Israel halt all illegal settlements on Palestinian territory, but also that Palestine would stop bringing cases to the International Criminal Court. The Israelis has rejected the proposal totally.

“New Zealand continued to demonstrate support for Palestine in voting decisions”

While Palestine appreciated the positive intentions behind the proposal, it assessed it to be problematic in a number of ways, expressing these concerns to the Ambassador of New Zealand to the United Nations, Gerard van Bohemen. The resolution did not gain the support of the United States of America and was therefore stopped in its progress, but was indicative of the efforts that New Zealand is making on the Security Council to help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **New Zealand bilateral talks:**

The Palestinian Ambassador to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, Izzat Abdulhadi, visited New Zealand from 28 March to 2 April in order to conduct bilateral talks with the New Zealand government and to participate in an academic seminar hosted by the New Zealand Centre for Global Studies. During this trip, the ambassador met the New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs Murray McCully, where he congratulated New Zealand government on its new non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council. The Minister discussed with the ambassador the intention of the New Zealand government to propose a motion to the Security Council aimed at helping resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Palestinian Ambassador thanked the Minister for his willingness to propose such a resolution, but stressed that any such proposal should be coordinated and consulted with the State of Palestine. In their bilateral discussions, Minister McCully and Ambassador Abdulhadi discussed a number of matters, including recognition of Palestinian sovereignty, negotiation with Israel and the efforts of the Palestinian government to join a number of international agencies and agreements, including the International Court of Justice. On this point the New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed the concerns of the New Zealand government that Palestine joining the ICJ might undermine the Israel-Palestine peace process. Ambassador Abdulhadi reaffirmed that joining the ICJ is part of the current Palestinian strategy towards internationalisation of the conflict and efforts towards Palestinian recognition at a global level.

While in New Zealand, Ambassador Abdulhadi also met with the shadow Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs, David Shearer, as well as Mark Mitchell, Chair of the parliamentary Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Select Committee, and MPs from the Green Party of New Zealand. The Ambassador stressed

# New Zealand



the importance of parliamentary visits to Palestinian territories so that MPs can better understand the plight of the Palestinian people. He also proposed a Palestinian friendship committee of the New Zealand parliament, an idea that was welcomed. Ambassador Abdulhadi praised the support of the New Zealand government in supporting Palestinian rights and efforts towards self-determination.

### **Visit of Riad al-Malki:**

The Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister made a successful two-day visit to New Zealand from 30 April to 2 May 2015 to conduct talks with New Zealand officials, in particular the Minister of Foreign Affairs Murray McCully. These meetings were very positive, with McCully informing al-Malki of the desire of New Zealand to propose a resolution in the Security Council that would end Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. In Auckland, the Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister also met with the shadow Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs, David Shearer, in which Shearer assured the Minister of his support for a two state solution and the establishment of a Palestinian state within 1967 borders. He also criticized the continuation of illegal Israeli settlement activity. Shearer is considered to be a major supporter of Palestinian rights who closely follows the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

During his visit, the Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister was invited by the University of Auckland to give an important speech at a seminar attended by academics, students and solidarity groups, in which he reviewed the new Palestinian multilateral strategy in seeking United Nations support and the importance of international public diplomacy.

The Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister invited McCully for a reciprocal visit, which was carried out in June 2015, when he met with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Rahmi Hamdallah and the Foreign Affairs Minister Riad al-Malki. During this visit, the Palestinian officials present thanked the New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs for the active concern shown by the New Zealand government for resolving the Palestinian issue, in particular New Zealand leadership within the UN Security Council.

### **New Zealand financial assistance:**

New Zealand continued to provide financial assistance to Palestinian people, primarily through supporting UNRWA

# New Zealand



programs. Additionally, New Zealand has contributed NZ\$2.8 million to a project removing mines from areas that can then be used by Palestinians for agricultural purposes.

During his visit to New Zealand for the purpose of bilateral negotiations, Ambassador Abdulhadi met with the General Director of International Development in the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, encouraging the New Zealand government to increase its financial support of the Palestinian people, particularly in the education, agriculture and health sectors. The General Director has assured the Ambassador that New Zealand aid to Palestine would be reviewed.

### **New Zealand Ambassadorial appointment:**

After the diplomatic stalemate with Israel over the appointment of an ambassador to cover both Israel and the Palestinian territories, in February 2015 a resolution was found, with Sir Jim McClay being appointed New Zealand's Representative to the Palestinian Authority. McClay has an illustrious diplomatic and political career, and was previously Permanent Representative to the United Nations, leading the successful campaign for New Zealand's election to a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council. In addition to his appointment as Representative to the Palestinian Authority, McClay is also Special Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Special Envoy for the Prime Minister. While he is based in Wellington, since his appointment he has visited Palestine two times.

“McClay has an illustrious diplomatic and political career”





## The Pacific Region

This year saw numerous fruitful visits by the Palestinian Ambassador to the Pacific region, promoting stronger relationships between Palestine and nations in the Asia-Pacific. While the majority of Pacific political positions relating to Palestinian statehood changed little this year, significant progress has been made towards advancing Palestinian interests in the region.

### **The Pacific at the UN:**

The positions of countries within the Asia-Pacific region in relation to voting on resolutions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at the UN General Assembly remained varied this year. The majority of nations either voted in support of or abstained from resolutions concerning Palestine at the General Assembly, but a number of countries have continued to vote against such motions. Countries to have recently voted against resolutions relating to Palestinian statehood and rights at the United Nations have included the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau and Nauru.

### **Ambassador's Visit to Fiji:**

The Ambassador of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, Izzat Abdulhadi, made a successful visit to Fiji through participation in the Pacific Countries Development Forum. Primarily convened to discuss the challenge of climate change that is disproportionately affecting Pacific nations, the forum was attended by a number of heads of state from Pacific

“significant progress has been made towards advancing Palestinian interests in the region”

# The Pacific Region

countries. The Ambassador conducted meetings with most of the heads of delegations of the participating countries, in which he discussed with them the issue of recognising the State of Palestine. The most productive of these meetings was with the Fijian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Inoke Kubuabola, who expressed the willingness of the Fijian government to recognise the State of Palestine pending necessary consultations. This is considered an important development in Palestinian-Fijian relations. Further discussions that took place at this forum focused on the potential for professional and developmental coordination between Palestine and a number of Pacific countries. Further research into advancing such relations is being conducted by the General Delegation of Palestine.

## **Ambassador's Visit to Timor-Leste:**

2015 also saw Ambassador Abdulhadi of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific make a successful visit to Timor-Leste, one of Australia's close neighbours. The aim of this visit was to promote cooperation between Timor-Leste and Palestine and to discuss strategies towards advancing Palestinian involvement in the Pacific region. The potential platforms that are seen as key for increasing Palestinian engagement in the Pacific region include medicine, education, agriculture and tourism.

“the aim of this visit was to promote cooperation between Timor-Leste and Palestine”







# Objectives and Strategic Pathway

# Goals and Objectives

In 2015, the GDOP embarked upon a vast range of activities designed to fulfil the objectives initially established in 2012. Putting these objectives into action has achieved strengthened support for Palestinian self-determination.

The overall goal for this year was to enhance and strengthen the status and legitimacy of the GDOP as the diplomatic representation of the State of Palestine and the credible partner with all interested stakeholders in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

The strategic objectives to achieve this were as follows:

1. Further enhance and institutionalise bilateral relations with the foreign affairs ministries and policy-making bodies of Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific.
2. Strengthen relationships between the GDOP and the Arab and international diplomatic corps.
3. Further enhance and institutionalise relationships with civil society in Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific.
4. Further enhance and institutionalise relationships with the Palestinian, Arab and Islamic communities in Australia.

Improve the ability of the GDOP to operate efficiently and effectively through the streamlining and institutionalisation of managerial, financial and consular processes.



# Strategies

1. To initiate and engage in heartfelt strategic dialogue with the Coalition Government. Statements from the current Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP, have clarified that the Coalition's foreign policy is unlikely to be sympathetic towards the Palestinian situation. Therefore, a position paper that discusses the main components of Australia's foreign policy and its impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be prepared and future dialogue with the government will be based on it. The GDOP believes that a clear position, agreed upon by the GDOP, Palestinian civil society and Palestinian business societies, must be determined before the GDOP approaches the new government to initiate official dialogue.
2. To create and sustain a more effective relationship with civil society and the New Zealand Government, through robust dialogue and the development of a clear working plan that engages all stakeholders. The GDOP believes that the appointment of an honorary consul will facilitate work and relationships with relevant decision-makers in New Zealand.
3. To work closely with the Pacific island states, with more direct visits and improved bilateral coordination with their representatives in Canberra. The implementation of an active and inclusive regional strategy by Palestinian missions in the Pacific region would substantially improve relations between Palestine and various regional actors. Stronger lines of communication between the GDOP and the U.N. observer missions in both New York and Geneva would also lead to marked improvement in relations with relevant states. The GDOP hopes to participate more directly in discussions already taking place in New York and Geneva.



4. To develop an institutionalised strategy and implement active method to engage with various Palestinian advocacy groups. The GDOP hopes that such strategy will specify a clear, overarching political vision and definite, unanimous political messages that can be impressed upon decision-makers in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. Furthermore, developing an information exchange on Israeli human rights violations and other issues of concern will support these groups in their advocacy.
5. To empower and encourage the Palestinian community to take a stronger role in political life in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. A politically adept Palestinian community would theoretically form strong bonds with decision-making agencies, such as parliaments, ministries of foreign affairs, civil society groups and other institutions. Organising the Palestinian community and working to improve the leadership skills of its members is a high priority for the GDOP. In this regard, the GDOP will particularly focus on youth human resources, which is integral to the community's future. The GDOP aims to assist in establishing an Australian Palestinian Community Council as a framework of representation for the Palestinian community, also to be used as a model for the region. Such a council should facilitate the community's ability to play a more prominent role in the political life of Australia. The council should also provide beneficial social services to members and assist with local level engagement with councils and institutions.
6. Given the considerable influence of the Jewish community in Australian society, maintaining a productive and amiable relationship between this community and the GDOP is extremely important. The GDOP believes that robust and earnest dialogue with the Jewish community will lead to greater common understanding. Such dialogue could potentially influence and moderate the political positions of the Jewish community. Ultimately, a sustainable strategy for engagement could eventually lead to important long term changes of the positions and policies of the Jewish community in regard to the Palestinian question.
7. The GDOP has worked diligently to connect with regional media and has made some progress with print media, resulting in the publication of numerous articles and interviews. The GDOP is pleased with this limited outreach, achieved without a dedicated media department. However, the GDOP believes that a dedicated media strategy would generate a much stronger impact and be far more effective at influencing public opinion within Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. At present, the

**“to empower and encourage the Palestinian community to take a stronger role in political life”**



“to connect directly with the public in a meaningful and influential way”

capacity and strategy includes little more than a contact list for various media representatives in Australia and New Zealand. Undoubtedly, it is essential to involve the media and to keep them, and therefore the public informed and interested. Furthermore, the proper utilisation of social media on platforms like Facebook and Twitter is essential, particularly if the GDOP hopes to connect directly with the public in any meaningful and influential way.

8. To prioritise those events and tasks within the GDOP's program with the most impact, in a bid to manage constraints on the GDOP's financial and human resources. In order to further respond to these constraints, the GDOP has launched a new program to engage volunteers, who are able to offer their valuable expertise in exchange for experience. These volunteers, most of whom are recent university graduates from a variety of fields, have been engaged to cover particular areas of work through a focus on research. The involvement of volunteers - all of whom work under guidance of the GDOP's professional staff- could significantly alleviate the human resources problem facing the GDOP, especially if coupled with effective general management of the GDOP's program, annual plan, and targeted outcomes.



# Activities

## Bilateral Relationship with Australia

The bilateral relationship between Australia and Palestine was enhanced in 2015 through a range of measures and joint cooperation. The highlight in the relationships was undoubtedly the visit of Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad al-Malki.

1. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in the Australia Day function in the presence of then-Prime Minister Tony Abbott, in addition to other Arab and international diplomatic corps and high-ranking Australian officials. The Palestinian Ambassador spoke briefly to the Prime Minister, delivering President Abbas' regards and congratulations on the occasion of the Australian national celebration, also passing on an invitation to the Prime Minister to visit Palestine in the near future.



Prime Minister Tony Abbott speaking at the Australia Day function on January 26.

2. The General Delegation of Palestine pursued, with great concern, the issue of Palestinian immigrants detained in Manus Island, an Australian offshore immigration-processing centre. A number of immigrants in the detention facility have undertaken a hunger strike to protest the living conditions at Manus. The General Delegation of Palestine followed up this issue with the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, with the department responding positively to the efforts of the Delegation. They forwarded a report to confirm the good health condition of the Palestinian immigrants in detention, having ended the hunger strike.

3. The General Delegation of Palestine participated in the Canberra Multicultural Festival on February 14, 2015. The festival is one of the most important multicultural festivals organised in Australia, and attended by more than 300,000 visitors each year. The Delegation has participated annually in this festival with a display including Palestinian arts and crafts. In addition the Delegation seized the opportunity to encourage people to visit Palestine through a number of brochures and leaflets about the many historical and cultural attractions in Palestine. The General Delegation of Palestine also organised a photography exhibition that highlighted the rich diversity of Palestinian life before the establishment of Israel, as well as life during



The popular Palestinian stall at the Canberra Multicultural Festival on February 14

Al-Nakba and the current situation under Israeli occupation and the Palestinian Authority. This aimed to challenge misguided beliefs about Palestinian life prior to the establishment of Israel, as well as life during

Al-Nakba and showed the successful state building efforts of Palestinians under occupation. The exhibition and other displays focusing on Palestine

received a lot of interest and attention from visitors to the festival as well as the Palestinian community in Canberra.

4. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in an important panel at Parliament House on March 16, 2016, as a guest of the Australian Parliamentary Friends of Palestine Committee alongside the

The Ambassador at Parliament House on March 16



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United Nations. The panel addressed the sustainable development and socio-economic issues in the Republic of Fiji. In this context the Ambassador raised a question as to whether Fiji would recognise the State of Palestine. The speakers promised to raise the issue with the Fijian government, with a follow up response to be provided in due course.

5. The Palestinian Ambassador and the Counsellor, Suheir Gedeon, met Mr Grant Morrison and Paul Rocher from the International Development Department of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The meeting was convened at the Delegation premises on March 20, 2015. This meeting came from the request of DFAT to update the Delegation as to the latest developments regarding cooperation between Palestine and Australia. The meeting was also timely as Mr Rocher will be the new Australian aid representative to Palestine, succeeding Mr Joel Thorpe. Mr Morrison briefed the attendees on the Australian aid for Palestine over the coming years. This aid focussed on needs within the agricultural sector, and was based on meetings with the Palestinian Agriculture Minister and a number of Palestinian non-governmental organisations. Mr Morrison also discussed continuing Australian financial support for Palestinian refugees through UNRWA, which was awaiting finalisation based on the annual budget. He also stressed that postgraduate scholarships offered to Palestinian students will be continued. This program has been highly successful, with 39 scholarships offered since 2011, with a further 11 applications under current consideration.

6. The Ambassador attended a business lunch meeting convened between the Arab Council of Ambassadors and the Council for Australia-Arab Relations (CAAR) on March 24, 2015 in Canberra. The Council for Australia-Arab Relations was established by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with its main objective being to develop the relationship between Australia and the Arab world through supporting worthwhile projects. The Palestinian ambassador participated in the meeting and made multiple proposals highlighting the importance of building close partnerships with the Council of Arab Ambassadors, particularly stressing the importance of transparency in the work of the council and the mutual benefits of implementing programs together.

7. The General Delegation of Palestine coordinated an intensive campaign to highlight the issue of Israel illegally withholding Palestinian taxes. A letter was written to the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, outlining the issue. In her response she confirmed her dissatisfaction with the measures taken by Israel including withholding of Palestinian taxes. Furthermore, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs reiterated Australia's ongoing financial aid and humanitarian assistance to Palestine. In light of this positive response the General Delegation of Palestine issued a

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad al-Malki meeting with Tanya Pliibersek and Julie Bishop during his visit to Australia

communiqué that was distributed to a number of official and unofficial

institutions.

8. The Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad al-Malki visited Australia at the end of April, followed by New Zealand at the beginning of May. This visit is considered a major breakthrough towards fostering bilateral relationships with Australia and New Zealand and Palestine. In this regard, the General Delegation of Palestine made all necessary preparations in terms of drafting meeting agendas and talking points to be discussed. Furthermore,





the Delegation made all required preparations to convene the important meetings with the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Julie Bishop and the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms Tanya Plibersek, as well as interviews with a number of media outlets. Mr al-Malki also had the opportunity to meet with prominent leaders of the Palestinian community at business lunch also attended by the head of the Australian Parliamentary Friends of Palestine Committee, Mrs Vamvakinou and Mr Greg Laundry. The visit of the Palestinian Foreign Minister was considered successful and generated important outputs in relation to fostering the relationship between Australia and Palestine. The key highlights are as follows:

- the visit was a breakthrough in the strategic relationship between Australia and Palestine and an important step forwards to fostering the relationship between the two countries
- both Foreign Ministers got to know each other, with a firm commitment towards meeting again in the future
- the visit gave the chance for the Palestinian Delegation to brief the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs on the new Palestinian approach to international diplomacy
- a number of Australian media outlets conducted interviews with the Palestinian Foreign Minister, which covered his trip to Australia and his work in Palestine
- the Palestinian Foreign Minister had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Palestinian community in Australia and listen to their views regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

9. The Counsellor at the General Delegation of Palestine, Mrs Suheir Gedeon, has contacted the the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs office, relating to development of the two proposals regarding Palestine that were to be discussed during the Australian Labor Party's national conference in July. Mrs Gedeon provided the office of the shadow minister, based on their request, the necessary information regarding the current French and New Zealand peace proposals in front of the Security Council, and furthermore proposed that consultation should take place with the Delegation to assist in the drafting of proposals regarding Palestine for consideration at the ALP conference. This matter had also been raised by the Palestinian Foreign Minister during his meeting with the Shadow Minister Ms Tanya Plibersek in Sydney while visiting Australia.

10. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a number of meetings convened alongside Palestinian officials with the

First Assistant Secretary of the Middle East Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Marc Innes-Brown, during his visit to Palestine on June 17, 2015. The visit of Mr Innes-Brown is considered important for discussing Australian financial aid to Palestine and the future of the Palestinian-Australian relationship. Further discussion focussed on the importance of aid to the peace process and Palestinian institution building. Mr Innes-Brown also met at a business luncheon with Ambassador Rawan Abu Yosef, Deputy Foreign Minister for International Organisations, again accompanied by the Palestinian Ambassador to Australia. Ms Abu Yosef gave a detailed overview of Palestinian multilateral diplomatic efforts to further the peace process. In addition Mr Innes-Brown conducted several visits to projects implemented by Palestinian NGOs that are financed by the Australian government, also visiting a number of refugee camps in Ramallah and Gaza to meet with UNRWA representatives.

11. During his trip to Palestine, the Palestinian Ambassador met with Mr Tom Wilson, Australian Representative to Palestine, where both parties briefed each other on the activities of the General



The Palestinian Ambassador meeting with officials from the Middle East Division while in Palestine



The Palestinian Ambassador at the ACT Chief Minister's Iftar function on July 9

Delegation of Palestine and the Australian representative office in Ramallah as well as the political issues and aid program concerning Palestine

12. The Palestinian Ambassador conducted various meetings with high-ranking officials at the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlighting the progress of work made by the General Delegation of Palestine.

13. The Palestinian Ambassador was invited and attended the Ramadan Iftar function convened by the ACT Chief Minister alongside a number of international diplomatic corps on July

9, 2015. The Chief Minister gave an important speech outlining the themes of Ramadan, stressing the tolerance and cohesion present in Australia as a multicultural society.

14. Within the framework of support submitted by the General Delegation of Palestine regarding the decision made by the Australian Labor Party conference convened in July 25, 2015, the General Delegation of Palestine provided conference attendees with details of the Palestinian government's position relating to final status issues and illegal Israeli settlement. The Delegation has been in constant contact with the office of the Shadow Minister, Ms Tanya Plibersek, regarding the issue, and also made contact with former-Senator Bob Carr to assist the passage of pro-Palestinian proposals at the conference. The Delegation has welcomed the decision made by the ALP and considers it a step forward in the right direction that can be built on in the future.

15. The Palestinian Ambassador conducted a lecture relating to the Palestinian national struggle at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for a number of Arabic-speaking Australian diplomats on August 4, 2015. During this lecture the Palestinian Ambassador discussed the history of civil society in Palestine, starting with the British mandate and ending with the Oslo Accords.

16. Within the framework of conducting meetings with various federal parliamentary members, the Palestinian Ambassador conducted a meeting on September 14, 2015 with MP Mrs Maria Vamvakinou, the co-chair of the Australian Parliamentary Friends of Palestine Committee. The Palestinian Ambassador discussed with her the implications of the Liberal Party leadership ballot, and the impact of this on Australian foreign policy, especially regarding the Palestinian issue. Furthermore the ambassador discussed with Mrs Vamvakinou the arrangements for celebrating Palestinian Independence Day in Melbourne, as well as other developments in the Arab world. He also expressed his gratitude and the appreciation of the Palestinian government as to the stand on Palestine taken recently by the Australian Labor Party.

17. The Ambassador participated in an important panel convened on 15 September 2015 at the federal parliament, which focused on the Millennium Development Goals and the progress Australia has made towards them. The main speakers on the panel were representatives of the United Nations, as well as parliamentarians and social and civil society figures from Australia. All speakers stressed the importance of the New Millennium Goals for developing countries. The Ambassador was joined at the panel by other members of the international diplomatic corps.

18. The Palestinian Ambassador met on September 15, 2015 at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with Mr Greg

The Palestinian Ambassador at federal parliament on 15 September



Ralph, Assistant Secretary for the Middle East, and Mr Luke Wild, the director of the development division at DFAT. Both parties discussed the developmental framework of Australian aid to Palestine. The Ambassador stressed the importance of continuing support for the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority in order to continue rendering services to the people and building Palestinian state institutions.

19. The Palestinian Ambassador met with the federal Member of Parliament Mr Nick Champion, as part of his efforts to meet with federal members of parliament, on 16 September 2015. They discussed the impact of Australian foreign policy on the international community, including Palestine. Furthermore the Ambassador thanked Mr Champion in supporting Palestinian rights, and briefed him on the latest developments in the Arab world.

20. The General Delegation of Palestine sent a letter on August 3, 2015 to the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Julie Bishop, and the New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs Murray McCully, regarding the Palestinian Duma village arson attack conducted by Israeli settlers where three family members were burnt to death, requesting that both countries take a firm stand in condemning this attack. In her response, Ms Bishop confirmed her condemnation for this terrorist act and requested that both parties exercise self restraint, reiterating her position in support of the two state solution based on bilateral negotiations between the two parties.

21. The program of the Palestinian Ambassador meeting federal Members of Parliament continued, with the Ambassador meeting on November 11, 2015, with members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade at Parliament House. He briefed them on the latest political developments, as well as the present Palestinian strategy of seeking support from the United Nations and its various institutions to help Palestinian nation-building efforts.



The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

22. The Palestinian Ambassador convened a meeting on 16 November 2015, attended by Counsellor Suheir Gedeon along with the new director of the Middle East Division with responsibility for Palestine and Israel, Mr Luke Davis. They discussed the present situation in Palestine and the root causes of the current violence. Furthermore both parties discussed the stalling of the peace process and the obstacles and constraints to its renewal, in particular the continuation of Israeli settlement activities. They also discussed the bilateral relationship between Australia and Palestine and how it can be further developed. Mr Davis has in-depth knowledge of the region, having served at the Australian Embassy in Tel Aviv for four years.

23. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a Christmas function organised by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms Julie Bishop, alongside the Arab and international diplomatic corps and a number of officials, public figures and parliamentarians. During the function Ms Bishop gave a speech highlighting the key pillars of Australian foreign policy. The Minister for Trade Mr Andrew Robb also gave a speech discussing the achievements made in his ministry during 2015. The Palestinian Ambassador congratulated Ms Bishop during the ceremony and conveyed to her his sincere Christmas greetings.

24. A business lunch was convened at the Australian Parliament on December 3, 2015, with the head of the Australian Parliamentary Friends of Palestine Committee Mrs Maria Vamvakinou, to discuss the present situation in Palestine. The Ambassador also discussed the work of the General Delegation of Palestine and its plans for 2016. At the conclusion of the lunch the two agreed to

continue developing consultation between the committee and the Delegation.

25. The Palestinian Ambassador met with the new head of the Australian representative office in Palestine, Mrs Marcia Pius, on 7 December 2015 at the premises of the General Delegation of Palestine. He congratulated her on her new position as the head of the Australian representative office in Ramallah and wished her all diplomatic success. He further discussed with her the current political situation and briefed her on Australian-Palestinian relations. Both parties agreed to continue consulting one another and for the regular exchange of views.



The Palestinian Ambassador with New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs Murray McCully

### **Bilateral Relationship with New Zealand**

*2015 witnessed close cooperation and consultation between Palestine and New Zealand, leading to a more advanced relationship between the two countries. This is especially important in light of New Zealand's membership of the Security Council.*

26. The Palestinian Ambassador made a visit to New Zealand from 28 March to 2 April 2015 to conduct bilateral negotiations with the New Zealand government and to participate in a forum about the United Nations and New Zealand's role on the Security Council. This forum was at the invitation of the New Zealand Centre for Global Studies. Among the meetings conducted during this visit was one with the New

Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Murray McCully, who the ambassador congratulated on New Zealand winning a non-permanent membership of the Security Council with an overwhelming majority. They discussed the willingness of New Zealand to propose motions relating to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and the intricacies of the situation. The Ambassador expressed his views on a number of matters concerning this situation, and engaged in an in-depth discussion with Mr McCully as to the nature of any potential resolution to be proposed to the Security Council by New Zealand. During his trip to New Zealand the Ambassador also met the Shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr David Shearer. Mr Shearer is considered a supporter of the Palestinian cause, and also has great understanding of the situation having worked with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Jerusalem for four years. The Ambassador discussed with him the recent developments in the conflict, including the latest Israeli elections. They discussed together the potential

The Ambassador with Shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs David Shearer

of establishing a parliamentary friendship group for Palestine, and also the possibility of the New Zealand parliament voting to recognise the State of Palestine. During his visit to New Zealand, the Ambassador further met with a number of parliamentarians, including Mr Mark Mitchell, the Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, as well as members of parliament from the Green Party. The Ambassador stressed the importance of MPs conducting visits to Palestine, and reiterated his request for a parliamentary friendship committee. In addition, the ambassador conducted talks with members of the Middle



East Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to discuss New Zealand's strategy on the United Nations Security Council as a non permanent member, emphasising the importance of prior consultation and cooperation to resolve conflicts and foster international peace and security. Both parties agreed on the success of these talks and negotiations between New Zealand and Palestine, and agreed to continue them. Also speaking to members of the international aid portfolio, the Ambassador discussed the continuing need for foreign aid to Palestine and institutions aiding Palestine including UNRWA, UNDP and NGOs. The director of this section promised to review New Zealand's international aid to the region. While in Auckland, the Ambassador also met with the Palestine Solidarity Network, giving an overview of the current situation in Palestine as well as stressing the importance of solidarity groups in building support for Palestinian rights through engaging with government and members of parliament. Finally, the Ambassador met with the Arab ambassadors in New Zealand, which included

Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, in a meeting which focussed on the importance of coordination between the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Canberra and the Arab ambassadors in Wellington. The Arab ambassadors expressed their willingness to help represent the Palestinian cause in Wellington.

27. The Palestinian Foreign Minister, Mr Riad al-Malki, conducted a visit accompanied by Mazin Shamiye, the head of the Africa, Asia and Australia Department in the Palestinian Foreign Ministry, as well as the Palestinian Ambassador, to meet with New Zealand officials and the New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Murray McCully. This visit to New Zealand took place from May 1 to May 2. The meetings were very positive and encouraging, with Mr McCully informing his counterpart of New Zealand's plan to propose a motion in the Security Council to end Israeli occupation. Mr al-Malki also met with the Shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr David Shearer, who expressed his support for a two state solution and the establishment of a Palestinian state within 1967 borders. While in New Zealand, Mr al-Malki also conducted a seminar at Auckland University, attended by academics, students and solidarity groups. The Minister elaborated on new Palestinian foreign policy strategy utilising the United Nations as a means of furthering multilateral negotiations.

Riad al-Malki lecturing at Auckland University in New Zealand



28. The Palestinian Ambassador attended a reception held at the New Zealand Embassy in honour of Brook Barrington, Secretary of New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which was attended by members of the international diplomatic corps.



Attendees at a lunch hosted by the New Zealand Embassy in honour of Stuart Holme

29. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a lunch organised by the New Zealand Embassy in honour of an official from the Middle East Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr Stuart Holme, attended by all Arab Ambassadors in Canberra. A genuine discussion took place relating to the Arab-Israeli

conflict, the conflict in Yemen and the war on terrorism in Iraq and Syria. The Ambassador raised the issue of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which was discussed especially in the context of New Zealand's Security Council membership.

30. The New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs made a return visit to Ramallah on June 4, 2015, during which he met with President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, and Foreign Minister Riad al-Malki. He was accompanied by the Palestinian Ambassador to Australia and New Zealand. He was briefed about the present political situation and Palestinian initiatives to end Israeli occupation. The Palestinian officials thanked Mr McCully for his concern regarding the Palestinian issue and his willingness to propose a resolution to the Security Council. The General Delegation of Palestine followed up the visit of Mr Murray McCully, New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Palestine, establishing that the visit was concluded successfully whereby he confirmed New Zealand's position of full support for the Palestinian cause and the rights of the Palestinian people.

31. A representative of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave a lecture on the role of New Zealand in the Security Council on July 14, 2015 at the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra. He discussed New Zealand's willingness to help bring about a resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, touching on the significance of the outcome of the visit of New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs Murray McCully made to Palestine in June.

32. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in an important seminar on 17 September 2015 at the New Zealand Embassy in Canberra. During this seminar Mr Colin James, a well-known journalist and expert in New Zealand economic issues, conducted a presentation alongside a journalist, where he discussed internal developments in New Zealand and New Zealand foreign policy, focussing on the economy.

### **Bilateral Relations with the Pacific**

*2015 was a year of great development for the Palestinian-Pacific relationship, aided significantly by two visits to the region by the Palestinian Ambassador. These visits furthered efforts towards greater recognition of the State of Palestine and developmental cooperation.*

33. The General Delegation of Palestine closely followed the hurricane that hit Vanuatu on 16 March 2016. Palestine enjoys full diplomatic relations with Vanuatu, and this hurricane resulted in many casualties and destruction of infrastructure. The Palestinian Foreign Minister sent his condolences to his Vanuatuan counterpart, expressing his sorrow regarding the casualties. The Palestinian Ambassador also sent a letter of condolence to his counterpart in Canberra.

34. The Palestinian Ambassador attended the 34d

Pacific Islands Development Forum Leaders' Forum in Fiji from 1 September to 6 September 2015, at the directive of the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The theme of the Forum was "Building Climate Resilient Green Blue Economies," and focussed on coordination and cohesion in preparation for the upcoming UN Climate Forum in Paris. Climate change is of special concern to Pacific nations, who face desolation as a result of rising sea levels. In addition to Pacific participants, the Forum was attended by a number of other observer states, including China,

The Pacific Islands Development Forum Leaders' Summit



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The Ambassador with Fijian President Epeli Nailatikau

Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, Pakistan, Singapore, Kazakhstan, Belgium, Holland, France, Italy, Georgia, Serbia and Russia. The only Arab representatives there were an official from the United Arab Emirates embassy in Canberra and a developmental intergovernmental agency from Kuwait. The main purpose of the General Delegation of Palestine's participation was to canvas the greatest number of Pacific representatives possible, in order to encourage them to recognise the State of Palestine. The Ambassador was warmly welcomed to the Forum, and conducted meetings with several national leaders. He met with the Prime Minister of Fiji, Mr Frank Bainimarama, discussing the issue of Palestinian recognition, which the Prime Minister promised to consider seriously. The Ambassador also met briefly with the President of Fiji Mr Epeli Nailatikau, again discussing Fijian recognition of the State of Palestine. This was followed by an in-depth meeting with the Fijian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Dnoko Kubuabola, discussing bilateral relations between their two countries. The Ambassador suggested that fostering the

relationship between the two countries would lend itself to future technical cooperation in a range of sectors as well as enhanced relations with all Arab League nations. The Palestinian Ambassador met with the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands, Mr Manasseh Sogavare, during which the Ambassador thanked the Prime Minister for the recent affirmative vote of the Solomon Islands in favour of Palestine at the United Nations. The Prime Minister expressed his desire to fully recognise the State of Palestine, and committed to discussing the matter directly with the relevant political actors. The Palestinian Ambassador expressed his willingness to visit the Solomon Islands in order to help influence politicians in favour of full recognition of the State of Palestine. During the visit the Ambassador also met with the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, Mr Enele Sopoaga, where they discussed furthering bilateral relations. Thanking the Prime Minister for Tuvalu's affirmative voting in favour of Palestine, the Ambassador pressed the case of full recognition of the State of Palestine. The Palestinian Ambassador further met with the Foreign Minister of the Marshall Islands, Mr Tony DeBrum, and discussed with him the position of the Marshall Islands in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, especially their negative voting patterns at the United Nations. The Foreign Minister highlighted the geopolitics of the Marshall Islands, especially its close relationship with the United States. The Ambassador also met with the Prime Minister of Tonga, Mr Samuela Akilisi Pohiva, during which both parties discussed bilateral relations and the desire of Palestine to establish full diplomatic relations with Tonga. Further meetings the Ambassador participated in included with the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, the special envoy of the UN Secretariat Mary Robinson, the Minister of Public Works in Papua New Guinea Mr Ben Micah. Moreover the Ambassador met with a number of private sector and civil society organisations, focussing on mutual cooperation between these organisations and Palestine in the foreseeable future.

35. The Palestinian Ambassador made a special formal visit to Timor-Leste from 5 to 10 October 2015. During a meeting with the head of

the Timor-Leste parliament, the two parties agreed that the Palestinian Ambassador would in the near future give a speech to the parliament. They also decided to form a Parliamentary Friendship Committee to further express support for Palestinian rights. The Ambassador also met with the Secretary of State for ASEAN Affairs, Mr Roberto Soares, who



The Ambassador with Roberto Soares, Secretary of State of ASEAN Affairs



The Ambassador meeting with the Palestinian soccer team in Timor-Leste

expressed his support of Palestinian rights and desire to develop an effective developmental cooperation program to make use of Palestinian expertise in the health and agriculture sectors. He agreed that the government of Timor-Leste would play a role in influencing other Pacific nations to recognise the State of Palestine. Further meetings included one with the Acting Deputy Health Minister, Dr Ana Isabel Soares, who explained the dire need for doctors and medical specialists in Timor-Leste. The Ambassador also met with representatives of the Ministry of Education, who discussed the challenges with

providing universal primary education in the country. A comparison was made between the strategies of Palestine and Timor-Leste because of the similar

challenges that face the two countries. Additional meetings were held with the dean of the international diplomatic corps (from Cuba), the New Zealand Ambassador, the President of the National University and representatives from civil society organisations. At all levels there was an emphasis on closer cooperation between Palestine and Timor-Leste, including cultural exchanges. A highlight of the trip to Timor-Leste was meeting with the Palestinian soccer team, who were playing a preliminary match against Timor-Leste in the lead-up to the 2018 Asia Cup.

### Relationship with Advocacy Groups and Civil Society Organisations

36. The General Delegation of Palestine played a major role in welcoming the Palestinian soccer team to Australia to participate in the 2015 Asia Cup. This was a hugely significant event both for the team and for Palestine as a whole, being the first time the Palestinian team had participated in this tournament. Welcoming the Palestinian team to Australia on December 31, 2014 was the Ambassador along with many

Palestinian community members. The Delegation provided ongoing administrative and logistical support to the team prior to and throughout their time in Australia. The Delegation also acted as the liaison between the team and the organising committee of the Asia Cup. Despite the limited resources of the Delegation, it was able to arrange and manage the trip with great success. The Ambassador attended a number of events associated with the tournament, including meetings, official functions and all of the soccer matches. The Delegation also organised a reception for the team at the Delegation premises on 17 January 2015, a farewell dinner in Canberra on 20 January 2015, and also was active in coordinating a number of activities celebrating the team organised by the Palestinian community in Australia. At the farewell dinner, the Ambassador praised the Palestinian team for their wonderful participation, and thanked the entire Palestinian community for their efforts in welcoming the team and raising morale. Many Palestinians reflected on being immensely proud at hearing the Palestinian national anthem played prior to matches. In association with the Palestinian



Welcoming the Palestinian soccer team at Sydney airport on December 31, 2014.





A lunch honouring Manal Zureik on 10 March

participation in the Asia Cup, two significant seminars were coordinated featuring Mr Hashim Shawa, the General Manager of the Bank of Palestine. These took place in both Sydney and Melbourne, and focussed on the great investment possibilities in Palestine and the current economic and social situation in the country. These were organised in association with the Australia Arab Business Council and the Australian Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

37. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a business lunch honouring Mrs Manal Zureik, who is the assistant of Mr Bashar Masri, a renowned Palestinian

businessman in Ramallah. This event, on March 10, 2015, was at the invitation of Ms Cynthia Dearin, head of the Australian Businesswomen's Forum. The Ambassador also participated in a business lunch with Mrs Zureik and other prominent businesspeople at the invitation of Mr Harry Wallis, a businessman in Australia. Mrs Zureik made an overview of the political and economic activities taking place in Palestine, and gave a comprehensive overview of the Rawabi City project and the challenges facing it.

38. The Palestinian Ambassador was invited by Archbishop Philip Freier, Primate of the Anglican Church in Australia, to a business lunch on 17 March 2015. The main course of discussion was the Palestinian plight and role of Australian churches in supporting the rights of Palestinians. The archbishop highlighted the important support and aid given by the Anglican church to Palestinian people through its offices in Jerusalem and Melbourne, in particular the services rendered by the Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza and the Anglican Hospital in Nablus.

Furthermore, the Ambassador invited the Archbishop to visit Palestine, so that they could understand for themselves the situation of the Palestinian people. The Archbishop expressed his support for Palestinian self-determination, and promised to continue providing support to Palestinians.

39. Within the framework of cooperation between the General Delegation of Palestine and the Australian National University, the Palestinian Ambassador participated, on 17 March 2015, in the annual dinner celebrating the internship program organised by the university in cooperation with different organisations and bodies. The Delegation hosts a number of students to work as interns every year, who support research work and other daily activities.

40. The Palestinian Ambassador met on 24 March 2015 with the Australian Palestinian Advocacy Network (APAN), focussing on the present political situation and efforts to promote recognition of the State of Palestine. The Ambassador explained to APAN the present strategy of the Palestinian leadership and highlighted the importance of Palestine joining international bodies, in particular the International Criminal Court.

41. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a panel at the Australian parliament on March 24, 2015, under the title "A Different Vision to the Arab-Israeli Conflict," led by the Israeli professor Daniel Bar Tel. He voiced his support for the two state solution under 1967 borders, lamenting the

The Ambassador meeting with Archbishop Philip Freier on 17 March



Netanyahu government's failure to promote a peaceful solution. The lecture was attended by several parliamentarians in addition to members of the Australian Parliamentary Friends of Palestine Committee as well as Arab ambassadors.

42. The Palestinian Ambassador attended a dinner organised by the United Nations Association in Australia at the Press Club in Canberra, along with members of the Arab and international diplomatic corps. During the dinner the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms Julie Bishop gave the keynote speech, addressing Australia's membership of the Security Council in 2013 and 2014. She highlighted Australia's contributions to the Security Council, in particular pertaining to counter-terrorism Syria and Iraq.

43. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in an important seminar organised by the Australia Strategic Policy Institute on 23 April 2015 regarding Australian defence policy and evaluating the performance of the Australian military, held in Canberra. The seminar tackled a report regarding the Australian military and policies and procedures needed to enhance its performance as an organisation.

The Ambassador at the Lebanese Islamic Society in Sydney



attended by a number of Australian officials, business people and Arab diplomats. A number of recommendations came out of this Forum regarding fostering trade between Australia and the Arab World.

46. The Palestinian Ambassador and the Saudi Arabian Ambassador visited together the Lebanese Islamic Society in

Sydney, where they were both welcomed by the head of the organisation. The ambassadors were hosted for lunch with members of the Islamic community in Sydney, who expressed their welcome to the two ambassadors while they explained the activities the organisation participates in. Special attention was paid to the challenges faced by the Islamic community in light of extremist terrorism.

47. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a religious service commemorating the Armenian genocide, hosted by the Armenian Church in Sydney on 23 May 2015. During a



The Ambassador with the General Director of APHEDA

44. The Palestinian Ambassador met with the

General Director of APHEDA – Union Aid Abroad on 11 May 2015. The General Director made an overview of the organisation's activities in the West Bank and Gaza supporting the Palestinian people. Both parties discussed the decrease in Australian government aid to Palestine, and the impact of this on the country. They agreed to ongoing further cooperation.

45. On 21 and 22 May the Palestinian Ambassador participated in the Australian Arab Trade Forum, convened in Sydney organised by the Women in Business Forum lead by Ms Cynthia Darien,

The Ambassador at the Armenian Church in Sydney on May 23



reception afterwards, the Ambassador met with the Armenian patriarch, who thanked him for attending and gifted him a book documenting the Armenian tragedy. The patriarch also reflected on the hospitality of Palestine in welcoming Armenian refugees during the First World War.

48. The Palestinian Ambassador met with Dr Michelle Burgis-Kasthala, a Research Fellow at the Australian National University, who is working on research regarding Palestine joining the International Criminal Court. They discussed this matter in depth on 26 May 2015 at the Delegation premises.

49. Counsellor Suheir Gedeon participated in an annual lunch organised by the Australian Arab Business Council in cooperation with the Council of Arab Ambassadors on 15 June 2015. The meeting was attended by government officials and members of parliament, as well as other Arab ambassadors. A serious discussion took place regarding fostering economic and business cooperation between Australia and the Arab world. Counsellor Gedeon stressed that any developmental strategy for the Arab world should include Palestine as a rising state with an emerging economy.

50. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in an Iftar dinner organised by the Blue Star Turkish Organisation in Canberra on 24 June 2015, attended by a large number of Australian officials, religious figures and members of the international diplomatic corps. The speakers focussed on the importance of tolerance and dialogue between all religions.

51. The Palestinian Ambassador was a guest of the Strategic Defence Studies Institute in Canberra on July 2, 2015, to conduct a lecture regarding the new strategy for the State of Palestine. The centre is of great importance, hosting a number of high-ranking officers of the Australian Defence Force. The Palestinian Ambassador gave a presentation, which included detailed information regarding the current Palestinian strategy of multilateralism, especially in regard to pursuing an end to Israeli occupation through multilateral mechanisms.

52. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a panel organised by ANU Students for Justice and Peace in Palestine at the ANU on 14 July 2015 alongside former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Bob Carr. Mr Carr discussed Israeli infringements of human rights and the ongoing settlement building, also discussing the negative influence of the Jewish lobby on Australian foreign policy regarding the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The seminar was attended by students and academics as well as members of the Arab and international diplomatic corps.

53. In response to an invitation from the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Australian National University, Professor Lawrence Davison gave a lecture regarding Palestine pursuing legal action against Israel at the International Criminal Court. The Palestinian Ambassador attended this lecture on July 23, 2015, which illuminated the importance of the ICC to the rights of the Palestinian people.

54. On 31 July 2015 the Ambassador met with the head of the Student Exchange Program of the Australian National University at the Delegation premises. They discussed the willingness of the ANU to host students from Palestine and to promote cultural and educational exchanges between Palestinian and Australian universities. The Ambassador promised to provide facilitation support to guarantee the success of the program.

The Ambassador with former Senator Bob Carr on 14 July



55. An important meeting was convened at Dar al-Ifta in Sydney on 3 August 2015, to follow up the decisions made at the Australian Labor Party national conference regarding the Palestinian cause. Former senator Bob Carr participated in the meeting in addition to a number of Labor Party parliamentarians, the Grand Mufti of Australia Ibrahim Abu Mohamed, the head of the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network and a number of Palestinian community representatives. The main purpose of the meeting was to develop an effective strategy to make use of the positive decision. The Palestinian Ambassador was not able to attend the meeting due to health issues.



The Ambassador at the Australian National University on 25 August

56. The Palestinian Ambassador met with the General Director for Action Aid on 11 August 2015. Action Aid is an Australian NGO that works in Palestine providing important services for Palestinian people. They discussed Australian aid to Palestine and the developmental strategy of the Australian government. They also talked about the current political situation in Palestine and the implications for projects run by Palestinian civil society organisations.

57. The International Relations Society at the Australian National University invited the Ambassador and staff of the General Delegation of Palestine to a cultural night on 25 August 2015. The Palestinian Ambassador gave a speech at this event discussing the present political situation in the region and the Palestinian foreign policy strategy. The Ambassador requested that students participating in the cultural night engage with showing solidarity to Palestine as a just cause. The Jordanian Ambassador Ms Rima Alaadeen also participated in the event, giving a speech on tourism in Jordan.

58. The Palestinian Ambassador met with former bishop George Browning, president of the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network on August 27, 2015. They discussed his visit to Palestine and his vision for the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network. In addition, both parties discussed the possibility for further coordination given their joint vision for Palestinian recognition and self determination.



The annual gala dinner of The Telegraph Arabic newspaper on 28 August

59. The Counsellor Suheir Gedeon represented the General Delegation of Palestine at the opening of the Arab Film Festival on 28 August 2015 in Canberra. This opening was attended by many members of the international diplomatic corps, Australian officials and fans of Arab cinema.

60. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in the annual gala dinner organised by the Arabic newspaper 'The Telegraph' in Melbourne on 28 August 2015. The participants of this gala dinner were members of the international diplomatic corps, members of parliament and members of the Arab and Islamic community in Australia.

61. The Palestinian Ambassador met with Mr Ian Dudgeon on September 30, 2015, representing the Australian Institute of International Affairs. Mr Dudgeon briefed the Ambassador regarding his forthcoming visit to Iran. The Ambassador gave an overview of his vision of the role of Iran in the

region, and the future of its relationship with the Arab region, especially Palestine.

62. The Counsellor Suheir Gedeon met with Mrs Michelle Burgis-Kasthala from the Australian National University at the Delegation premises on 2 September 2015. They discussed Mrs Burgis-Kasthala's upcoming visit to Palestine and her research topic relating to Palestine and the International Criminal Court.

63. The Palestinian Ambassador conducted a lecture at Parliament House in Canberra on 7 September 2015 at the invitation of the Australian Union of Jewish Students. The Ambassador focused on the Palestinian plan to build democratic institutions, pointing to the impediments inflicted by Israeli occupation. The audience had many

questions, which the Ambassador readily responded to.

64. In preparation for International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, a meeting was convened at the Delegation premises on 9 September 2015 with representatives of the UN Information Centre in Canberra. The conveners agreed on hosting a reception to mark the occasion in addition to screening a Palestinian film.

The Ambassador speaking to the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network on 25 October



65. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a conference hosted by the Australian Institute for International Affairs relating to Australian foreign and security policy on 19 October 2015. The Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Julie Bishop, gave an important speech discussing Australian strategies for combating terrorism. In addition, the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs Ms Tanya Plibersek gave a speech highlighting the position of the Australian Labor Party on foreign policy. There was not great discussion of Palestine, except for a brief mention by former Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Gareth Evans, who described it as one of Australia's major foreign policy challenges.

66. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a fundraising dinner organised by the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) conducted in Melbourne on October 25, 2015. The main participants of

this dinner were public figures, politicians and representatives of civil society organisations. The Palestinian Ambassador made a speech pointing to the importance of the work of Palestinian solidarity groups in educating the public about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

67. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a discussion regarding the research work of Mr Daniel Price, a research intern from the Australian National University. The discussion related to Palestinian foreign policy in relation to Australia.



The Ambassador and Gareth Evans at the Australian Institute for Foreign Affairs

Arab Ambassadors hosted by the Australian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce



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68. In accordance with the General Delegation of Palestine's cooperation with solidarity organisations, the Ambassador met with Mr Ian Gordon, a member of the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network on 10 November 2015 at the Delegation premises. They discussed strategies to end Israeli occupation and seek United Nations intervention.

69. At the invitation of the Grand Mufti of Australia, Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohamed, the Palestinian Ambassador attended a meeting with a number of other Arab ambassadors in Sydney on November 12, 2015. The focus of the meeting was tensions between Muslim communities in Australia and the government, and strategies and efforts to counteract radicalisation and promote dialogue. The Prime Minister's Adviser for Multicultural Affairs Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wellse also attended this meeting.

70. An invitation from the Australian Lebanese Chamber of Commerce saw the Palestinian Ambassador participate in a business lunch in honour of Arab ambassadors on 17 November 2015 in Canberra. The Palestinian Ambassador praised the performance of the organisation and encouraged its further work. The chamber focuses on fostering further trade relations between Australia and the Arab world.

71. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in an annual Gala dinner hosted by the Australian Institute for International Affairs held at Old Parliament House in Canberra on November 18, 2015. The dinner was attended by officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Defence and members of the international diplomatic corps. A speech was made by the Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, Mr Dennis Richardson, highlighting Australia's role in peacekeeping and international security.

72. The Palestinian Ambassador met with Mrs Lama Hammouri in Canberra on 19 November 2015. Mrs Hammouri is a member of the executive committee of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils. The two parties discussed the tension in the relationship between some Muslim communities and the Australian government. They discussed the importance of developing constructive dialogue between both parties.

73. The Palestinian Ambassador and Counsellor, Suheir Gedeon participated in a reception hosted by Care Australia on November 19, 2015, marking seventy years since its establishment. The reception allowed members of the General Delegation of Palestine to meet with members of the executive committee of Care Australia and to discuss the Australian government programs in Palestine and the importance of Australian NGOs in this respect.

74. The General Delegation of Palestine hosted the Palestinian film director Leila Sansour who came to Australia to screen her film about life in Bethlehem. Her visit to Australia was at the invitation of the organising committee of the Palestinian Film Festival. During her visit to Canberra on 25 November 2015, the Delegation was responsible for organising her program, and coordinated a number of visits to cultural organisations as well as meetings with Palestinian

solidarity groups. In addition, the Ambassador and Ms Sansour discussed the best means of garnering international attention for the plight of the city of Bethlehem, especially given its religious significance.

75. The Palestinian Ambassador hosted a Delegation from the Islamic Council in Sydney at the Delegation premises. The Delegation briefed the Ambassador on the activities engaged in by

The Ambassador with the visiting Iraqi Foreign Minister



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the council and gave him an official invitation to visit their premises in Sydney. Moreover, the two parties discussed the importance of forming a coordinating body for all Islamic community organisations, as well as the importance of combating radical trends within Australia.

76. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a conference organised by the Australian National University regarding Da'esh in Syria and Iraq on 11 December. The other participants included politicians, members of the diplomatic corps and academics. The speakers discussed the phenomenon of Da'esh and its developments, and the appropriate strategies to combat Islamic extremism in the Middle East.

### **Relationship with the international and Arab diplomatic corps**

77. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a meeting hosted by the Iraqi Ambassador in honour of the visiting Iraqi Foreign Minister on February 11, 2015. The Iraqi Foreign Minister mentioned the importance of the Palestinian cause to the Iraqi government, and committed to the ongoing support of Palestine by the Iraqi nation.

78. The Palestinian Ambassador attended a dinner alongside other Arab ambassadors on 25 February 2015 honouring Ahmad Hariri, General Secretary of the Al-Mustaqbal Movement in Lebanon. The Palestinian Ambassador attended at the invitation of the Lebanese Charges d'Affaires, Milad Raad. Mr Hariri expressed the support of the Al-Mustaqbal Movement for the Palestinian people and government, and in particular the political direction of the Palestinian leadership. The Ambassador additionally discussed the living conditions of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, and requested Mr Hariri's support in enhancing their livelihoods in Lebanon.

79. The Palestinian Ambassador joined celebrations for Africa Day on 27 May 2015, joined by much of the international diplomatic corps and the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Julie Bishop.

The Ambassador with Angelique Namika



80. The Counsellor participated in a dinner hosted by the Ambassador of Egypt honouring the Australian Minister for Agriculture, Mr Barnaby Joyce on June 16, 2015. The Counsellor raised the issue of products from Israeli settlements being imported to Australia, and the importance of labelling the origin of these products given that such settlements are illegal under international law. The Minister for Agriculture promised to follow up this issue.

81. At the invitation of the High Commissioner for the UNHCR in Canberra, the Palestinian Ambassador attended in a reception for Ms Angelique Namika, a human rights activist and women's campaigner from Botswana. A number of diplomatic corps representatives and civil society members also participated. Ms Namika expressed her support for the Palestinian people and her interest in visiting Palestine shortly.

82. The Palestinian Ambassador attended a gala dinner hosted by the Latin American Ambassadors at the Hyatt Hotel on 10 September 2015. During the gala dinner several speeches were made in addition to cultural and artistic displays.

83. The Palestinian Ambassador attended a fine arts exhibition of paintings at the Embassy of Venezuela on September 18, 2015, which was attended by members of the international

diplomatic corps.

84. The Palestinian Ambassador attended a lunch hosted by the Ambassador of Jordan in honour of the Grand Mufti of Australia on 13 October 2015. The discussion revolved around the Muslim community in Australia and their relationship with official and governmental bodies.



85. A strategic meeting for the Council of Arab Ambassadors was conducted on 20 October 2015, whereby the Arab Ambassadors discussed their program for 2016. The draft of the program has been sent to the General Secretary of the Arab League, Mr Nabil Al-Arabi, who confirmed his appreciation of the work of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Canberra.

86. An important decision was made by the Council of Arab Ambassadors to establish a new group in Canberra consisting of all Ambassadors of Islamic nations in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. The group was established on 9 November 2015 at a lunch with over forty diplomatic attendees. The primary purpose of the group is to advocate for 'genuine Islam' that resists violence and terrorism, and to clarify misconceptions about the religion. The Ambassador of Indonesia was elected President of this new group, with the Palestinian Ambassador elected Vice-President.



The Ambassador with Pierre Krähenbühl of UNRWA in Canberra on November 30

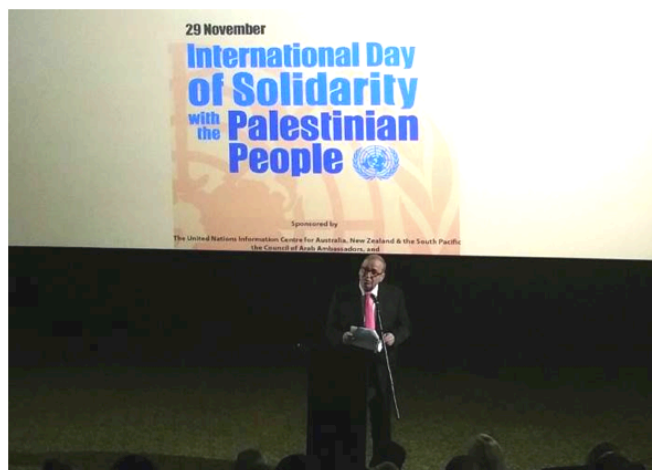
87. The Palestinian Ambassador conducted important talks on 30 November 2015 in Canberra with the visiting High Commissioner of UNRWA Mr Pierre Krähenbühl at a dinner with the Jordanian Ambassador and the Lebanese Charges d'Affaires, in addition to the planning director and public relations officer of the of UNRWA. During his three-day visit to

Australia the UNRWA High Commissioner met with the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and other officials, as well as the Arab Ambassadors in Canberra. The Arab

Ambassadors, who met at the invitation of the General Delegation of Palestine, expressed their appreciation and interest in the work of UNRWA and suggested measures towards showcasing the plight of Palestinian refugees.

The Ambassador speaking on International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

88. The United Nations Information Centre in Canberra, along with the General Delegation of Palestine and the Council of Arab Ambassadors, marked Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on 27 November 2015 in Canberra. The day was marked with a screening of the Palestinian film *The Idol*, as well as speeches by important figures and a reception for the diplomatic corps, civil society members and public officials. During his speech, the Palestinian Ambassador highlighted the plight of the Palestinian people and the new strategies of the



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The friendly soccer competition on 28 November



Palestinian leadership towards international recognition.

89. A friendly soccer competition was hosted in Canberra on 28 November 2015 mirroring the 2015 Asia Cup, which had included Palestinian participation. A team comprised of members of the Palestinian community in Canberra competed in the tournament, supported by the General Delegation of Palestine.

90. The General Delegation of Palestine organised a farewell reception for the Ambassador of Jordan, Ms Rima Alaadeen, and for the Ambassador of Iraq, Mouavad Saleh, at the Palestinian Ambassador's

residence on December 8, 2015. The reception was attended by members of the diplomatic corps as well as the head and deputy head of the Middle East division in the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The Palestinian Ambassador gave a speech praising the distinguished roles played by the two ambassadors, and wished them both success in forthcoming postings.

### **Relationship with Islamic, Arab and Palestinian Communities**

91. The Palestinian Ambassador was invited to a lunch on 2 March 2015 by the Grand Mufti of Australia, Dr Ibrahim Abu Muhamad, attended by Arab ambassadors and the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Bob Carr. The meeting discussed the importance of raising the Palestinian issue with state parliament candidates, and to make it part of election campaigns in Australia. Discussions also took place regarding the role of the Muslim community in counteracting the negative stereotypes about Islam in Australia.

92. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in the commemoration of Al Nakba and in honouring high-achieving students from the Palestinian community at an event in Sydney on 10 May 2015. The event was organised by a range of community organisations, including the General Union of Palestinian Workers, the Palestinian Club and the Sydney Palestinian Society for Graduates. The Ambassador made a speech recognising the achievements made by Palestinian students and reaffirmed the importance of restoring Palestinian rights and an independent Palestinian state within 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

93. The General Delegation of Palestine is working on a database for all Australian business people of Palestinian background, as well as other distinguished members of the Palestinian community in Australia and New Zealand. It is accepting submissions from members of the Palestinian community, and is hoping that the database will help promote Palestinian livelihoods in Australia.

94. The General Delegation of Palestine participated in a vigil in front of federal parliament commemorating those

The Ambassador with high achieving Palestinian students in Sydney on 10 May



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A vigil outside Parliament House commemorating those killed under occupation



who have been killed under Israeli occupation and by Israeli settlers. A number of speeches were made by representatives from Palestinian solidarity groups.

95. In response to an invitation from the Council of Australian Palestinians, the General Delegation of Palestine joined in observing Palestinian Independence Day and the death of late President Yasser Arafat on 11 November 2015 at the New South Wales Parliament. The function was attended by a number of representatives of international and Arab missions, members of parliament, civil society representatives and members of the wider community. The Palestinian Ambassador gave a speech discussing the Palestinian strategy towards achieving a just two

state solution. The leader of the opposition Labor party in New South Wales, Mr Luke Foley, gave a speech highlighting the struggle of the Palestinian people. Former Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Bob Carr gave a speech condemning Israeli settlements as the main obstruction to the two state solution as well as illegal under international law.

96. The Palestinian Ambassador marked the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in Sydney on 29 November 2015, in an initiative led by the Australian Palestinian Professional Association in cooperation with other Palestinian community organisations in Sydney. The Palestinian Ambassador gave a speech highlighting the achievements made by Palestinians in terms of self-determination and establishing an independent state. A number of Australian officials and politicians participated in this function, including former Senator Bob Carr and members of parliament Mr Tony Burke and Ms Lee Rhiannon.

97. The Counsellor participated in a celebration hosted by the Gaza Orthodox Society in Sydney on December 4, 2015, celebrating Christmas. The Counsellor gave a speech pointing to the important messages of Christmas, especially in light of the harsh conditions the Palestinian people must endure. She further wished everyone a happy Christmas, discussing the importance of Jesus Christ to people around the world. In the same light the Palestinian Ambassador met with a number of Palestinian Christian, Muslim and Jewish families in Sydney celebrating Christmas in Sydney, and wished them all a happy Christmas, also reassuring them of the role of the Palestinian government in supporting Palestinian rights.

## Institutional Development at the General Delegation of Palestine

98. The Palestinian Ambassador met with the head of the Palestinian National Fund, Mr Ramsi Khouri, during a visit to Jordan. The Ambassador expressed his appreciation for the role played by the Palestinian National Fund, and also explained the financial and administrative needs of the Delegation in order to foster and develop this aspect of



The new website of the General Delegation of Palestine

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the mission.

99. The Palestinian Delegation sent regular periodic reports to the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs highlighting the main political issues taking place within Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, as well as other developments in the region.

100. At present the General Delegation of Palestine is engaged in updating the website of the Delegation, as well as a newly designed newsletter that will be issued in the near future. There will be a merge between the Facebook page of the Delegation, the newsletter and all other correspondence entered into. In addition there will be a new consular procedures section online, whereby consular requests can be initiated through the website. This will help facilitate consular procedures more efficiently.

101. There has been a significant increase in the number of visitors to the Facebook page of the Delegation, which updates the public as to the various activities of the Delegation, as well as official Palestinian posts.

102. The internship program in cooperation with the Australian National University has seen the General Delegation of Palestine host a number of interns, whereby some very useful research has been completed. This included an examination of lobbying strategies adopted by Arab communities, and Australia's respect for international law.

103. The General Delegation of Palestine is working on updating its contact lists using Access software, also merging it with the website.

104. At present the General Delegation of Palestine is working on finalising the establishment a Resource Centre, so that researchers interested in Palestine can use it and access a wide range of resources relating to Palestine.

105. The Annual Report for 2014 was completed and set to the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although it was delayed due to technical problems.

106. The General Delegation of Palestine has worked on issuing a number of special reports relating to the positions of Australia and New Zealand regarding the Palestinian cause and other issues of importance.

107. The General Delegation of Palestine concluded two concept papers, the first one outlining Delegation strategy regarding communication with the Australian Parliament and its members, and the second focussing on the Delegation's media strategy. The two documents are considered to be of high importance in terms of directing the work of the Delegation in these two domains.

108. The General Delegation of Palestine continued to provide quality consular services to the Palestinian community in Australia, and additionally produced a procedural manual outlining these procedures that will be distributed online to members of the community.

109. The General Delegation of Palestine continued to send reports regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a number of groups within Australia.



# Evaluation

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2015 witnessed a number of activities that have contributed to the ongoing diplomatic impact of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

The visit of the Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad al-Malki to Australia upon an invitation from the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop is an important and diplomatic development for the relationship between the two countries. It was the first such visit from a Palestinian Foreign Minister upon the invitation of an Australian government. The visit can be considered an excellent initiation of a future close bilateral relationship that will foster deeper understanding of the situation in Israel and Palestine from the Australian government. The meeting also opened the door for broader discussions as to the nature and elements of the conflict in the region, particularly in relation to Syria and Iraq. The meeting promoted a closer acquaintance between the two ministers, and provided an excellent basis for future bilateral discussions. Moreover, the Palestinian Foreign Minister's meeting with Ms Tanya Plibersek, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, has furthered discussions relating to the position of the federal opposition Labor Party on the situation in Palestine, especially in regard to the two state solution, Israeli settlement issues and recognition of the State of Palestine.



The visit of the Palestinian Foreign Minister also allowed for him to meet a range of Australian media outlets for the first time, allowing him to discuss Palestinian perspectives to the ongoing conflict for the Australian public. The visit was therefore successful in giving a voice to the Palestinian people in popular Australian media. The visit was also successful in attaining the objectives of the trip, with positive results from the organized meetings, which will help build a stronger relationship between the two parties in the future. Furthermore, this visit had a sustained effect on Australian public opinion, which is more sympathetic towards Palestinian perspectives of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The visit of the Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad al-Malki to New Zealand achieved its desired aims, being a success alongside his visit to Australia. The timing of this visit was crucial in this regard,

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given the New Zealand government's initiative in proposing a resolution in the United Nations Security Council to end Israeli occupation, as well as voting in favour of Palestine in United Nations resolutions relating to the matter. The visit was able to meet its objectives in clarifying the Palestinian position towards the New Zealand diplomatic initiative, but also was able to foster the bilateral relationship between the two countries. Additionally, the trip helped clarify the Palestinian approach in New Zealand public opinion through interviews with media outlets and also the lecture given by the Foreign Minister at Auckland University.



Within the framework of strengthening Palestinian ties to the Pacific region, the Palestinian Ambassador, Izzat Abdulhadi, made two important visits, to Fiji and Timor-Leste. In Fiji, he participated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pacific Developmental Conference, and met with a number of political figures in the region, encouraging them to recognise the State of Palestine and establish full diplomatic relations with Palestine. The delegates and state representatives the Ambassador spoke to were positive in their reactions, with several promising to pursue the matter further. Fiji was especially willing to consider the requests. Equally though, there are major challenges in that many of these countries enjoy close ties with Israel, and have coordinated their foreign policies, to a certain extent, with United States, Australia and New Zealand. In this respect the General Delegation of Palestine is working on developing an effective strategy to work with these countries through fostering economic, social and cultural relations and engaging with the developmental aid program of the League of Arab States to further Arab-Pacific cooperation. This visit to Fiji took place at a fortuitous time and met its objectives, having a profoundly positive impact on Palestinian-Pacific relations. The Ambassador also made a successful diplomatic visit to Timor-Leste, which clarified the Palestinian perspectives regarding the breakdown of the peace process and also the new Palestinian foreign policy strategy. A serious and meaningful discussion took place regarding the potential for development and professional cooperation between the two parties. The Palestinian Ambassador conducted a review of the health and education needs of Timor-Leste with a number of officials and experts, with a view to initiate cooperation with Palestine through its human resources and technical capabilities. The objective of full cooperation between the two countries will take a number of years to realise, and will determine the

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sustainability of such joint projects.

The institutional development of the General Delegation of Palestine has been fundamental to its work in 2015. There has been a concentration on utilising new media tools, for example merging various social media tools within the existing website. Relating to this, the website of the delegation has also been redeveloped with a more striking design and also increased effectiveness. As part of this, consular procedures have been incorporated online and upgraded, a monthly newsletter has been initiated and there are more regular updates of the Facebook page. These developments have taken place on the basis of a clear strategy of the delegation to strengthen its outreach with the broad public, especially in terms of clarifying the Palestinian position.



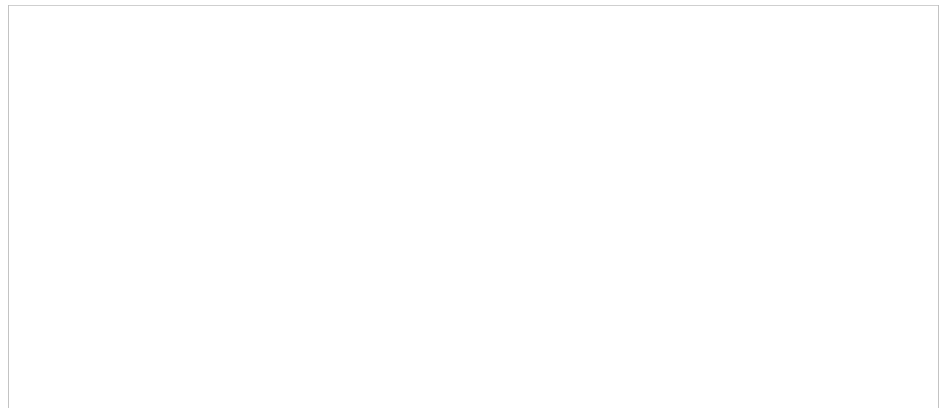
In 2015 the delegation continued to host a number of interns who focused on specific projects, such as preparing policy reports, supporting diplomatic strategies of the delegation and assessing how it can best influence public opinion. In light of the insufficient human resources of the delegation, the presence of interns and volunteers has impacted positively on the work of the delegation, and can be considered greatly successful. Likewise, the interns working at the delegation have benefited from working with the delegation, strengthening their understanding of Palestinian-Israeli conflict developing their diplomatic and research skills and strengthen their Arabic language competences.

The General Delegation of Palestine has continued to work effectively alongside its international and Arab counterparts in Australia. It has played a vital role in this capacity, particularly within the Council of Arab Ambassadors and the Organisation of the Islamic Council Group. In 2015 the Palestinian Ambassador continued as the General Secretary of the Council of Arab Ambassadors, and Deputy Dean of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Group in Canberra. Furthermore, the delegation participates in almost all events and activities hosted by the international diplomatic corps. The General Delegation of Palestine is highly regarded for its legitimate representation of the State of Palestine, and in light of the increasing bilateral

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relationship between Palestine and both Australia and New Zealand.

In 2015 the delegation continued to maintain strong professional relationships with a number of Australian civil society and advocacy groups, Islamic organisations, Arab community groups and Palestinian community in Australia and New Zealand. We consider these relationships to be a strength of the delegation, given the continuous and regular consultative process with these organisations. Adopting a professional mode of communication, the delegation provides a number of these organisations with information and documents relating to the work of the delegation, as well as exchanging views and opinions. It is also important to note that representatives of the delegation attend most of the events run by the various organisations. Equally though, the impact of these groups on broader public opinion is limited, and should be revisited within a clear strategy to maximise their effect and to bring about general community solidarity with the Palestinian people and their political and national rights.





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