



State of Palestine

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

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Cover Image

Celebration of the recognition of Palestine as a non-member state at the UN

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

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THE GENERAL DELEGATION OF PALESTINE TO AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND THE PACIFIC

RICH EXPERIENCE AND CONSTANT PROGRESS



Ambassador Izzat Salah
Abdulhadi

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

The year 2012 witnessed substantial developments on the legitimacy, efficiency, and capacity of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

These developments and achievements have been reaffirmed through numerous meetings with stakeholders who applauded the work of the Delegation and its accomplishments on the diplomatic and community levels.

STRENGTHENED RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND THE PACIFIC

In particular, 2012 was notable for the strengthening of mutual relations between the Palestinian National Authority and Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific states. This was demonstrated through increased political support for Palestinian self-determination and through direct practical and financial support for state-building process.

This political support has been evident through several indicators. Including Australia's abstention from the vote on upgrading the status of Palestine as an observer non-member state in the United Nations General Assembly, a decision that represented a significant change from Australia's previous voting pattern at the United Nations.

Moreover, increased political support has been evident through New Zealand's position on the same issue, in which they voted in support of the Palestinian bid to upgrade Palestine's status. It has also been evident through the votes submitted by the Republic of East Timor, the Solomon Islands, and Tuvalu in favour of the bid as well as the abstention of most of the Pacific states.

This year also witnessed a perceptible increase in Australian public support for the establishment of an independent and viable Palestinian state. Three separate public opinion polls conducted in the last 3 years revealed that more than two thirds of Australians support the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination through the establishment of an independent state.

STRENGTHENING RELATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND ADVOCACY IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

The General Delegation of Palestine has succeeded in establishing direct relations and effective and regular consultation process with the most important advocacy organisations working in support of the Palestinian struggle to establish an independent state.

PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY

Relations with the Palestinian community have also been strengthened through the direct involvement of the General Delegation in most of the activities of the community, and equally through the active contributions made by the community in support of the General Delegation. Through such activities, the Palestinian community in Australia and New Zealand have demonstrated increased commitment to promoting the Palestinian cause and to developing active and cohesive communities.

One particular example of the symbiotic relationship between the Palestinian community and the General Delegation has been the active participation of the latter in the project to establish the Palestinian Community Council as an organisation encompassing members of the community as well as various other bodies.

A further development in the arena of relations with civil society has been the significant strides made in the relationship between the General Delegation of Palestine and the **Jewish community in Australia**. This relationship has been built upon continual dialogue, mutual respect, and clear standards for future cooperation.

INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING OF THE DELEGATION

In addition to the developments detailed above, I must duly note the organisational and professional advancements that have taken place within the General Delegation itself especially within the consular affairs section and managerial and financial matters. The progress made in such areas has contributed greatly to the sustainability and efficiency of the General Delegation's work and to its future growth.

Lastly, I would also like to sincerely thank all of the groups and persons mentioned herein who have offered their generous help and support to the General Delegation. I would equally like to thank the staff and volunteers at the General Delegation in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. Our accomplishments would not have been realised without their commitment and professional dedication.

Ambassador



Izzat Abdulhadi

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

The POLITICAL CONTEXT



AUSTRALIA

This year, Australia's political position on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict displayed negligible differences from the past five years in which Labor has been in office. This position can be summarised as comprising support for the two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with a limited exchange of land. It also includes an emphasis on continued support to Israeli security.

There has thus been no obvious change in Australia's position on the final status issues of Jerusalem, refugees, borders, security, water, and settlements.

Australia also continues to view direct negotiations as the only mean to achieving a two-state solution and an end to the conflict.

It can be briefly stated that the Australian stance still closely resembles that of the United States, and therefore does not completely accord and associate with the principles and practice of international law or UN resolutions.

In this context, two important developments occurred this year in the arena of Australian foreign policy. These involved:

- Australia's success in securing a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the years 2013 and 2014. This membership may involve important political responsibilities affecting the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, particularly in light of the fact that the Palestinian problem may be one of the core issues that the Council will discuss over the coming years.

It is hoped that Australia will demonstrate strong leadership throughout the period of its membership in the Security Council by advancing positions compatible with the United Nations Charter, International Law, and various relevant UN resolutions. Australia could then be said to be participating effectively in meaningful efforts to bring about a just and permanent solution to the conflict in the Middle East.



Amb. Abdulhadi with the Hon Bob Carr Minister of Foreign Affairs

- Australia's decision to abstain from the vote to upgrade the status of Palestine in the UN. This decision created a stir of debate within political circles, civil society, and Australian public opinion. Some have considered it to be straying away from Australia's traditionally close alignment with the US on such matters. Others believed that it did not show leadership and thought that Australia must vote in favour of the resolution.

In the lead-up to the vote, it had been made apparent that the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, intended to vote against the Palestinian draft resolution. However, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Bob Carr, managed the controversy regarding the voting decision astutely and was able to convince the Cabinet to place their support behind a decision to abstain instead.

SEVERAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTED TO AUSTRALIA'S FINAL DECISION TO ABSTAIN FROM VOTING:

- Australia's success in winning a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the years 2013 and 2014 and the attendant concern with portraying an image of independence from the US.
- The support of the majority of the Labor Party, including those on the right, for an abstention.
- Australia's commitment to supporting a two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.
- The clear, reasoned, and measured nature of the Palestinian draft resolution text that was submitted to the UN.
- The effective campaign led by the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia and New Zealand in association with the Council of Arab Ambassadors to convince Australia to back the Palestinian draft resolution.
- The effective campaigns undertaken by organisations in solidarity with the Palestinian people, in which forceful petitions were made to the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs.
- The bold stance taken by the Arab, Islamic and Palestinian communities who addressed strong messages to the prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs. The communities warned of the potential impact, Australia's negative vote on the Palestinian draft resolution would have, on their voting behaviour in Australian elections. It might be the first time that these communities would make such a direct link between Australia's policy on Israel/Palestine and their own voting decisions and it worked very well.

In its efforts to support the two-state solution and its realisation, the Australian government continued its provision of financial and technical aid to the Palestinian people. Significantly, the Australian government signed an agreement with the Palestinian Authority to directly support its budget by approximately \$22 million per year. In addition, Senator Bob Carr signed an agreement with UNRWA committing almost \$18 million worth of aid to Palestinian refugees per year. Further to these new commitments, Australia continued its support for projects coordinated by Australian development organisations and their partner organisations in Palestine. Australia also continued the provision of its postgraduate scholarship program for Palestinian students offering 10 scholarships per year.

What has been notable is the perceptible change in Australian financial support from mere humanitarian aid to developmental aid for the purpose of establishing the infrastructure necessary for a future Palestinian state. This can be considered both a qualitative and quantitative change in the nature of Australian aid and a development that must be further built upon.

EXPECTED CHALLENGES IN FRONT OF AUSTRALIA FOREIGN POLICY SUSTAINABILITY:

Certain challenges, however, may threaten the sustainability and further expansion of these initiatives and the articulation and formulation of a more balanced approach to the issue of Palestine. The most significant obstacles are anticipated to result from the following factors:

- The strong possibility of Labor's defeat in the upcoming 2013 elections by the Liberal party. Liberal's comparably stronger support for Israel was evidenced in its strong opposition to the government's decision to abstain from the vote on Palestine in the UN, rather than vote against it. While the party has consistently called for a two-state solution in all its statements and releases on the issue, it has stipulated that this must be achieved solely through direct negotiations.
- The position of the current Prime Minister, Ms Julia Gillard, which can be described as supportive of Israel and keenly focused upon the maintenance of strong relations with the US. It is regrettable that the majority of Labor parliamentarians still incline towards the prime minister's pro-Israeli position at the expense of the Labor left which strongly advocates for Palestinian rights.
- The strength of the Jewish community in Australia and its influence on Australian foreign policy. The Australian Zionist lobby benefits from a highly developed organisational capacity, strong leadership, and substantial financial resources that have enabled it to, deeply, influence Australia's foreign policy decisions. The lobby's key influence stands in stark contrast to the weak lobbying power of Australia's Arab, Islamic, and Palestinian communities that have not yet developed similar capacities. This is attributable to a lack of funds, a lack of efficient organisation, and a lack of effective leadership, all of which are compounded by the relatively new discernible presence of these community groups in Australia.
- Despite the existence of Excellent trade relations between Australia and the Arab world, estimated to be worth approximately \$13 billion per year, the Arab World has not attempted to establish a direct link between their trade relationship with Australia and the positions taken by the Australian government on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.
- In recent times, Australia has endeavoured to develop a foreign policy that is relatively independent from the United States, firstly through the conceptualisation of Australia as a "Middle Power" and secondly through the strengthening of relations with China and other neighbouring Asian nations. Nonetheless, Australia's lack of substantial military power has undermined its ambition for greater foreign policy independence from the US. This can be seen most clearly in view of its closely guarded security alliance, which serves to ensure American protection against any potential threats.

A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY TO SUSTAIN AUSTRALIA EVEN-HANDED APPROACH:

In 2012 the General Delegation of Palestine, in cooperation with the Council of Arab Ambassadors, devised a comprehensive strategy aiming to influence Australian foreign policy as it pertains to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This strategy involved the following key aspects:

1. The development of a concept paper further to the commencement of meaningful dialogue between the Palestinian National Authority and the Australian Government to address the core issues of the Palestinian problem. Among the most important of these matters is Australia's position on the issue of Palestinian land occupied in 1967 as well as on final status issues.
2. The commencement of formal dialogue between the Council of Arab Ambassadors and the Australian Government in order to address numerous issues of mutual interest, among which the Palestinian-Israeli conflict holds central place. Such a dialogue would be compatible with the Memorandum of Understanding signed in September 2011 by the Arab League and the Australian Government that cited the importance of discussing the Palestinian problem.
3. An increase in the visits made by Australian officials to Palestine to allow them to witness first-hand the impact of oppressive Israeli policies on the Palestinian people. In this context, it should be noted that the former minister of foreign affairs and trade, Mr Kevin Rudd, made three visits to Palestine during his time in office – a total number unprecedented by previous Australian foreign ministers and reflective of growing Australian interest in the Palestinian question. The current minister of foreign affairs and trade, Senator the Hon Bob Carr, meanwhile, made a highly successful visit to Palestine in 2012, his first year in the position. During his visit, Senator Carr met with President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, and Foreign Minister Dr Riyad Malki among many other officials. Furthermore, several Australian parliamentarians and members of civil society organizations made visits to the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2012.

The execution of a comprehensive strategy that would coordinated cooperation between organisations of civil society in order to further educate the Australian public on the Palestinian problem, effectively utilise the media and influence policy-makers.

NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained largely unchanged in 2012. This position is demonstrated in the form of support for a two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. New Zealand continues to back the resumption of direct negotiations between the parties.

The most positive illustration of this position in 2012 was the vote submitted by the New Zealand Government in support of an upgrade to Palestine's status at the UN General Assembly. The significance of this vote is highlighted in consideration of the fact that New Zealand's current Government is led by the relatively conservative National Party which is known to be supportive of Israel.

New Zealand based its voting decision not only upon its continued support for a two-state solution, but also upon the fact that in the absence of direct negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis, there was no preferable alternative to backing the bid. The decision was also influenced by the substance of the Palestinian draft resolution itself, which the Minister of Foreign affairs, Hon Mr Murray McCully, described as compatible with the necessary conditions for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Moreover, New Zealand's vote was reflective of the country's historical interest in Middle East affairs – exemplified by the commitment of its forces to the peacekeeping mission that was sent to the area following the armistice agreement signed between Israel and neighbouring Arab states in 1949.

Some observers have further speculated that New Zealand's voting decision also derived from its desire to increase its chances of securing a non-permanent Security Council seat in 2015-16, for which Arab and Islamic votes would prove advantageous.

It should be noted that New Zealand, in contrast to Australia, accords greater emphasis to multilateral diplomacy and to enabling such avenues by empowering the UN and its bodies. Despite its small size, New Zealand has played an important role in the UN and has historically exercised a relatively independent foreign policy.

New Zealand has also shown a great deal of interest in supporting and empowering Palestinian institutions, stimulating the Palestinian economy, and supporting sustainable growth through the UN mine action service to which \$2.8 million dollars were contributed by New Zealand. This comes in addition to the humanitarian aid that New Zealand contributes to UNRWA for the purpose of assisting Palestinian refugees.

THESE DYNAMICS NOTWITHSTANDING, CERTAIN CHALLENGES EXIST THAT MAY AFFECT THE CONTINUATION OF NEW ZEALAND'S BALANCED APPROACH TO THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT. THESE INCLUDE:

1. The constant pressure applied by Israel and the Jewish Community to affect a change in New Zealand's foreign policy. This effort has been significantly aided by the presence of an Israeli embassy in the capital of Wellington. In contrast, relations with New Zealand are managed by the General Delegation of Palestine located in Australia, as there is no Palestinian Delegation based in New Zealand. Similarly, New Zealand lacks diplomatic presence in Ramallah and administers its relations with the Palestinian Authority through its embassy in Ankara, Turkey.

2. The ineffectiveness of Palestinian advocacy organisations in New Zealand and the weak links that exist between them and the General Delegation of Palestine.
3. The low diplomatic representation of the Arab States in New Zealand. The Arab Diplomatic missions in Australia, principally, manage relations between New Zealand and Arab States.

A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY TO SUSTAIN NEW ZEALAND EVEN HANDED POLICY:

To face these challenges and to bolster the even-handed stance that New Zealand has adopted in support of the Palestinian right to self-determination, the General Delegation of Palestine proposed the commencement of official talks between New Zealand officials and their Palestinian counterparts on all issues encompassing Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The General Delegation of Palestine, in coordination with the Council of Arab Ambassadors, also developed and prompted a strategy for communicating with the New Zealand Government through regular correspondence with the minister and ministry of foreign affairs and other official bodies.

Finally, the General Delegation supported and facilitated the visit of Hon Mr Murray McCully to Palestine at the beginning of the year where he met several Palestinian officials and was a keen witness to the current situation on the ground. A delegation of New Zealand parliamentarians also visited Palestine and observed the impact of Israeli practices on the Palestinian people.

It is expected that New Zealand's positive approach will persist in the short and medium terms and that New Zealand's commitment to the establishment of a viable Palestinian state would remain firm in the event of a change of government.



Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs H.E. Dr. Riyad Malki
with the Hon Mr. Murray McCully, Foreign Minister of New Zealand

THE PACIFIC CONTEXT

1. VANUATU, TIMOR-LESTE AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA



Dr Jose Ramos Horta with President Mahmoud Abbas

The three Pacific states of Vanuatu, East Timor, and Papua New Guinea all recognise the state of Palestine. Vanuatu and East Timor have both established full diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine.

East Timor's position is supportive of Palestinian rights, particularly the right to establish an independent Palestinian state in the territories occupied in 1967. East Timor recently voted to support the bid to upgrade Palestine to observer non-member state at the UN General Assembly.

This vote constituted the most significant event in relations between East Timor and Palestine in 2012. The second most significant event, meanwhile, related to the electoral defeat of Dr Jose Ramos Horta, who has been a strong supporter of Palestinian rights, and the victory of Mr Taur Matan Ruak who is similarly supportive of Palestinian rights.

Indeed, it has been observed through meetings with the Ambassador of East Timor in Canberra that the country's position continues to be strongly supportive to Palestine despite the emergence of new leadership.

It should also be noted that Timorese-Israeli relations have undergone development, and were most recently demonstrated in Dr Horta's visit to Israel and Palestine when he was president in 2011.

Vanuatu differs slightly from the case of East Timor despite the fact that it has recognised the Palestinian state since 1986 and has established full diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine. For example, Vanuatu chose to abstain from voting on the draft resolution regarding Palestine's status at the UN. Regrettably, Vanuatu has in recent times been following this pattern of abstention when it comes to voting on Palestinian draft resolutions submitted each year to UN. This is considered a clear retreat from Vanuatu's previous historical position of voting favourably on resolutions concerning Palestine.

According to some officials from Vanuatu, these decisions regarding Israel-Palestine taken in line with their National interest.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

As to **Papua New Guinea**, which recognises the state of Palestine but has yet to establish diplomatic relations with the Palestinian Authority, it chose to abstain from voting on Palestine's UN bid. New Guinea also has a pattern of abstaining from resolutions concerning Palestine at the UN.

- In 2012, the General Delegation of Palestine communicated numerous messages to the embassy of New Guinea in Canberra with the aim of nurturing relations between the two nations and in order to equip New Guinea's leadership with comprehensive and accurate information on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

THE ISLANDS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC – IN PARTICULAR: TONGA, FIJI, SOLOMON ISLANDS AND TUVALU

These states have not recognised the state of Palestine and no diplomatic relations have been established with them. However, all support a two-state solution and the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.

The position of these states is considered to be largely balanced and most abstained from the vote to upgrade Palestine to a non-member state at the UN. **The Solomon Islands and Tuvalu made up the exceptions by having voted in favour of the bid.**



The island states of the South Pacific receive varying amounts of assistance from the governments of Australia, New Zealand and the US. All with the exception of Fiji whose relations with Australia and New Zealand remain poor as a result of Fiji's military regime. It is expected that relations between Fiji and Australia, New Zealand, the US, and the European Union will improve after it holds democratic elections in 2014.

Fiji enjoys full diplomatic relations with a large number of Arab countries and it has also been proposed that an Arab League office could be established there.

The General Delegation of Palestine in 2012 submitted applications to establish full diplomatic relations with the republic of Fiji, Tonga and the Solomon Islands.

The General Delegation on several occasions also met with the representatives of these countries in order to follow up with the aforementioned applications. These states showed interest in the applications and have undertaken to study them and respond as soon as possible.

IN SUMMARY, THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN FROM AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOREIGN POLICY POSITIONS OF SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDER STATES WITH RESPECT TO THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT:

- All of the countries discussed support Palestinian rights and the two-state solution and would therefore be inclined to vote in favour of Palestinian resolutions put forth in the UN. However, these states are impoverished and heavily dependent upon the assistance provided by Australia, New Zealand, the US, and China and thus find themselves, sometimes, obliged to serve their national interest.
- New players have emerged in the Pacific arena that may alter the balance of power and bring about greater support for Palestinian rights. One major new player in this respect is China, which has demonstrated increasing influence in the Pacific region and has begun to offer significant assistance to Pacific states. The influence of Malaysia, Indonesia and Japan are other examples that should also be noted. These positive new dynamics developing in the region should be given attention in order to construct an effective strategy for working with Pacific states.
- A new and comprehensive approach is needed to improve relations with the Pacific countries. The Pacific countries are very interested in strengthening the relations with the Arab world taking into consideration the economic and cultural similarities.

ISLANDS OF THE NORTH PACIFIC - E.G. MICRONESIA AND THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

These small states have consistently voted with Israel and the US. The Islands of the North Pacific receive most of their assistance from the US and, as a result, they fully reflect its policy positions.

The assessment of the General Delegation of Palestine is that it is not possible to influence these states in the short term. This is in view of the fact that they are linked to the US by binding commitments from which it would not be feasible to extract them.

Strategic Pathway



IN 2012, THE GENERAL DELEGATION OF PALESTINE EMBARKED UPON A VAST RANGE OF ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO FULFIL THE OBJECTIVES ESTABLISHED FOR 2012. PUTTING THESE OBJECTIVES INTO ACTION HAS ACHIEVED STRENGTHENED SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIAN SELF-DETERMINATION.

The overarching objective:

To reinforce the status and legitimacy of the General Delegation of Palestine as the voice of the Palestine Liberation Organisation - the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people - and the state of Palestine. Thus, the General Delegation of Palestine sought to strengthen its role in representing Palestinian aspirations and expectations and as the recognised partner for all stakeholders in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

This overall goal generally was encompassed by the following six objectives:

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 existing relationships and develop new bilateral relations between the General Delegation and the Arab and international diplomatic corps.*
3. *Monitor and analyse major developments in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region affecting Palestinians or the Israel-Palestine conflict.*
4. *Further enhance and institutionalise relationships with civil society in Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific.*
5. *Further enhance and institutionalise relationships with the Palestinian community in Australia.*
6. *Improve the ability of the General Delegation of Palestine to operate efficiently and effectively through the streamlining of administrative and managerial processes, the systematisation of service provision, and the enhancement of organisational development.*

STRATEGIC PATHWAYS

The strategic pathways target key decision making and opinion-influencing institutions, organizations and persons within Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. Strategic pathways put into action, lobbying, communications, information dissemination, support for civil society organizations, informed relationship building, and responsive, effective leadership and management.

The strategic pathways through which the 6 Objectives of the General Delegation of Palestine have been put into action are:

a. Decision-making and policy-making Institutions and Organizations and crucial position holders including the Parliament's of Australia, New Zealand and Timor-Leste, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Development Agencies and Government Departments

The General Delegation of Palestine conducted a series of meetings to discuss specific issues regarding Palestine with Parliamentary Committee's, relevant Ministers, the advisory staff of Ministers and individual members of Parliament and Senators.

In addition, the General Delegation of Palestine has worked strategically with the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine to strengthen understanding and interest in Palestine and to inform decision making.

The General Delegation of Palestine strengthened its relationship with the Australian Agency for International Development AusAid, The General Delegation provided accurate responses to political issues regarding Palestine that were raised in the Australian Parliament.

A range of communications, discussions and meetings have been held with Australian Foreign Minister the Hon Bob Carr and with New Zealand's Minister for Foreign Affairs the Hon Murray McCully, and particularly to discuss strategic dialogue between Palestine and Australia and between Palestine and New Zealand.

Regular meetings have been conducted between the representatives of the Palestinian Delegation and Ambassadors of the Pacific countries in Canberra.

b. The Council of Arab Ambassadors and Regional Diplomatic Relationships

The central political issue pursued by the Council of Arab Ambassadors with the Australian government, is Palestinian self-determination and recognition of Palestinian statehood. The issue has been pursued in face-to-face lobbying, meetings, letters and joint meetings with relevant Minister's including the Minister for Foreign Affairs the Hon Bob Carr.

The overall work of the Council of Arab Ambassadors significantly strengthens Australia's and New Zealand's understanding of the importance of Palestine in multilateral and regional relationships. Multilateral relationships elevate both Australia's and New Zealand's significance within the international arena and create a counter- balance to the historically more dominant relationships and alliances with Israel and the US.

The Australia-Arab Dialogue supported by the Council of Arab Ambassadors and the Memorandum of Understanding with the Arab League, is a strategic pathway for Australian recognition of the importance of Palestine to other Arab States. The creation of the Federal Parliamentary Australia-Arab Friendship group extends and reinforces this dialogue in the Parliamentary arena.

c. Strategic and Authoritative Communication

Ensuring the General Delegation of Palestine is the authoritative voice regarding Palestine, and occupies the most influential positions from which to convey its voice, has seen the General Delegation systematically pursue the most effective media and communications pathways.

Television, English and Arabic radio, metropolitan daily newspapers and Arabic press have all been used extensively. The website of the General Delegation of Palestine

is the most widely accessible face and voice for the General Delegation, and is used to publish leading information, support material, news from the President's Office, the Palestine Government Media Centre, Ministries, and to circulate media alerts.

The General Delegation of Palestine also supplied Australian and New Zealand-based media outlets with the contact details of key Palestinian political leaders. The result was a measurable and marked increase in direct interviews and quotes from Palestinian leaders, in Australian and New Zealand newspapers and radio.

Communications reporting on the work of the General Delegation of Palestine, consists of both progress reports critically evaluating the work of the General Delegation, and reports on specific Palestine-related issues. These reports are sent to HE Dr Riyad Malki and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Palestinian Government Media Centre, the Palestinian National Fund and the Office of the President.

D. Strategic Civil Society Relationships and Partnerships

The role of local civil society organisations is integral to building support and commitment for Palestinian self-determination and statehood within diverse democratic contexts such as Australia, New Zealand, Timor-Leste and the Pacific States.

Civil society organisations and their members are the local advocates and the parliamentary constituency and the numeric influence on decision makers. The General Delegation of Palestine has strategically supported influential civil society organisations in Australia and has begun establishing relationships with civil society organisations in New Zealand. An example of the General Delegation's strategic support for civil society organisations, is its continuous support to the work of Australia Palestine Advocacy Network – APAN, formally established on 9 April, 2011.



APAN www.apan.org.au is a networked organization composed of mainstream civil society organizations in Australia including Churches, the Palestinian Community, Business Groups, Workers Unions, NGOs, Academics and solidarity groups. The General Delegation formalized its relationship with APAN, conducting consultations with to share information.

e. Expanding the Diplomatic Presence in the Pacific Region

Transforming the Pacific region's low record of support for Palestinian self-determination and statehood is an imperative, and particularly with regard to UN voting on the status of Palestine.

The General Delegation of Palestine has initiated discussions with a number of Pacific states, to establish full bilateral diplomatic relations. These discussions have been conducted through the Embassies and High Commissions present in Australia.

It is a point of real and on-going frustration that the level of financial support given to the General Delegation to pursue its critically important diplomatic work and particularly in the Pacific region, does not allow Ambassador Abdulhadi to use the most effective pathway for this work i.e. face-to-face meetings in the Islands themselves. The lack of funding for travel imposes real and harmful constraints on this work.

Excellent beginnings have been made. However, transforming the voting record in the Pacific region requires additional financial resources and systematic information sharing and coordination between the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the UN and the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, and MOFA.

f. Leading Role of the Palestinian Community

The Palestinian community is the core community voice on Palestine and as such, the Palestinian community must play its rightful and leading role. The Palestinian community authentically speaks the reality of the Palestinian experience.

Within the Australian context, ethnic community councils are key consultation partners for public advocacy and government policy. It is noticeable that the Australian Jewish community uses its community organizations to full effect.

Recognising the highly influential role that can be played by the Palestinian community, a community that is politically diverse and geographically spread, the General Delegation of Palestine has embarked on a process of working with the community to overcome foundational obstacles preventing greater community cohesion.

The General Delegation has become a key reference point for the Palestinian community in Australia. Strategic work with the Australian Palestinian community will continue in 2013, to support the establishment of a peak community body; a Palestinian Community Council.

g. Strengthening Management and Productivity of GDOP

Fulfilling the expanding scope of work required of the General Delegation of Palestine, demanded a re-conceptualisation and re-configuring of management processes within the General Delegation of Palestine.

Program management has enabled Ambassador Abdulhadi to coach staff in developing their skills, individual judgment and responsibility for internal organization. This has enabled staff to carry significantly heavier workloads and has enabled Ambassador Abdulhadi to engage in more and higher-level diplomatic representation than has been previously possible. However, more time allocated to representation and lobbying is still required.

The commitment of skilled Australian volunteers has also contributed significantly to the General Delegation's ability to achieve extraordinary outcomes in relationship to the human and financial resources available.

Sustaining these outcomes into the medium and longer-term and as the scope of work continues to expand, requires an urgent and immediate increase in the re- sources available to the General Delegation of Palestine to enable it to properly fund all of its work and to recruit and retain suitably skilled local staff.

Objectives and Outcomes



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The **overarching objective** for the year was to reinforce the status and legitimacy of the General Delegation of Palestine as the voice of the Palestine Liberation Organisation - the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people - and the state of Palestine. Thus, the General Delegation of Palestine sought to strengthen its role in representing Palestinian aspirations and expectations and as the recognised partner for all stakeholders in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

This overall goal generally was encompassed by the following **six objectives**:

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 existing relationships and develop new bilateral relations between the General Delegation and the Arab and international diplomatic corps.
3. Monitor and analyse major developments in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region affecting Palestinians or the Israel-Palestine conflict.
4. Further enhance and institutionalise relationships with civil society in Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific.
5. Further enhance and institutionalise relationships with the Palestinian community in Australia.
6. Improve the ability of the General Delegation of Palestine to operate efficiently and effectively through the streamlining of administrative and managerial processes, the systematisation of service provision, and the enhancement of organisational development.

PALESTINE AS A NON-MEMBER STATE AT THE UNITED NATIONS



H.E. president Mahmoud Abbas at the UN

1. As part of its concerted lobbying efforts to secure support for the bid to upgrade the status of Palestine in the United Nations General Assembly, the General Delegation of Palestine implemented an action plan engaging all the relevant parties and governments.

This plan included the following activities:

- Letters were sent to the foreign ministers of Australia and New Zealand explaining the background to the bid and outlining its key importance.
- Letters were also sent to advocacy groups, mainstream organisations, and to the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network explaining the Palestinian position behind the bid. The letter called upon these organisations to campaign for the governments of Australia and New Zealand to vote in favour.
- The Council of Arab Ambassadors convened a meeting on the matter, resulting in the proposal to speak directly with the Australian Prime Minister and also to send letters to the Foreign Ministers of Australia, New Zealand, and the countries of the Pacific on the behalf of all Arab Ambassadors.
- Palestinian community organisations in Australia and New Zealand were contacted and encouraged to send letters to their respective governments calling for their support.
- Relevant information on the vote was sourced and circulated among parliamentarians, support groups and members of civil society. This information was also published on the Delegation's website.
- Meetings were arranged with parliamentarians and DFAT representatives.
- The Palestinian Independence Day celebration was employed as a forum to send a message to the Australian government about the importance of the bid.
- Meetings with the High Commissioners of Pacific missions were held in Canberra to urge them to lobby their governments for their support. Letters were also sent for this purpose.
- Information prepared by the General Delegation as well as by various Palestinian organisations was disseminated among members of the Arab and International diplomatic corps.
- The Delegation's representatives have conducted several media activities including TV and Radio interviews, articles in the daily newspapers, issuing press releases and fact sheets among other activities. It is worth mentioning that the Palestinian bid and the Australian abstention vote has attracted the attention in the media.



Images reflecting the celebration of the Palestinian people for upgrading of Palestine as observer non-member state at the UN 2012

2. Ambassador Abdulhadi undertook an official visit to the West Bank in August/ September that provided a useful opportunity to consult directly with the PNA on developments taking place in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

During his visit, the Ambassador conducted a meeting in Ramallah with President Abbas that allowed him to update the President on the positive developments taking place in Australia-Palestine relations and on the implications of Australia securing a seat on the UN Security Council. Ambassador Abdulhadi conveyed an invitation from the government of Timor-Leste for the President to visit as well as the Australian interest in inviting the Palestinian President for a visit to Australia. The same developments were discussed in a separate meeting with Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in addition to the details of the Development Partnership Agreement arranged with Australia. Furthermore, Ambassador Abdulhadi met with Dr. Riyad Malki, the Palestinian Foreign Minister and both discussed the Palestinian delegation plan and the bi lateral relations between Australia and Palestine.



Amb. Abdulhadi and H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas



The new Presidency Premises/Ramallah

ISRAEL'S ASSAULT ON THE GAZA STRIP

- 3. In response to the Israeli attack on the besieged Gaza Strip that began on 14 November, the General Delegation of Palestine developed a strategic plan to inform the Australian public and the governments of Australia, New Zealand and the countries of the Pacific of the impact of the assault and explain the official Palestinian position regarding it.**

To this purpose the General Delegation conducted the following activities:

- Official letters were sent to the foreign ministers of Australia and New Zealand as well as countries of the Pacific, with particular focus given to communicating with nations with representation in Canberra (including Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Timor-Leste).
- A meeting of the Council of Arab Ambassadors was called in which a plan of action was devised. Following the meeting, an official letter was sent on behalf of the Council to the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Senator Bob Carr.
- An urgent meeting was also conducted with the Assistant Secretary of DFAT's Middle East Branch, Ms Lynette Wood, to discuss the official Palestinian response to the attacks and urges the Australian Government to condemn the Israeli aggression.
- The General Delegation issued a press release.
- Support was provided to advocacy groups and networks actively addressing the crisis.

- All the relevant information issued by official Palestinian ministries and organisations was collected and disseminated to the Prime Minister's office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, parliamentarians, advocacy groups, the international diplomatic corps and the Palestinian community.
- The same action was taken on relevant information and statements issued by the Palestinian observer mission to the United Nations.
- A meeting was held with the Australian Parliamentary Friends of Palestine to discuss a draft resolution prepared by the Australian Greens party to be submitted to the Senate calling for the immediate halt of attacks. The resolution also demanded that the siege on Gaza be lifted and that a two-state solution be implemented.
- The website of the General Delegation of Palestine acted as a gateway for the public through the up-to-date information it provided on the Gaza assault.
- Lastly and importantly, Ambassador Abdulhadi conducted a high number of interviews with major news media, including major broadcasters.

The General Delegation political position towards the Israeli assault on Gaza Strip:

- The attack on Gaza was an aggression on all the people of Palestine, making up part of a larger campaign that includes the continued policy of settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the longstanding and crippling siege on the Gaza Strip, and the many other illegal policies that Israel has pursued.
- Any attempt to solve the crisis in Gaza would be incomplete and inadequate without addressing the root causes of the conflict – namely, the denial of the right to Palestinian self-determination, the continuing occupation and the siege of Gaza.
- Thus, any ceasefire will not be maintained or sustainable in the long-term unless the major issues of conflict find a just and meaningful solution. Without such a solution, the situation will remain volatile and precarious.
- The international community must support the Palestinian bid for upgraded status in the UN General Assembly in order to protect the two-state solution. This became more vital than ever, with the Gaza attack presenting as an attempt to jeopardise the path toward a two-state agreement.
- Thus, the attacks should not result in attention being drawn away from the major issue of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, or from the highly important bid in the UNGA in November.



In front of
the Federal
Parliament

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF A BOAT CARRYING PALESTINIAN ASYLUM SEEKERS IN WATER BETWEEN INDONESIA AND AUSTRALIA

4. The General Delegation monitored with concern, the tragic developments surrounding the disappearance of a boat carrying 67 asylum seekers, including around 28 Palestinians displaced from Iraq, which went missing in waters between Indonesia and Christmas Island.

The Delegation maintained close contacts with concerned parties throughout the crisis, including the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship, the Australian Red Cross, representatives of the Australian-Palestinian community, and the families of those missing.

The difficulty in accessing information on the incident from official bodies meant that the Delegation played a highly valuable role as a source of information and support for those concerned. The Palestinian Delegation also engaged with the media; providing crucial information and expressing the urgent need for the Australian government to make concerted efforts to search for the boat and adequately support the families of the missing.

Members of the Delegation consistently provided reports to the Palestinian Foreign Ministry as events unfolded.



Asylum Seekers boats



RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GENERAL DELEGATION OF PALESTINE AND THE GOVERNMENTS OF AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND THE PACIFIC



The General Delegation prepared a concept paper on the commencement of strategic dialogue between the Australian Government and the Palestinian Authority, with the aim of deepening an accurate understanding of final status issues and of the conflict from a Palestinian perspective.

A key objective of the proposal was to glean Australia's position on key issues related to the conflict and what it views as the best course for realising Palestinian self-determination and statehood, along with the role that Australia can play in supporting the process of state-building.

The paper was delivered to Foreign Minister Carr as well as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on June 13. A copy of the paper was also sent to the Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Riyad Malki.

A similar concept paper was also sent to the government of New Zealand with the purpose of advancing the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Murray McCully's proposal for the initiation of a strategic dialogue between the two governments. Obtaining clarity on final status issues will make it easier to predict and rely upon Australia and New Zealand's support in specific matters in the international arena.

5. In order to strengthen support for the initiation of the strategic dialogue proposed in the concept paper prepared by the General Delegation, Ambassador Abdulhadi met with the full members of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade.

During this session, the Ambassador explained the importance of such a dialogue for furthering the interests of both governments and encouraged the parliamentarians in attendance to add their support and participation.

In addition, Ambassador Abdulhadi met with a number of influential members of parliament.

All those he met with expressed their agreement on the value of such a dialogue and on the need to enhance mutual understanding on the parts of both governments in order to further efforts for a comprehensive peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state.



Amb. Abdulhadi with Michael Danby (MP), the Head of the Joint standing Committee for Foreign Affairs at the Federal Parliament

6. **As part of the objective of enhancing relations between the General Delegation and Australian political parties, Ambassador Abdulhadi gave a lecture to the Labor Party's security and foreign affairs committee on March 21 in Canberra.** The Ambassador presented the Palestinian position on final status issues, reconciliation, the peace process, and the role that Australia can play in advancing justice and peace in Palestine. The lecture elicited a positive response from those in attendance, resulting in the agreement to conduct more sessions in order to improve cooperation and develop a political framework for the Labor party members to influence decision making on Israel-Palestine conflict.
7. **As part of regular annual meetings with interested Australian parliamentarians aiming to increase the level of interest and awareness in issues affecting the Palestinians, Ambassador Abdulhadi spoke at Parliament House on the latest political developments concerning the situation in Palestine.**

The ambassador addressed such issues as reconciliation, the presidential and parliamentary elections that were due to occur and potential obstacles preventing them from taking place. A summary of the briefing was prepared and circulated to all federal parliamentarians as well as the Palestinian community and members of civil society organisations.



**Australian
Federal
parliament/
Canberra**

8. **Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in a dialogue with Mr Meir Itzhaki, Israel's deputy chief of mission to Australia, held at the University of South Australia on the 19th of April.** The dialogue, entitled *Paths to a Just Peace for Palestine and Israel*, was hosted by the Abraham Institute and The Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre, named after Labor's longest serving Prime Minister notable for promoting a vision of Australia within a global context. The centre operates as a forum for the community to engage in important ideas affecting society, and has drawn highly influential figures to participate in discussions, as well as the patronage of Mr Nelson Mandela.

During the dialogue, Ambassador Abdulhadi discussed how continued military occupation and an asymmetry of power between Israel and Palestine render negotiations ineffective and unjust. Bilateral negotiations alone have thus far failed to produce a secure peace for either the Israelis or Palestinians, and for this reason a recourse to multilateral avenues is a necessary component of any sustainable outcome. The Ambassador therefore emphasised the importance of realising Palestinian self-determination through statehood – a matter not dependent on bilateral negotiation – and the negotiation of final status issues within a clear and enforceable framework.

Over 250 people attended, including the Governor of South Australia and members of the university's academic staff. The discussion was recorded and posted on the centre's website.

During his visit, the Ambassador also met with the Governor of South Australia and attended a lunch hosted by the South Australia division of the Australian Palestinian Parliamentary Friendship Group. He also took time to meet with a number of Palestinian-Australian businessmen, advocacy organisations, and members of Adelaide's Palestinian community.



Amb. Abdulhadi at the South Australia Parliament

9. **On the 29 June, the General Delegation of Palestine sent a letter to the Foreign Ministers of Australia and New Zealand, Senator the Hon. Bob Carr and the Hon. Mr Murray McCully, to draw their urgent attention to the Israeli government's decision to demolish 51 Palestinian homes and facilities in the village of Susiya near Hebron in the West Bank. Including a clinic funded by AusAID and solar panels funded by EU member states.**

The letter explained that the demolition order forms just one in a series of actions committed by Israel in the Susiya area including the constant expansion of settlements over the last two decades, the stripping of Palestinian property rights, the theft of Palestinian lands, and the denial of the right of Palestinians to obtain building permits. This has been undertaken in direct violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and various other binding international legal agreements, and in the face of widespread international and domestic opposition.

Ambassador Abdulhadi also referred the ministers to a report released by a distinguished group of British judges and lawmakers on Israeli torture of Palestinian children. The report, entitled *Children in Military Custody*, found Israeli practices to constitute, at least, six violations of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The delegation that compiled the independent report was led by former High Court judge Sir Stephen Sedley and was backed by both the British Foreign Office and the British Consulate in Jerusalem.

The Ambassador called upon the ministers to take action against such practices and join the international community in their condemnation.

10. **Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in a meeting between DFAT and the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Canberra on March 30 that aimed to further dialogue between Australia and the Arab League, based upon the memorandum of understanding that was signed between the two parties.** The General Delegation is playing a key role in coordinating the development of this strategic dialogue, particularly by playing a major role within this process.
11. **The visit of Senator the Hon Bob Carr, Foreign Minister of Australia, to Ramallah on August 6 strengthened the relationship between Australia and Palestine, particularly through personal discussions with President Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, Foreign Minister Dr Riyad Malki and other Palestinian ministers.**

Senator Carr also made special arrangements to meet with renowned Palestinian legislator and activist Dr Hanan Ashrawi, to whom he awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in 2003.

During the visit, Senator Carr emphasised Australia's support for the realisation of an independent Palestinian state and his opposition to continuing settlement activity. He also detailed the expansion of Australia's aid and development commitment dedicated to assisting Palestinian institutions and projects in the improvement of education and health.

In his activities, Senator Carr also demonstrated his engagement with the Australian-Palestinian community - particularly signified through his attendance at Palestinian National Day events each year over three decades - and Australia's dedication to the strengthening of cooperation between its government and the PNA.



H.E.
President
Mahmoud
Abbas
receives
the Hon.
Senator
Bob Carr in
Ramallah

- 12. A letter of congratulations was sent to the Australian government for securing a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for the years 2013-14.**

The success of the government's campaign to win the seat represents Australia's endeavour to grow as a global player and influence world events more decisively. As such, it should be viewed as an important opportunity for Palestine and underscores the importance of the General Delegation's efforts to strengthen its bilateral relations with the government and with Australian policy-making bodies.

- 13. Under the auspices of the General Delegation of Palestine, the Palestinian community attended a dinner with the Foreign Minister of Australia, Senator the Hon Bob Carr, and his wife, Ms Helena Carr, in Sydney on November 30.**

The dinner, attended by more than 30 distinguished members of the Palestinian community, aimed at strengthening the community's relationship with policymakers and underlining the crucial role of Australian Palestinians in Australian society. It provided those in attendance with a vital opportunity to present the perspectives of Australian Palestinians on Australian policies regarding Palestine as well as their own personal stories of dispossession and occupation. The minister expressed his appreciation for the chance to hear the human stories of the conflict and connect with Australian Palestinians in such a way. Speeches were given by Senator Carr, Ambassador Abdulhadi and Mr Eddie Zananiri (who is an active member of the community). A question and answer session allowed guests to interact with Senator Carr, make suggestions, and receive advice as to how Palestinians in Australia can make their voices heard in advocating for a just solution to the conflict.

During the dinner, the minister explained the reasons behind Australia's decision to abstain from voting on the status of Palestine in the UN General Assembly and expressed the Australian government's continued support for a two-state solution and the establishment of an independent Palestine. In particular, Senator Carr emphasised the significance of the decision to abstain as a move away from previous positions – a development that should therefore be viewed positively by the Palestinian community.

The Palestinian Ambassador, in turn, thanked the minister for accepting the invitation and urged Australia to continue its support for the Palestinian people in their consistent attempts to end the Israeli occupation and establish their independent and sovereign state within 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.



The Hon Senator Bob Carr, Minister of Foreign Affairs during his meeting with the Palestinian Community in Sydney

- 14. The General Delegation of Palestine continues to implement its program with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, focused on the peace process, political support for the two-state solution and the position of the Australian government towards the final status issues.**

The General Delegation of Palestine considers this bilateral diplomatic relationship to be one of its most important programs. The advice provided by DFAT to the Australian government and the communications flowing between DFAT and the Australian government regarding Palestine make this program pivotal to sustaining influential representation for Palestine in government policy and decision-making.

The General Delegation conducted a number of meetings with DFAT over the course of the year both as part of its regular consultations on the parameters of the conflict and strategies for achieving a just solution, and in response to various events and crises. Thus, on September 17 Counsellor Suheir Gedeon met with the Assistant Secretary of DFAT's Middle East Branch, Ms Lynette Wood, to discuss the Palestinian plan to upgrade their status in the UN General Assembly and to encourage the government to support the Palestinians UN endeavour.

Counsellor Gedeon met for a second time with Ms Wood on September 27 to discuss the proposed process for facilitating the work of the General Delegation in Australia. A number of provisions were discussed related to improving the ability of the Delegation to operate in Australia as a diplomatic mission to the country. Counsellor Gedeon expressed the Delegation's interest in the provision of such measures as the start of a larger process to upgrade the diplomatic status of the General Delegation in Australia. Indeed, in meetings conducted throughout the year, DFAT had made indications that the package could possibly be implemented within the framework of a future status upgrade. At the September 27 meeting Ms Wood committed to providing an elaborated plan of the proposals.

- 15. The General Delegation participated in the National Australia Day celebrations, which included a reception hosted by the Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, on January 26 at the Lodge.** Ambassador Abdulhadi took the opportunity to convey President Abbas' congratulations and good wishes to the Prime Minister on this occasion.

Members of Parliament, the diplomatic corps and Australian civil society attended the reception.



Prime Minister Hon Julia Gillard welcomes Amb. Abdulhadi and his spouse/Canberra

16. **On October 22 Ambassador Abdulhadi and Counsellor Suheir Gedeon met with Mr Tom Wilson, the new Australian Representative in Ramallah, at the General Delegation in Canberra.** The current political situation, the role of Australia in foreign affairs, and the enhancement of bilateral relations were all discussed.

17. **Ambassador Abdulhadi met with a group of Australian diplomats who speak Arabic and discuss with them the latest developments of the Israel-Palestine conflict and the Israeli concept of security on February 28.**

In this meeting, the Ambassador explained that Israel's security strategy is currently based upon the maintenance of a balance of power. However, this type of security is unsustainable in the long term, and Ambassador Abdulhadi emphasised that Israel's security cannot be achieved without a meaningful investment in the peace process and the reaching of a comprehensive peace in the region.

18. **The visit of New Zealand's Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Murray McCully, to Palestine on May 6 contributed to the strengthening of relations between the two governments.** The General Delegation played a central part in the organisation of the Minister's visit through the preparation of his schedule, the coordination of logistics, and by briefing the Palestinian Foreign Minister, Dr Riyad Malki, on important matters to discuss with Minister McCully.

A group of parliamentarians from New Zealand followed the Minister with their own visit to Palestine soon after, on May 17. The Delegation was again instrumental in arranging the schedule of the visit, which included meetings with Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, Foreign Minister Riyad Malki, and representatives of President Mahmoud Abbas.



Hon Murray McCully, Foreign Minister of New Zealand and
H.E. Minister Riyad Malki

- 19. In the effort to enhance and develop bilateral ties with Pacific nations, Ambassador Abdulhadi met with Fiji's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mr Ratu Inoke Kubuabola in Sydney on July 30.**

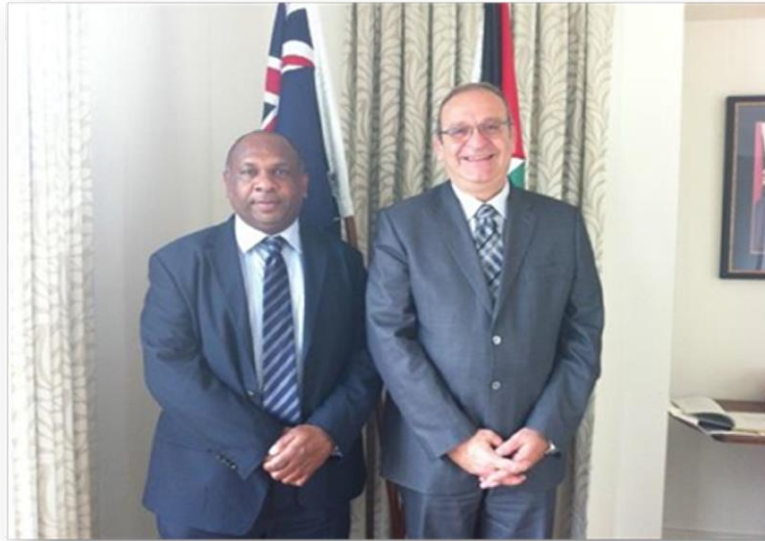
The meeting involved a discussion on the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the state of Palestine and the nation of Fiji, in which the minister pledged to investigate the matter and update the Delegation on any progress in the following months.



Amb. Abdulhadi and H.E. the Foreign Minister of Fiji in Sydney

- 20. The General Delegation continued to review the progress of the submission of Ambassador Abdulhadi's credentials to Vanuatu that was carried out in order to open full diplomatic relations.**

This process has been pursued for a number of years, and the Delegation believes that having the High Commissioner based in Canberra will ease the process and bring about the expected results in the near future.



Amb. Abdulhadi with Amb. of Vanuatu in Canberra

21. On December 12 the General Delegation participated in a reception organised annually by DFAT for the entire international diplomatic corps in Australia.



Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

THE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY AND THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

- 22. Representatives of the Palestinian Delegation conducted a meeting with AusAID on March 5 in order to discuss the 5 Year Development Partnership Agreement between the Australian government and the Palestinian National Authority that was finalised in 2011.**

Discussion during the meeting centred on evaluating the implementation of the program and the challenges involved. The meeting comprised one of a series of consultative sessions that the General Delegation regularly engages in with AusAID to support the program and monitor its implementation and impact. The General Delegation also uses such meetings as an opportunity to encourage the Australian government to further its support for the state building program and for development in Palestine in general. In addition, the General Delegation raised the issue of the challenges faced by Palestinian students who wish to study in Australia, in particular with regard to the slow issue of student visas, and referred to specific cases that required attention.

A team from the General Delegation again visited AusAID on April 26 for a consultation session on the highly important agreement. Discussion was also particularly devoted to the upcoming signing of the partnership agreement reached between the Australian government and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).



Australian Government

AusAID

- 23. A major advancement in Australia's commitment of support to Palestine came with the finalisation of a \$90 million partnership agreement with UNRWA in support of its core programs throughout the Middle East over the next five years.**

The commitment came at a time when the organisation found itself significantly under-funded and unable to keep pace of the needs of refugees and what is required to achieve its human development goals. The step has contributed to making Australia one of few countries to make a significant increase to its development assistance to Palestine in recent years.

Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in the signing ceremony involving the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bob Carr, and UNRWA Commissioner-General Filippo Grandi. The ceremony was also attended by a number of Arab ambassadors in Canberra.

The Palestinian Ambassador met with Commissioner-General Grandi during his visit on May 28 and was informed of the challenges and financial difficulties that the organisation is currently facing. Ambassador Abdulhadi also discussed the role that the General Delegation of Palestine played in the reaching of the Development Partnership Agreement between the Australian government and the Palestinian National Authority.



Hon Senator Bob Carr signed a cooperation agreement with Commissioner General of UNRWA , Filippo Grandi in Canberra

DEVELOPING THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GENERAL DELEGATION OF PALESTINE AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATION



- 24. The General Delegation of Palestine provided support to the planning of an annual visit to Palestine, enabling a group of influential Australians to attain a first-hand experience of Palestine and its people.** The trip, which is organised by the non-governmental Australian organisation APHEDA (Union Aid Abroad), involved members of parliament, businessmen, academics, mainstream activists, and members of civil society organisations. The Delegation assisted in setting meetings with members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- 25. In cooperation with the Australian Council of Churches, the General Delegation also assisted in conducting a highly successful visit of Australian church leaders to Palestine on March 5.** The group met with Prime Minister Salam Fayyad as well as with President Mahmoud Abbas' advisor for religious affairs, Mr Ziad Al-Bandak. In addition to such high profile meetings, the group also met with a large number of church representatives in Palestine, as well as with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. Their visit also included a tour of a number of archaeological sites in the West Bank. During their stay, Australian church leaders were able to experience the realities of occupation and witness the suffering of the Palestinian people struggling with its effects on their lives and livelihoods.
- 26. In the anticipated lead-up to Palestinian elections, the General Delegations made efforts to involve Australia in supporting the democratic process in Palestine by conducting a meeting with the Honourable John Dowd AO QC, president of the International Commission of Jurists on March 16.** The meeting focused on the possibility of having Australian representatives participate in the election as observers and the role that the International Commission of Jurists would play in such an arrangement. Mr Dowd expressed his interest in participating in the monitoring process and in persuading the government to support such a project.

27. **The General Delegation took an active role in facilitating the participation of two Palestinian diplomats in the academic conference on disarmament in the Middle East that took place in Greece.**
28. **The General Delegation also participated in the lunch held at the National Press Club in Canberra in honour of the Secretary-General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Mr Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu.** Ambassador Abdulhadi met with Mr İhsanoğlu twice during his official visit to Australia and on these occasions he discussed the Australian position on Palestinian issues and encouraged the Secretary-General to present the OIC's position on the Palestinian question to the Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard.
29. **The General Delegation engaged key strategists and defence analysts on the central issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a lecture delivered at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies on May 30.**

The centre operates as the educational institution of the Australian Defence College and delivers courses to senior military officers and government officials engaged in national security issues.

Ambassador Abdulhadi presented the key points of conflict from the Palestinian perspective focusing on the two-state solution, the terms of reference of the peace process, and final status issues before responding to audience questions.



Amb. Abdulhadi delivered a lecture at the Center for Defence and Strategic Studies/Canberra.

30. **Ambassador Abdulhadi was invited to the University of Canberra to deliver a lecture on the impact of the 'Arab Spring' on Palestine-Israel conflict on August 8.**

The lecture was chaired by Professor John Stanhope, the director of engagement at the University's Institute for Governance (ANZSIG) and former Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory. Among the audience in attendance were a number of academics, students, representatives of civil society organisations and interested members of the public.



In his lecture, the Ambassador examined the various and wide-ranging effects of developments in the Arab World on Palestinians and how the 'Arab Spring' is likely to impact on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the long term, and why the problem is so enduring.



Amb. Abdulhadi delivered a lecture at University of Canberra.

- 31. The General Delegation of Palestine engaged with a number of youth and advocacy organisations in Australia to encourage them to take part in the Palestinian National Youth Week Festival from 15 November.** The festival coincided with the Palestinian declaration of independence and was marked by a celebration of Palestinian culture, society and sport – sport being a particular focus for the 2012 Olympic year. It also presented a valuable opportunity for young people from the West Bank and around the world to meet each other and express their common interest in the heritage and future of Palestine.
- 32. After being invited to present the Palestinian narrative and experience to secondary students, Counsellor Suheir Gedeon delivered a presentation at Copland College and Narrabundah Collage, secondary schools in the ACT.**

Ms Gedeon explained the history of the Palestinians and the Israel-Palestine conflict and answered the questions of students and faculty members. Such presentations provide valuable perspectives to eager new audiences who would otherwise receive scant exposure to the Palestinian narrative.



Counselor Suheir Gedeon delivered a presentation on Israel-Palestine Conflict at a high school in Canberra.

33. **The visit of the highly regarded Israeli historian Professor Ilan Pappé in September allowed Australian audiences to learn about the history of Israel and Palestine from an academic who draws on thorough research and evidence to support his incisive arguments. The General Delegation supported Professor Pappé's visit by participating in an address given by him at the National Press Club in Canberra that was hosted by APAN.** The sold-out event was televised nationwide and attended by diplomats, academics, members of the press, members of civil society, and members of the public. Thus, a large and varied audience were able to hear Professor Pappé's highly articulate summary of the history and direction of the conflict, as well as his answers to questions posed by the audience.

The Palestine Parliamentary Friendship Group also organised an event in which the Delegation of Palestine participated. The group invited Professor Pappé to deliver an address at Parliament House during which he described the systematic cruelty endured by the Palestinians that continues without media coverage or international attention.

The purpose of Professor Pappé's visit was to deliver the annual Edward Said Memorial Lecture at the University of Adelaide, but included visits to a number of major Australian cities as well as televised appearances.



Counsellor Suheir Gedeon and Valentina Al-ama from Palestinian Delegation participated in a Lecture by Ilan Pappé

34. **The General Delegation continues to engage Australian civil society in the development process in Palestine through regular consultation with non-governmental organisations.** As part of these efforts, the Ambassador met with the Australian Council for International Development's (ACFID) Middle East Working Group to discuss the various projects that the Council is actively implementing. The Ambassador explained Palestine's development needs and priorities as well as the specific challenges posed by continued occupation, the presence and expansion of settlements, and the imposition and encroachment of the West Bank wall.

ACFID is considered a vital partner to the General Delegation, particularly in light of its role as an umbrella body for non-governmental organisations involved in aid and international development in Australia. Their Middle East Working Group functions as a forum for the coordination of program delivery and advocacy and therefore provides an important avenue for the General Delegation to both communicate Palestine's development needs and gain insight into the strategies of Australian organisations.

35. **Ambassador Abdulhadi was interviewed by the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) for their monthly e-newsletter in a feature published on 23 April. The AIIA is a highly respected independent non-profit think tank with branches around Australia, and holds close ties with DFAT.** In this highly important interview, the Ambassador discussed the General Delegation's objectives in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, the relationship between Australia and Palestine, the effect of Australia's voting on Palestine's UNESCO bid, the impact of the Arab Spring on the Palestinian quest for self-determination, and the status of reconciliation between Fateh and Hamas.
36. **The General Delegation of Palestine supported the activities of the Australia-Arab Business Network (AABN) through attending the AABN Gala Dinner as their Guest of Honour and presenting a speech to the AABN on trade and investment opportunities available in Palestine.** Ambassador Abdulhadi addressed the audience at the March 17 gathering, attended by businesspersons and professionals of Arab background.



Amb.
Abdulhadi
hosted by
the
Australian-
Arab
Business
Network
(AABN)

37. In working to achieve the objective of enhancing trade relations between Australia and Palestine, the General Delegation actively participated in preparations for the Australia-Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (AACCI) 2012 Business Forum and Expo, held on June 5 and 6. While doing so, the General Delegation communicated with the Palestinian Ministry of Economy and with Pal trade in order to encourage them to participate in the forum and expo and to approach the event as an opportunity to expand trade relations between the two economies.

Ambassador Abdulhadi prepared a speech for the event discussing important investment opportunities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, however due to health reasons he was unable to deliver it in person. The paper was instead added to the report produced by the forum.



CELEBRATING PALESTINIAN NATIONAL EVENTS

38. On the event of Palestinian Independence Day, the General Delegation of Palestine participated in celebrations held each year in the NSW Parliament.

Organized by the Council of Australian Palestinians (CAP), the event took place in Sydney on November 14 and was attended by a large number of parliamentarians, representatives of the NSW State Premier, the Arab and international diplomatic corps, civil society representatives and the Palestinian community.

Alongside a speech delivered by Ambassador Abdulhadi, other highly important speeches were given by a representative of Mr Barry O'Farrell, the NSW State Premier, and by Senator Doug Cameron. Senator Cameron first delivered a speech on behalf of Senator Kate Lundy before then giving his own address. Senator Cameron has demonstrated impressive commitment to the cause of justice in Israel/Palestine and in his inspirational speech he reaffirmed the right of the Palestinians to self-determination.



Amb. Abdulhadi delivered a speech during the Palestinian National Day Celebration in Sydney

- 39. In December, the General Delegation collaborated with the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC), the Australian National University's Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies, and the Council of Arab Ambassadors to organise an event for the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, December 3, 2012.**

A large function was held at the Australian National University featuring speeches made by Mr Christopher Woodthorpe, the director of UNIC in Canberra; the Dean of the Council of Arab Ambassadors, H.E. Mohammad Maalinin; Professor Amin Saikal, the director of the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies; and Ambassador Abdulhadi. The speakers all emphasised the importance of the recent upgrade of Palestine to a non-member state at the UNGA and the positive impact that such a step would have on the development of a two-state solution. The event also showcased a moving musical performance and an exhibit of Palestinian arts and crafts.

The Palestinian community in Canberra played a significant role by donning traditional dress and by providing a large banquet of traditional Palestinian dishes and desserts - much to the delight of all guests.



Amb. Abdulhadi addressing the guests at the UN day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People function

40. The General Delegation organised and participated in events commemorating the Nakba held around Australia in May.

In Canberra, the General Delegation held an event supported by the Palestinian community that included a speech by Ambassador Abdulhadi, a reading of Mahmoud Darwish's poetry by two young members of the Canberra Palestinian community, and the screening of a documentary on the Nakba.

The central commemorative event was held in Sydney by the Palestinian Workers Union during which the Ambassador spoke about the centrality of the Nakba to Palestinian identity and experience. He also paid tribute to life in Palestine before the Nakba, thereby refuting the Zionist myth of a 'land without people', and addressed contemporary challenges in the form of ongoing Israeli policies and difficulties facing Palestinian reconciliation.

The General Delegation published an article on its website presenting the Palestinian narrative of Nakba and its enduring impact on almost every aspect of Palestinian life today. The website also provided links to the Negotiation Affairs Department's collection of memories of Palestinian life before 1948, and to the important documentary produced by Al Jazeera on the appropriation of Palestinian books and manuscripts in 1948.



Palestinian Nakba (Catastrophe)

**THE GENERAL DELEGATION OF PALESTINE
COMMEMORATING NAKBA**



38. **The General Delegation encouraged the Palestinian community and a number of non-governmental organisations to observe and commemorate the anniversary of Nakba.** Commemorations took place in Sydney and Melbourne .The General Union of the Palestinian workers in Sydney organized a big function on this occasion attended by Ambassador Abdulhadi and hundreds of Palestinian Community members. On this occasion, Ambassador Abdulhadi has delivered a speech in which he tackled the life in Palestine before Nakba and the impact of Nakba on the Socio-economic development in Palestine and its lessons learned. The Delegation prepared an article on the occasion which was published on the main page of the website along with all the relevant articles that were released by the Palestinian Negotiation Affairs Department and the PLO.



Amb. Abdulhadi delivered a talk during the commemoration of Nakba anniversary in Sydney

39. **In celebration of the birth anniversary of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, widely considered to be a national treasure, the General Delegation participated in an event honouring his memory.**

The evening was hosted by the Central Queensland University at their branch in Melbourne on March 13 and involved poetry readings in both English and Arabic, accompanied by the Oud. Ambassador Abdulhadi also gave a talk honouring Darwish's life and poetry as well as his status as a representative figure of the Palestinian struggle. He also recited 'Mother'; one of Darwish's most well-known poems. The result was a highly moving evening for both the audience and participants. It is worth mentioning that the PA has announced the birth anniversary of Mahmoud Darwish as the Palestinian Cultural Day.



Palestinian late poet Mahmoud Darwish



Amb. Abdulhadi during Mahmoud Darwish Birth Celebration in Melbourne.

40. The General Delegation participated in celebrations of the 43rd anniversary of the creation of Fateh and the launch of the Palestinian National liberation Movement, organized and held by the Palestinian Workers Union in Sydney on February 13.

During the celebration, Ambassador Abdulhadi spoke of the tremendous sacrifices made by the Palestinian people in the struggle for self-determination, and the constant demonstration of the strength of their Palestinian identity and agency. He also affirmed the role of the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and took the opportunity to clarify the current Palestinian position on the issues of the peace process, Palestinian unity, state building, and Australian-Palestinian bilateral relations.

Mr Eddie Zananiri, A Palestinian community leader and the leader of Fateh also spoke during the event, highlighting the history of the Fateh movement and the efforts of its leaders in striving to achieve the national aspirations of the Palestinian people, particularly the right to self-determination, the right of return for refugees, and the establishment of an independent state in Palestine. Mr Zananiri also discussed the importance of creating a centralised body to bring the Australian Palestinian Community together.

41. **The General Delegation welcoming the opening of a cultural conference in Melbourne, titled *Hikayat*, dedicated to exploring the tradition of Palestinian storytelling and theatre.** Four Palestinian artists travelled from the Occupied Palestinian Territories to take part in the occasion. Although Ambassador Abdulhadi was unable to attend, a speech that he prepared was delivered on his behalf.
42. **Promoting the appreciation of Palestinian culture and heritage among Australians, the General Delegation supported the launching of 'Keys of Hope: A Palestinian Story' at the Migration Museum of South Australia in Adelaide on December 16.** Organised by the Australian Friends of Palestine Association (AFOPA), the exhibition displayed rare artefacts, traditional Palestinian costume and embroidery, artwork, and information exploring the history, culture and beliefs of the Palestinian people from early history through to the present day. In doing so, the exhibition movingly told the story of Palestinian suffering and determination and carried with it a message of hope for peace and justice.

The exhibition, running from 4 December 2012 until 23 February 2013, is of key importance as an accessible means for all sectors of Australian society to gain exposure to the Palestinian experience

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GENERAL DELEGATION OF PALESTINE AND THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY IN AUSTRALIA

43. **Strengthening communication with the Australian-Palestinian community, the General Delegation actively supported the attempts to establish the Palestinian Community Council.** Such a council will be able to act as the Australian-Palestinian community's legitimate representative body in dealings with the government, local parliaments, and with civil society organisations. The establishment of the community council has been one of the major projects that the General Delegation has worked toward completing in 2012.

Throughout the year, the General Delegation held a series of consultative meetings with representatives of the Palestinian community to discuss objectives and strategies involved in establishing an Australia-wide Palestinian community council. This body will act as an umbrella council, bringing together Palestinian communities and organisations from around Australia.

Thus far the executive committee, made up of representatives from each state and territory in Australia, has been agreed upon, and it is expected that the official announcement of the establishment of the council will be made soon. It is worth mentioning that the establishment of this body is coordinated and facilitated with active participation of the existing Palestinian community organizations.

In Canberra, the General Delegation facilitated the successful establishment of the city's chapter of the community council. This process involved finalising the makeup of the executive committee, preparing the council's objectives and constitution, and officially registering it as an organisation. The successful establishment of the Canberra Australian Palestinian Society (CAPS) will function to enhance Palestinian identity among Palestinians in the area while also allowing them a means through which to be more involved in Palestinian representation.

- 44. As an initiative to improve the relationships formed between the Palestinian community and other communities in Australia, the General Delegation facilitated a meeting between some Palestinian community members and members of the Australian Jewish community.** The meeting presented a rare opportunity for the two communities to interact in a way that is not possible in Israel/Palestine; with their shared Australian identity acting as a bridge to political divides.

Results proved positive and fruitful, with participants agreeing to commence an official strategic dialogue between the two communities with a view to supporting the establishment of a two-state arrangement and a peaceful and just solution to the conflict.

- 45. The Canberra Multicultural Festival on February 11 provided the General Delegation of Palestine, in collaboration with the Palestinian community of Canberra, the opportunity to showcase Palestinian culture and heritage to the Australian community.**

The two-day event witnessed the attendance of over 300,000 visitors from around Australia and involved the participation of several diplomatic missions and community groups. The festival is one of the most important events to take place during the year in Canberra, representing a valuable opportunity to interact with the Australian community and its various cultures. Palestinian activities included the distribution of information on Palestinian culture and tourism, handicraft displays of embroidery, ceramics and brassware, and an exhibition of photographs of Jerusalem. A particular highlight, however, was a dabkke performance by young men and women from the Palestinian community that was very warmly received by the Australian audience in attendance.

The General Delegation is currently in the midst of preparations for the upcoming Canberra Multicultural Festival in February 2013.



National
Multicultural
Festival
Canberra



Images of the participation of the General delegation of Palestine and the Palestinian Community in Canberra Multicultural Festival

RELATIONS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATIC CORPS

46. On December 12 the General Delegation participated in a reception organised annually by DFAT for the entire international diplomatic corps in Australia.

47. The General Delegation has had a consistent and active participation in the national days and events of the Arab and International diplomatic missions.

These included an event organised by the European Union on the 50th anniversary of its establishment on May 24, as well as an event held on Africa Day, among many others.

48. The General Delegation participated in welcoming the Lebanese president, General Michel Silimein , during his visit to Australia on April 16.

The visit to Australia marked the first to be undertaken by a Lebanese president, and Ambassador Abdulhadi took advantage of the opportunity by delivering a speech on behalf of the Council of Arab Ambassadors.

The Ambassador highlighted the valuable contributions made by the Lebanese community in Australia and maintained the importance of strengthening community support for Arab concerns in Australia, particularly with regard to the Palestinian struggle. He also expressed the appreciation of the Palestinian government for support given to Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and the urgent need to improve their living conditions and grant them full rights to join the workforce.

49. Throughout the year the General Delegation of Palestine has played a leading role in the Council of Arab Ambassadors by setting agendas, participating actively in meetings, providing working papers, and participating in the various subcommittees related to the work of the Council. As a result, the council has supported the Delegation's work during the Gaza attacks by adding their weight to efforts to press Australia and New Zealand to vote for Palestine's status upgrade in the UNGA.

50. In order to promote closer relations and coordination between the Council of Australia-Arab Relations and the Council of Arab Ambassadors, the Palestinian Delegation took part in a meeting to discuss key issues regarding an enhancement of the partnership.

51. Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in a number of events during the month of Ramadan hosted by Australian Islamic organisations and Embassies of the Arab and Islamic worlds.



Amb. Abdulhadi and some Arab Ambassadors

MEDIA ACTIVITIES



52. **The General Delegation maximised interest in Palestine-related issues by dedicating considerable and increased energies to engagement with the Australian media.**

At the beginning of the year, Ambassador Abdulhadi conducted three interviews with SBS in both Arabic and English during which he discussed the Palestinian reconciliation process, President Abbas' invitation to Arab leaders to visit Jerusalem, and the general political situation.

53. **The General Delegation has consistently and promptly conducted media monitoring by reviewing and analysing Australian reporting of issues and events related to Palestine.**

54. **While Australians were celebrating the Easter holiday, the General Delegation prepared an article on the Palestinian experience of Easter under occupation, completed on April 7.** Unfortunately the article was not accepted for publication in newspapers, and so it was instead published on the Delegation's website.

55. A number of briefing papers and factsheets were circulated to Australian and New Zealander members of parliament, members of the Arab and International diplomatic corps, civil society and the media in response to particular events.

These included:

- *Documents issued by the PLO's Negotiation Affairs Department in commemoration of the Nakba.*
- *A press release issued by the PNA's Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerning the Israeli government's continued policy of settlement construction in the West Bank.*
- *A press release issued by the PNA's Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcoming the UN Security Council resolution denouncing the construction of Israeli settlements.*
- *Fact sheets issued by the PNA's Government Media Centre on Israeli incitement.*
- *A press release issued by the General Delegation on the same subject.*
- *Ambassador Abdulhadi's article on Palestinian prisoners, published in The Australian.*
- *A study conducted by the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) on the economic base of Israeli settlements.*

56. The General Delegation devoted extensive efforts to drawing attention to the plight of Palestinians imprisoned in Israeli jails and to organising support campaigns for hunger striking prisoners. In particular, the Delegation prepared a factsheet documenting all aspects of the issue, including the arbitrary Israeli practice of administrative detention and the torture, abuse, and ill treatment of prisoners occurring in contravention of international humanitarian and human rights laws. The factsheet was circulated to government, civil society, and the media. In this regard, The General Delegation also issued a press release to draw attention to the plight of Palestinian prisoners undergoing a hunger strike, highlighting Khader Adnan's well-known story, while also calling to denounce the Israeli practice of administrative detention. This was further carried out through the Delegation's website where texts composed by international organisations were posted.

In addition, the General Delegation sent a letter from Ambassador Abdulhadi to the foreign ministers of Australia and New Zealand calling upon the governments of both countries to exert pressure on Israel in accordance with the responsibilities attendant to their status as signatories of the Fourth Geneva Convention and to their endorsement of a UN resolution on the implementation of the Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The Delegation also published an article in the major daily Australia-wide newspaper, *The Australian*, entitled *System ignores hunger for freedom*, which described the personal stories of some of the hunger strikers, the conditions faced by Palestinian prisoners, and Israel's regime of imprisonment. The Australian Zionist community negatively received the article.

On top of these efforts, the Palestinian Delegation issued an urgent media alert and published information on its website.



57. In order to promote awareness of the case for upgraded Palestinian status in the United Nations as well as the political and economic situation in Palestine, Counsellor Suheir Gedeon featured in a number of media interviews in the later part of the year. These interviews were conducted with the national broadcaster SBS Arabic, among other news media.
58. In 2012 the General Delegation placed greater emphasis on publishing information on its website in order to present a key gateway to information on current events. Alongside updates made to content, the design of the website was also modernised and improved this year in order to allow for easy navigation. These upgrades resulted in the website becoming a hub of information and first point of reference for many interested parties. A high increase in the number of visitors to the website demonstrated its importance as a major source of reliable information on Palestine. The website can be accessed at www.palestine-australia.com.

The screenshot shows the website interface for the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. The header includes the organization's name and language options (English and Arabic). A navigation menu lists: Home, The General Delegation, Consular, Palestine, International, Palestinian Community, News, Highlights, Links, and Contact Details. The main content area features a 'Welcome to the General Delegation of Palestine' section with a description of the delegation's role. Below this is a 'Highlights' section with two news items: one dated 10 April 2013 regarding a cabinet decision on medical negligence, and another dated 3 April 2013 regarding the death of martyr Mayara Abu Hamdiya. A green sidebar on the right contains the text 'Palestinian Delegation website features'.

EMPOWERING THE GENERAL DELEGATION OF PALESTINE AND INSTITUTIONALIZING ITS WORK

59. **The General Delegation prepared the annual plan for 2012/2013 and sent this to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.** The report included analytical sections on Australia, New Zealand, and Pacific Countries' policies on the Middle East, as well as an outline of the Delegation's objectives and related action plans for the period 2012-13.
60. **The General Delegation has continued to develop more highly systematised processes in order to create an efficient and sustainable professional working arrangement.** This endeavour has involved the upgrading of the Delegation's archival and record keeping system, as well as the introduction of a network to facilitate information sharing and ease of communication between members of the Delegation. Such measures will also help to improve the efficiency of consular and administrative processes and enable the General Delegation to achieve maximum impact from the very limited financial and human resources provided to it. These measures included:
- a. The constant improvement of the General Delegation of Palestine's website. Regular updating and strong management of the website ensures that the most frequently accessed public face of the General Delegation of Palestine is always an authoritative, informative and persuasive voice for Palestine in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Region.
 - b. A review of the consular section of the website, involving the provision of clearer guidance and more detailed information on consular procedures. The website was further developed to function as an online port, allowing users to be able to enter data directly.
 - c. The creation of contact lists made available on the General Delegation's information sharing network.
 - d. The development of an efficient and highly organised information storage system, allowing for documents to be archived in an accessible and logical manner. This system will prove valuable for the long-term operation of the General Delegation.
 - e. Upgrading of financial procedures. The General Delegation's financial reporting is grounded in professional accounting procedure, thus strengthening its transparency and accountability and ensuring full accordance with the policies and procedures of the Palestinian National Fund.
 - f. Continuous enhancement of the Delegation's consular services with the aim of improving the efficiency of service delivery to the Palestinian community in Australia. A key element in this process has been the modernisation of the consular service database, which has occurred in conjunction with the development of the website's consular service section.

- 61. Following the resignation of Mrs Najibe Zahabi, the General Delegation welcomed the addition of Ms Valentina Alama in her new capacity as the financial and administrative officer.**
Ms Alama is a Palestinian who came from Bethlehem to join the Delegation and recently became an Australian national.

Challenges Facing the General Delegation of Palestine in 2012



The General Delegation of Palestine confronted a number of challenges that encumbered the achievement of its various programs and activities in 2012. In order to overcome such challenges, the General Delegation upgraded and reconfigured its administrative processes, which helped to facilitate the execution of most of the activities set out in the year's annual plan.

Such improvements notwithstanding, the following key challenges must be highlighted:

1. The vast and diverse territories that fall under the purview of the General Delegation of Palestine – encompassing Australia, New Zealand, and 12 Pacific states.

A corresponding increase in its financial or human resources have not accompanied the increase in the General Delegation's extensive geographical and political responsibility, and as a result, the General Delegation has become severely overextended.

The Delegation's diplomatic unit consists of only two representatives, Ambassador Izzat Abdulhadi and Counsellor Suheir Gedeon. In terms of administrative support, it is minimal and limited. The General Delegation's sole administrative officer is responsible for carrying out all administrative and financial duties.

However, a staff shortage does not exist on the diplomatic level; two diplomats have proven sufficient for undertaking the General Delegation's main diplomatic responsibilities. Rather, an acute deficiency is clearly evident in terms of the administrative capacity available to support the General Delegation's diplomatic work.

More specifically, the General Delegation is in need of four administrative officers (of Australian nationality):

- An executive assistant to the ambassador.
- An administrative and financial officer.
- A project officer.
- A media officer.

On top of the rapidly increasing workload faced by the small number of staff, the financial resources available to the General Delegation are extremely limited. This is especially apparent in the budget allocated for the work expenses and salaries of local staff.

2. The General Delegation of Palestine operates in a countries not considered to be consistently supportive of the Palestinian cause. This reality requires a heightened level of effort from the Delegation and a far-reaching policy enabling it to reach out to the different sectors in such countries and promote the Palestinian cause.

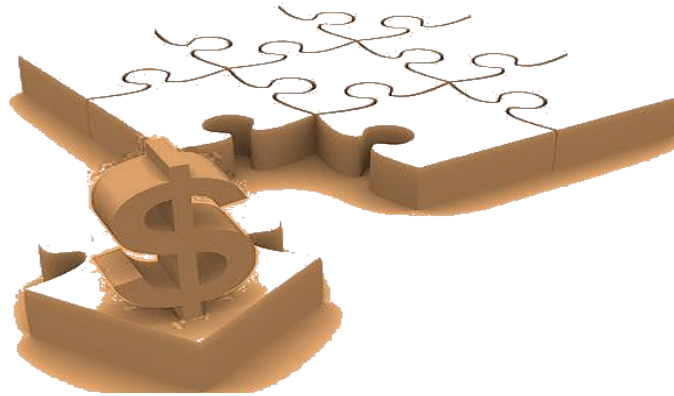
This political climate, which is not always agreeable, demands a great deal of dedication and strong links with all stakeholders. These include organisations of civil society, international organisations, advocacy organisations, the Arab and Islamic communities, the Palestinian community, workers' unions, churches, and local councils, among others.

The ability to effectively manage relations with these groups at the level that is needed lies beyond the current human and financial capacity of the General Delegation.

3. Australia has become one of the biggest donors to Palestine with an aid commitment of \$60-70 million per year.

Ensuring the continuation of this support requires close monitoring by the General Delegation and therefore a high commitment of time and resources.

It is also worth mentioning that New Zealand has started a program of financial and technical assistance to Palestine that requires continuous reporting and development.



4. It is not within the capacity of the Delegation, with its current human and financial limitations, to establish a sustainable diplomatic influence in the Pacific.

Moreover, the Delegation's inability to affect a sustained influence is also due to the absence of a comprehensive Arab strategy and approach to offer essential assistance to these states. Such assistance would carry further implications in view of the fact that these states are impoverished and depend on the assistance given to them by Australia, New Zealand, America, and China among others.

5. The Delegation faces clear challenges with regard to the Jewish Lobby, which is organised, efficient, and influential.

The Delegation of Palestine strives to establish a strategy suitable for dealing with the pro-Israel lobby, especially in the absence of an effectual Arab, Islamic, or Palestinian lobby.

The extent of this challenge should not be underestimated. The General Delegation has dedicated a large portion of its work to developing and executing an effective strategy to limit the influence of the Jewish Lobby.

6. Relations between the General Delegation of Palestine and the Palestinian community (numbering around 30,000 people) are excellent, although they are not without issues.

What is perhaps one of the most important of these issues is the absence of a united body capable of acting as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian community when dealing with stakeholders - particularly the Australian government or members of parliament.

In general, the lack of organisation within the Palestinian community, its lack of a unified voice, and the absence of a well-developed political approach all add to the workload of the General Delegation and weaken, to certain extent, its effectiveness.

7. Working with solidarity and advocacy groups is another challenge that faces the General Delegation of Palestine.

The General Delegation aims to unify the visions and the strategies of all actions undertaken or articulated in relation to Palestine. In particular, it aspires to achieve a situation in which these visions and strategies exist in harmony with the general political program of the PLO.

With great regret, some civil society organisations in Australia and New Zealand occasionally do not act in conformity with the program of the PLO. The challenge therefore, lies in the effort to integrate the program of the General Delegation of Palestine and the programs of advocacy groups in order to wield a strong influence upon the foreign policies of Australia and New Zealand.



This does not imply any kind of interference in the work and agenda of the existing advocacy groups. It just aims to maximizing influence and benefit through an effective coordination and consultation approach.

8. The Arab and Islamic communities do not demonstrate an awareness of how to adeptly navigate the democratic game in Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, they have neither the sufficient resources, nor the leadership and organisational capacity to exert effective influence on foreign policy programs in Australia and New Zealand.

This shortcoming, as well as the general political apathy demonstrated by these communities, impacts negatively upon the work and effectiveness of the General Delegation.

9. Despite important improvements in the management of communications between the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Palestinian diplomatic missions (of which the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific is one), It is still crucial to take serious steps and procedures to further developing these communications.

**Evaluation of the
Work of the General
Delegation of
Palestine in 2012**



In 2012, the General Delegation of Palestine continued its formidable successes in consolidating its legitimacy and credibility in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. These successes reveal themselves to be all the more notable when considered in view of the many and varied challenges the General Delegation has faced - particularly the complex political context in which it operates and the limited financial and administrative resources at its disposal.

Through its successful management of relations with key stakeholders - such as official institutions, organisations of civil society, the Arab and Islamic communities, the Palestinian community, the Jewish community, trade unions, churches, local councils, and academic institutions – the General Delegation of Palestine was able to gain great respect and recognition for its role as the region’s main representative of the Palestinian National Program.

There is insufficient scope here to present a comprehensive evaluation for each of the programs and activities that the Delegation has undertaken in 2012. However, it is nonetheless necessary to present a summarised assessment of the year’s strategies, approaches, and programs in reference to a number of important evaluation measures, encompassed by the following indicators:

RELEVANCE:

The programs and activities executed by the General Delegation throughout the year responded appropriately to the challenges and requirements that were presented by the political environments in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

A key example of this was the General Delegation’s response to enquiries from the ministries of foreign affairs in Australia and New Zealand in relation to the Palestinian issue. An effective initiative that made up part of this response was the drafting of a memorandum of understanding defining the main subjects to be discussed further with the governments of both countries.

A thorough appraisal of the General Delegation’s programs and activities found them to have been appropriate for the needs and priorities of the wide spectrum of stakeholders involved and in particular to the national interest of the Palestinian people.

EFFECTIVENESS:

The measure of the General Delegation’s effectiveness in 2012 is based upon two questions; the first being whether the activities undertaken corresponded to stated aims, and the second being whether the implemented activities were sufficient for realising the declared objectives.

The General Delegation of Palestine firmly believes that most its activities this year have largely corresponded with the objectives outlined in its annual plan. Despite this belief, however, the General Delegation does not overlook the activities that were carried out in response to direct instructions from the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs or for reasons related to public relations or emerge crises.

For example, it would not have been possible for the General Delegation to predict the hunger strike launched by Palestinian prisoners and include it in the Delegation’s annual plan. However, the General Delegation’s functional flexibility allowed it to organise an important campaign in support of the Palestinian detainees.

Overall, the year's activities were sufficient to realise their stated goals, although not totally. This was due to the scarcity of human and financial resources and the practical inability to travel to New Zealand or Pacific countries as regularly as needed.

EFFICIENCY:

An evaluation of the General Delegation's efficiency is based here upon an assessment of its human and financial resources in relation to the outputs of its work. In other words, it is the comparison of inputs and outputs.

The limited human and financial resources available were ideally utilised and resulted in an excellent implementation of programs when viewed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Indeed, the cost of programs and activities proved relatively minor in contrast to their significant impacts.

These results can be attributed to the dedication of the staff at the General Delegation; both their adherence to work plans and their professional competencies have greatly contributed to furthering the General Delegation's professionalism and efficiency.

In conclusion, very modest human and financial resources were efficiently utilised in the realisation of a vast range of high quality programs.

SUSTAINABILITY:

The foundations suggested and implemented by the General Delegation of Palestine and the results that have been attained so far can be considered sufficient for the achievement of sustainable and institutionalised outcomes. Such sustainability has been established in the area of stakeholder relationships and in the spheres of program administration, consular procedures, and financial and administrative affairs.

The General Delegation has developed clear standard operating procedures and fixed managerial guidelines for dealing with ministries of foreign affairs, federal parliaments, civil society, advocacy organisations, the Palestinian community, trade unions, academic institutions, churches, and other relevant groups or representatives.

Through its unique experience in working together with such entities, the General Delegation has been able to develop professional procedures and avenues of communication that have since become institutionalised aspects of its operation.

Moreover, managerial and financial procedures were significantly updated this year in order to most effectively support the sustainability of the General Delegation's diplomatic efforts.

IMPACT:

In 2012, General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific generated a clear impact upon the political environments in which it operated, demonstrated by perceptible shifts in policy positions, civil society and community engagement with the Delegation, and observable trends in public opinion, among other examples.

In terms of political dynamics, the General Delegation has received confirmation of the impact of its influence on Australia and New Zealand's policy positions regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Political discussion moved more decisively in favour of Palestine – from a mere recognition of national Palestinian aspirations to firm support for the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.

Australia's decision to abstain from voting on the status of Palestine at the UN is particularly indicative of this shift, presenting a stark break from Australia's conventional voting behaviour at the UN. New Zealand's vote in support of the aforementioned resolution provides yet another indication of the important influence that the General Delegation of Palestine achieved.

Growing recognition of the legitimacy and credibility of the General Delegation and its role has also been evidenced through the increased number of invitations to participate in the activities of official institutions.

Further, the General Delegation of Palestine played an important role in advancing coordination and cohesion between the programs of various advocacy organisations and the program of the PLO. Moreover, the General Delegation assisted in boosting the professional capacities of these organisations in the effort to construct a more broadly representative and unified lobbying and solidarity programs.

A key area of impact has been the Palestinian community's increased engagement with political and cultural activities and in the gradual creation of a framework for the centralisation and coordination of its efforts. The General Delegation has played the formative role in these developments and is particularly focused upon the establishment and maintenance of such a centralised and unifying framework for the community.

A real and positive change in public opinion on the issue of Palestine has also been recorded in Australia and New Zealand in direct relation to the General Delegation's determined effort to educate the public on the fundamental components of the Palestinian case. Such change is most clearly perceptible in the growing support expressed by Australians and New Zealanders for the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state.

Finally, despite the considerable challenges limiting the General Delegation's influence in the Pacific region (as detailed above), it still managed to affect some change in the positions of certain states, and to propose a framework for the enhancement of future relations with others.

These comprise only some examples demonstrating the impact that the Delegation produced in 2012.

Recommendations and Lessons Learned



RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

In critically appraising the General Delegation's achievements, it becomes apparent that there is an imperative need to ensure that the gains made in 2012 be consolidated and further built upon in coming years. Such consolidation requires continuous monitoring and follow-up in order to institutionalise the General Delegation's programs and relationships. However, this cannot be brought about without a significant expansion of financial and human resources or greater information sharing and coordination with stakeholders.

The following recommendations are therefore acutely important, as they would each contribute to a stronger and more effective General Delegation.

1. In the first instance, the operational budget of the General Delegation of Palestine must be increased to cover the growing cost of a diplomatic mission which scope of work is rapidly expanding to meet the challenges in the region. In order to address the current problem of the General Delegation becoming overextended, a budget increase to hire additional local staff is needed. This would make it possible to employ Australian residents suitably qualified in administration and planning to support the General Delegation's work in 2013. Positions to be filled by local staff would include:

- Executive assistant to the ambassador
- Administration and finance officer
- Project officer
- Media officer

2. Secondly, there should be serious consideration of the idea of redistributing the responsibility for managing Pacific states among other Palestinian missions in Asia, as follows:

- South Pacific states, New Zealand and Australia: the responsibility of the Palestinian General Delegation to Australia.
- North Pacific Islands: the purview of the General Delegation of Palestine to Japan.
- East Timor and New Papua Guinea: the responsibility of the Palestinian embassy in Indonesia.

All missions would cooperate in executing an integrated strategy for working with the countries of the Pacific region. Such an approach would be centred on the provision of Arab assistance and Palestinian technical support as well as on trade and scientific exchange. A budget would need to be approved to enable regular visits to these states and for the development of an effective communication and consultation strategy.

Thus, according to this redistribution of responsibilities and representation, the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia would still carry the bulk of responsibility. However, such a load would be entirely manageable should a number of local staff be hired in accordance with the first recommendation outlined above.

3. In 2013, the General Delegation of Palestine should focus on furthering relations with Pacific states. This endeavour would be greatly aided by the redistribution of responsibility detailed above.

4. In order to monitor and coordinate assistance given to Palestine by Australia and New Zealand, and in order to offer technical support to Pacific states, strong linkages between the Delegation and the ministry of Planning must be established.

There currently exists no direct link between the General Delegation of Palestine and the Ministry of Planning, in charge of administering all aid contributions and commitments donated to Palestine. Neither does there exist a framework or mechanism for coordination. This reduces the General Delegation's ability to develop and monitor support for the implementation of aid programs or the distribution of development grants.

5. A high priority for the General Delegation in 2013 should be the drafting and implementation of an effective strategy for working with the Arab and Islamic communities in order to establish an influential Arab-Islamic lobby.
6. It is important to continue to institutionalise the outcomes of the General Delegation's work with Australia and New Zealand in order to guarantee that they continue to take balanced positions on the Palestinian–Israeli conflict.
7. The relationship between the General Delegation of Palestine and the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs requires institutionalisation, particularly with the department of Asia, Africa and Australia.

Such institutionalisation would first of all necessitate a marked development in the functions of the department, followed by an increased effort on the part of the General Delegation to maintain constant communication with it.

8. A strategy needs to be developed to enable efficient coordination between the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia and the Palestinian Delegation at the UN.

Until now, no such coordination has taken place. This has resulted in negative consequences on many occasions and particularly those related to voting on Palestinian resolutions at the UN.

9. Similarly, a strategy must be developed for coordination and cooperation between the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific and the various Palestinian embassies and delegations in Asia.

Such a strategy should facilitate an exchange of information and analysis related to key issues of foreign policy in the region. It should also be conceived with a view to exerting pressure upon states such as China, Malaysia and Indonesia to influence the countries of the Pacific in a more decisive.

10. The General Delegation implemented an exceptional comprehensive upgrade to its management systems and internal procedures in 2012. Such advancements should be continued, whether on the level of program delivery or in the areas of consular, administrative, and financial procedures.



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