



State of Palestine

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

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Cover Image

Crowd cheering at the Multicultural Festival in Canberra, 2013

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

STRENGTHENING RELATIONS



Ambassador of the State
of Palestine Izzat Salah
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Head of the General Delegation
of Palestine to Australia, New
Zealand and the Pacific

It is my pleasure to present the Annual Report of the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and Pacific (GDOP) for 2013. I am fortunate to be able to note many triumphs and accomplishments for this year. 2013 has proved to be a significant challenge for garnering influence and support in the Australian arena. This has not, however, disheartened the GDOP's efforts to strengthen Palestinian-Australian relations and support the advancement of the Palestinian cause.

STRENGTHENED RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND THE PACIFIC

I would particularly like to highlight that bilateral relations with the Australian government and the Australian people improved markedly under the direction of Senator the Hon. Bob Carr, Minister for Foreign Affairs for most of 2013. As Minister, Senator Carr took the courageous and unprecedented position in early 2013 of declaring all Israeli settlements illegal under International Law, maintaining that such a stance was consistent with Australian policy dating back to the Fraser government of the 1970's. In his declaration, he referred to the Geneva Convention, which forbids an occupying power from transferring populations into conquered territory. Australia has shown strong support for the Geneva Convention since first signing in 1950 and by ratifying all three subsequent protocols. As head of the General Delegation of Palestine, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senator Carr for his honest, ethical, and balanced position towards the Palestinian question. Of course, none of this could have been achieved without the support of the Gillard-Rudd governments.

Outside Australia, bilateral relations between Palestine and the nations of the Pacific were improved. The growing interest of these countries in genuine and productive dialogue towards recognition of the state of Palestine, and in establishing diplomatic relations with Palestine possibly as early as 2014, is significant.

2013 also produced significant improvement in bilateral relations between Palestine and New Zealand, with the establishment of an official bilateral dialogue between the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Such dialogue reflects the continued support for Palestine that New Zealand provides through aid and international advocacy.

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

Connections with advocacy, media, and civil society groups strengthened throughout the year. Advocacy groups in Australia and New Zealand maintained warm and lasting discussions with the GDOP. These groups achieved considerable progress in campaigns promoting the rights and interests of the Palestinian people. A particular focus for this year was Jerusalem. Relations between the GDOP and the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) developed considerably via the implementation of a formal communication channel. Establishing a binding process improved outcomes through the exchange of ideas and augmented cooperation and coordination between our two bodies.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

The GDOP has continued its engagement with Australia's Jewish community and its representatives. Much effort has been made to encourage a more balanced perspective on the conflict in Australia, through the open support of a two state solution and the disclosure of a clear position against Israel's settlement policy. Notwithstanding hardliners within the community, engagement has been otherwise promising. The GDOP maintains that it is of utmost importance to engage with this community in order to appeal for a stronger position for peace from both sides. Undeniably, settlements construction is not in the best interests of the Jewish community, nor of Israel, nor of Palestine and the GDOP will endeavour to maintain constructive conversation in the hope of better illustrating this fact.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE ARAB AND ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

The GDOP has developed a framework for enhanced engagement with the Islamic and Arab communities of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. We have established solid working relationships with prominent members of these communities, who have consistently, played an important role in supporting the Palestinian agenda and political program. Arab and Islamic community representatives have touched on the Palestinian question and related policy with the Liberal and Labor parties. Unfortunately, the Palestinian community has not been adequately organized or influential. It has failed to execute a comprehensive dialogue with either side of Parliament. For its part, the GDOP has so far failed in its attempts to establish a unified national council for the Palestinian community. This goal will remain as the GDOP understands that such a council, providing a single unified voice to lobby the government towards a more balanced stance, is crucial to establishing a more integrated and influential Palestinian community. That being said, this drawback has not prevented enthusiastic participation by the GDOP in locally organised community activities. Such activities have stimulated the formation of trust of mutual respect between community leaders and the GDOP.

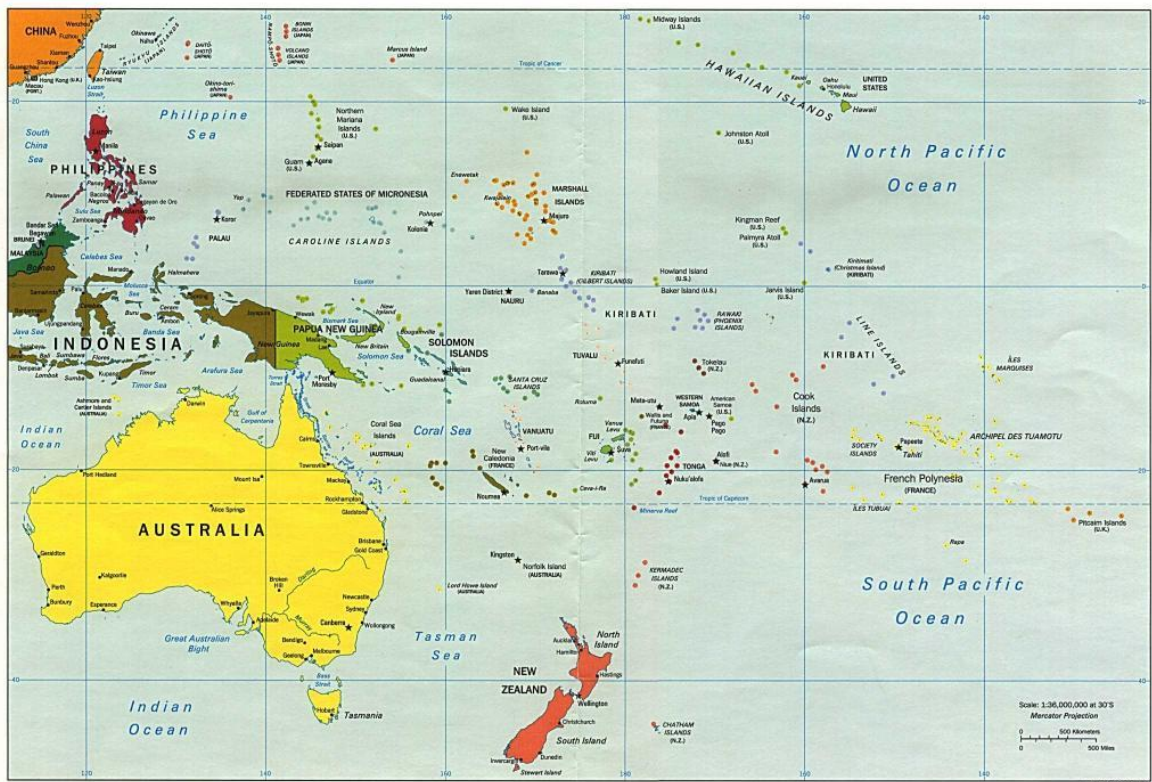
THE COALITION GOVERNMENT

The recent federal victory by the Liberal-National Coalition presents challenges to the GDOP. The newly formed government has pushed to foster stronger support of Israel and, regrettably, shifted Australia's position on the Palestinian question away from the previous government's progressive standpoint. Despite this, the GDOP prepared and implemented an effective strategy for rapprochement with the new Government through dialogue, chiefly with the current Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP. The GDOP has also prepared a position paper addressing components of Australia's new foreign policy as they relate to the Palestinian question.

I would like to extend my thanks to all the staff of the GDOP for their tremendous contribution in implementing the programs and vision of the GDOP. I would also like to thank the volunteers who have provided much needed technical support to the GDOP's efforts to execute its objectives. I wish all of them, and all my friends in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, a joyous and fruitful year.

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

The Political Context



AUSTRALIA

In Australia, we witnessed an important and exciting political development. After six years of Labor governance, a Liberal-National (Coalition) government was elected, led by Prime Minister the Hon. Tony Abbott. The Coalition election victory on November 7th followed a long period of internal conflict within the incumbent Labor government that culminated in a tremendous loss of electoral support.

Australian foreign policy under Labor Prime Ministers the Hon. Kevin Rudd and the Hon. Julia Gillard, particularly whilst Senator the Hon. Bob Carr was Foreign Minister, was rewritten in the international arena, particularly in regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Most noteworthy was the adoption of a more balanced position toward the conflict. Australia opposed all settlement activities and condemned Israel for the continuation of its illegal settlement policy in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Senator Carr's proactive decision to declare all settlement activities illegal according to international law was long overdue. Similarly, the Labor Government changed the voting trend of Australia at the U.N. on two important resolutions: the condemnation of Israeli settlements, and the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention in regard to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Australia supported both motions and had previously abstained.

Another significant development of 2013 was Australia's closer alignment with the Palestinian conceptual model on a solution to the final status issues. Additionally, Australia continued implementing its development agreement with Palestine, providing a contribution of approximately 60 million dollars annually. These actions showed a distancing in the decision-making of Australia from the United States. An independent decision-making process for Australia was emerging. The result of this was a clear move toward a multilateral position on solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and closer alignment with the international agenda on other global issues.



Prime Minister the Hon. Tony Abbott with Foreign Minister the Hon. Julie Bishop and Attorney General the Hon. George Brandis

The Australian Government enhanced its recognition of Palestine in 2013; for the first time approving the issue of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) identification for Palestinian diplomats and providing the GDOP with access to diplomatic parking facilities.

The new Abbott Government has led a noticeable shift in Australia's political position on the Palestinian question. This was clearly evident in the statements from members of the new Government, particularly the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. This shift was confirmed by the voting decisions of Australia at U.N. General Assembly. After reversing the stance on settlements and on the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Australia once again stands at odds with international community consensus. The previous Australian Government had voted in favor of these resolutions, upholding international law. Acting on instructions from the Minister for Foreign Affairs the Hon. Julie Bishop MP, Government representatives at the U.N. have withdrawn Australia's support for an order to stop 'all Israeli settlement activities in all of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Whilst 158 countries supported the U.N. in calling for an end to Israeli settlements, Australia joined eight other countries, in abstaining from the vote. The Abbott Government has also indicated it no longer believes that Israel, as an occupying power, should be forced to comply with the 1949 Geneva Conventions. At the U.N. meeting, 160 countries supported ordering Israel to "comply scrupulously" with the conventions. Australia was one of only five countries to abstain. Six countries voted against the resolution, including Israel, the US and Canada.



United Nations General Assembly

The Abbott Government has declared intention to decrease the foreign aid budget by \$4.5 billion. As yet, no specific information has been issued regarding the implications of these cuts for the aid Australia gives to Palestine. Early indications suggest the issue is still being discussed internally and that there may be a decrease. An Abbott Government restructure has seen DFAT absorb the former aid and development agency AusAid. This will have implications for the decision-making of what is an important and previously independent institution and will pressure it to focus on implementing the political objectives of Australia's foreign policy.



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

The GDOP has taken positive steps towards effective and rewarding discussions with the Abbott government, notably through the preparation of a position paper specifying the GDOP's position towards the different pillars of Australian foreign policy, particularly those which relate directly to Palestine. Furthermore, the GDOP has developed a strategy of continued communication with the current Government, and plans to meet more regularly with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP, and the Prime Minister, the Hon. Tony Abbott. The GDOP hopes in 2014 to maintain a robust and serious dialogue with the Abbott Government, tackling all aspects of the conflict to successfully forward the Palestinian position. The GDOP has extended an official invitation to the Minister for Foreign Affairs to make an official visit to Palestine.



Minister of Foreign Affairs the Hon. Julie Bishop

NEW ZEALAND

This year saw little change in New Zealand's position on the Israel-Palestine conflict. New Zealand has maintained its balanced position with growing sympathy for the Palestinian situation. The New Zealand Government is a strong supporter of the two state solution and advocates the best way to reach this solution is through concentrated, direct negotiations between the two state parties. In 2012, at the U.N. New Zealand voted in favour of the status upgrade of Palestine at the United Nations and continued this commitment through maintaining its support for Palestine as an independent state and a strong objection to Israeli settlements. In 2013, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade contacted the Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs to discuss, set an agenda for, and organise a first round of negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian parties. Negotiations have unfortunately been postponed till 2014 due to technical reasons. New Zealand continues its financial support to the Palestinian people through contribution to the UNRWA core budget. This contribution improves education and assists the disadvantaged in Palestinian refugee camps. Programs related to the detection of land mines, an area in which New Zealand has particular expertise, are also funded by New Zealand's generous contribution. The hope is to clear as much land as possible for Palestinian agricultural use.



New Zealand headed the most recent Pacific Islands Forum and looks forward to competing once again for a non-permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council in 2015-16. Furthermore, New Zealand appears eager to implement a free trade agreement with the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council.



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

THE PACIFIC CONTEXT

1. VANUATU, TIMOR-LESTE AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The Pacific island states have adopted no substantial change in their positions regarding the Palestinian question. The countries of the Pacific tend to align their foreign policy with those of their larger neighbours, particularly Australia, New Zealand, and more so the United States. Pacific nations have also forged close relations with Asian countries, including China, Indonesia and Malaysia. A clear indication of the position of the Pacific countries towards the Palestinian question is their voting trend at the U.N. Palestine enjoys full diplomatic relations with Timor-Leste, which has consistently voted in favour of resolutions that support Palestine. With the exception the Marshall Islands and Micronesia, both of whom have always voted in favour of the Israeli position, the remaining Pacific islands tend to abstain in votes. Unfortunately, Vanuatu, which has formal diplomatic relations with the Palestinian government, and Papua New Guinea, which recognises the state of Palestine, both recently abstained from voting on United Nations resolutions relating to the Palestinian question. This can be attributed to the tremendous financial difficulties that both countries face, leading to reliance on financial aid and the political pressure attached from the United States and Australia.

The GDOP has been active in establishing diplomatic relations with the Pacific island states through methods such as memos of understanding and direct meetings with the relevant ambassadors in Canberra. The GDOP has focused on Fiji, Tonga, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and Tuvalu, as these states supported upgrading Palestinian status in 2012 at the U.N. The Dean of the Council of Arab Ambassadors has agreed to hold a second meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Vanuatu to discuss enhancing diplomatic relations with these countries and establish a technical and financial aid program within the framework of an Arab-Pacific partnership.

H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi presented his credentials to the highest officials in Vanuatu. The Ambassador also met with the Presidents of Vanuatu and Timor Leste and their respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs during visits to Canberra. The Ambassador will discuss technical cooperation with Timor Leste's leaders more directly during his next visit to the nation in 2014.



Ambassador Abdulhadi and President of Vanuatu Mr Lolu Johnson Abbil

Strategic Pathway



STRATEGIC VISION AND OBJECTIVES

In 2013, the GDOP 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.

Overall goal:

To enhance and strengthen the status and legitimacy of the GDOP as the diplomatic representation of the state of Palestine and the credible partner with all influential stakeholders.



Strategic 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 relationships between the GDOP and the Arab and international diplomatic corps.
3. Further enhance and institutionalise relationships with civil society in Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific.
4. Further enhance and institutionalise relationships with the Aram, Muslim and Palestinian community in Australia.
5. Improve the ability of the GDOP to operate efficiently and effectively through the streamlining and institutionalization of managerial, financial and consular processes.



STRATEGIES

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



5. To empower and encourage the Palestinian community to take a stronger role in political life in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. A politically adept Palestinian community would theoretically form strong bonds with decision-making agencies, such as parliaments, ministries of foreign affairs, civil society groups and other institutions. Organising the Palestinian community and working to improve the leadership skills of its members is a high priority for the GDOP. In this regard, the GDOP will particularly focus on youth human resources, which is integral to the community's future. The GDOP aims to assist in establishing an Australian Palestinian Community Council as a framework of representation for the Palestinian community, also to be used as a model for the region. Such a council should facilitate the community's ability to play a more prominent role in the political life of Australia. The council should also provide beneficial social services to members and assist with local level engagement with councils and institutions.



6. Given the considerable influence of the Jewish community in Australian society, maintaining a productive and amiable relationship between this community and the GDOP is extremely important. The GDOP believes that robust and earnest dialogue with the Jewish community will lead to greater common understanding. Such dialogue could potentially influence and moderate the political positions of the Jewish community. Ultimately, a sustainable strategy for engagement could eventually lead to important long term changes of the positions and policies of the Jewish community in regard to the Palestinian question.



7. The GDOP has worked diligently to connect with regional media and has made some progress with print media, resulting in the publication of numerous articles and interviews. The GDOP is pleased with this limited outreach, achieved without a dedicated media department. However, the GDOP believes that a dedicated media strategy would generate a much stronger impact and be far more effective at influencing public opinion within Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. At present, the capacity and strategy includes little more than a contact list for various media representatives in Australia and New Zealand. Undoubtedly, it is essential to involve the media and to keep them, and therefore the public informed and interested. Furthermore, the proper utilisation of social media on platforms like Facebook and Twitter is essential, particularly if the GDOP hopes to connect directly with the public in any meaningful and influential way.



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



Challenges



CHALLENGES

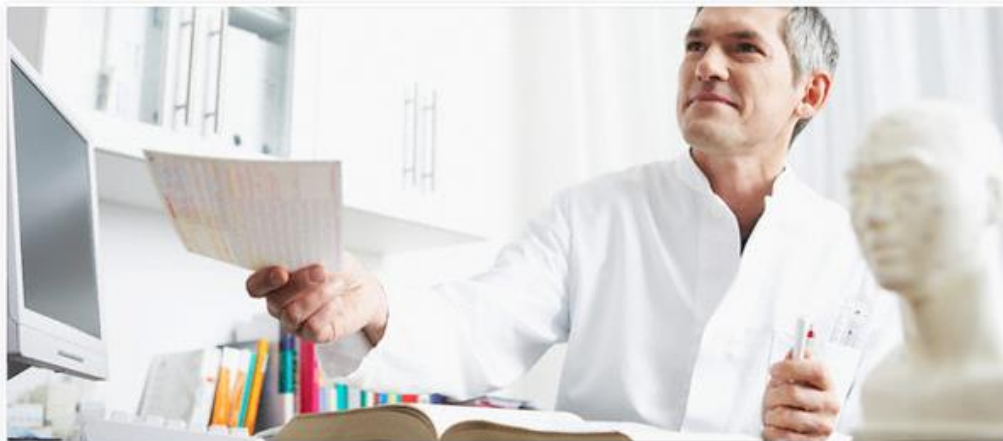
1. Balancing the GDOP's prodigious and optimistic program with its limited financial and human resources, especially considering the size of its geographic domain, has consistently tested its resilience. That situation is not expected to be addressed in the near future.
2. The lack of coordination and communication between the GDOP in Australia and other Palestinian representatives throughout Asia is problematic. The absence of an effective regional network and the consequential lack of a joint policy plan for the Asia-Pacific arena significantly curtails the influence of the GDOP in the region. The lack of coordination between the GDOP, the representatives of Palestine at the U.N., and other regional representatives has unfavourable influence on all active diplomacy with the Pacific countries.
3. The continuation of Australia and New Zealand's decision not to recognise the Palestinian state, in spite of Palestine's recent status upgrade to a non-observer state at the U.N., prevents the GDOP from taking an active part in numerous diplomatic activities organised by those governments.
4. Australia's shift of diplomatic focus to the Asia-Pacific region and its increasing preference for bilateral diplomacy over a multilateral approach presents a significant challenge. This regional focus may dramatically weaken interest in global issues, including the Palestinian question.
5. The direct influence of both Australia and the United States on the policies of the Pacific island states will undoubtedly impact negatively on support for Palestine from those states.
6. Particularly in Australia, advocacy groups have failed to agree upon a clear and shared vision, a hindering coordination to influence government policies. Without operative communication and cooperation between all parties many efforts go to waste. Working individually has proved an ineffectual use of time and resources.
7. The GDOP maintains a firm relationship with the Palestinian communities of Australia and New Zealand. That being said, their lack of integration into wider society and lack of defined and effective leadership has left these communities politically irresolute. This has negatively affected the GDOP's success at the diplomatic level.
8. For several reasons, the GDOP was unable to prepare or implement a strong diplomatic plan for New Zealand, where work and influence remains limited.

Activities



GENERAL ACTIVITIES:

1. Joining all relevant events and activities organised by the Arab and international diplomatic corps, particularly national and independence days.
2. Actively participating in meetings of the Council of Arab Ambassadors and playing a leadership role within the Council. The role entails a particular consideration of relations with the Australian and New Zealand governments and the implementation of Council decisions.
3. Producing a concept paper on the foreign policy of the current Australian Government, including an effective strategy for serious dialogue with the Government on the Palestinian question.
4. Preparing a brief on the solidarity and advocacy groups in Australia.
5. Introducing a volunteer program to provide the GDOP with professional support services, which may have otherwise been unobtainable given the GDOP's limited financial and human resources.
6. Disseminating important information to the Australian, New Zealand and Pacific island states' governments and public, including reports from the World Bank, human rights organisations, the PLO Department of Culture and Information and other Palestinian bodies.
7. Updating the GDOP's website to ensure that the latest information and analysis from both the GDOP and the Palestinian Authority are both available and easily accessible.
8. Participating in various events held by the Arab and Palestinian communities.
9. Further improving the consular services and procedures offered by the GDOP and working to align these with the work of respective departments of the Palestinian Authority.
10. Improving the financial and managerial procedures of the GDOP.



11. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi joined a luncheon organised to honour the new Maronite Bishop of Australia, Bishop Tarabay. Also attending was Margaret Abbott, the wife of Australian Prime Minister the Hon. Tony Abbott, as well as the Premier of New South Wales, the Hon. Mike Baird MP, and several Arab Ambassadors, dignitaries and members of the Lebanese community.
12. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in the commemorative service held in honour of Nelson Mandela at the Australian National University, together with many other members of the international diplomatic corps and Australian dignitaries. The dean of the Council of Arab Ambassadors, the Ambassador of Morocco, H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Mael-Ainin, spoke at the event. The dean highlighted the legacy of Mandela his achievements, and contribution to ending apartheid in South Africa.



13. Members of the GDOP met with the Palestinian football delegation and sports-orientated NGO representatives who visited Australia through the Rise Global organisation, with funding from the Council for Australian Arab Relations (CAAR). The team visited the GDOP to present the objectives of their visit and outline their activities in Australia. They also discussed the possibility of enhancing relations between sports institutes in Palestine and Australia.



BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Within the framework of regular visits and consultation between the Council of Arab Ambassadors and the New Zealand Government, a delegation from the Council of Arab Ambassadors, which included the Palestinian Ambassador, visited New Zealand during February 4-9.

During this visit, Arab-nation ambassadors met the Hon. Mr Murray McCully, the Foreign Minister of New Zealand, as well as the Director of the Middle East Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand, the President of the New Zealand Parliament, and the Leader of the Opposition Labour Party. The Arab ambassadors also met with the Arab Business Council of New Zealand.

The Council of Arab Ambassadors elucidated their views on many relevant and important issues. Of principal concern was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the obstacles set by Israel for the resumption of the peace process, particularly the Israeli Government's ongoing construction of settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which have proceeded in clear violation of international law and resolutions. The ambassadors thanked the Foreign Minister of New Zealand for New Zealand's positive vote in raising the status of Palestine in the U.N. General Assembly to that of a non-member observer state and requested he continue his support for such initiatives undertaken by the Palestinian leadership.

Other Middle Eastern issues were also discussed, particularly the conflict in Syria and the status of Syrian and Palestinians refugees within Jordanian, Lebanese and Turkish borders. In this context the Arab ambassadors called on New Zealand to provide additional relief aid to Syrian and Palestinian refugees, through methods such as support to involved governments, hosting refugees and through direct support to UNRWA.



Foreign Minister of New Zealand the Hon. Mr. Murray McCully and Ambassador Abdulhadi

Independently, the Palestinian Ambassador met with New Zealand parliamentarian Graham Kennedy to discuss the possibility of establishing a New Zealand-Palestinian parliamentary friendship group, as well as other mechanisms that might strengthen the relationship between the GDOP and the New Zealand Parliament.

The Ambassador also briefed New Zealand-Palestinian solidarity groups on political developments in Palestine and continuing violations of human rights under the Israeli occupation. He lobbied for the establishment of a body to coordinate a clear political program for these solidarity groups to support Palestinian rights.

He also met with a representative of the Maori people (the indigenous people of New Zealand), Mr Peter Louf, who expressed an interest in being appointed Honorary Consul to Palestine in New Zealand, given his people's clear empathy with the struggle of the Palestinian people.

The Ambassador also met with a range of New Zealand's non-governmental organisations, including the Catholic aid group Caritas, and also with U.N. representatives. He provided a brief on the current situation in Palestine and further explained, in detail, how New Zealand institutions could strengthen the Palestinian position through measures such as pressuring the government to augment its support for Palestinian institutions.



2. Along with other Arab ambassadors, the Palestinian Ambassador attended a reception on May 29 organised by the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra to welcome the Director of the Middle East Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand. In this meeting, the Director stressed the importance of relations with the Arab world and pointed to New Zealand's voting position in favour of raising the status of Palestine to that of non-member observer state at U.N. The Director also noted New Zealand's interest in contributing to the state and institutional building processes in Palestine and, moreover, affirmed New Zealand's unconditional support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders.

The GDOP followed up the New Zealand Foreign Minister's visit to Palestine through active interaction with the Department of Asia, Africa and Australia in the Palestinian Foreign Ministry, sending practical proposals for the meeting.



3. A strategic dialogue meeting was held on March 18, between the Australian Foreign Minister and the Council of Arab Ambassadors, including the Palestinian Ambassador, which was attended by DFAT representatives. A principle outcome of this meeting was a Memorandum of Understanding between the Arab League and the Australian Government. One of most important topics discussed at this meeting was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the position of the Australian Government towards ongoing Israeli violations of international law and human rights. The Palestinian Ambassador pointed to the remarkable progress in the stance of the Australian Government towards Palestinian rights, lauding the position of the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon. Bob Carr, in his explicit declaration that "all settlement activity is illegal under international law".

At the same time, the Palestinian Ambassador requested that the Australian Government clarify its position on final status issues, in order to align their stance completely with the principles of international law and with U.N. resolutions.

He also urged the Australian Government, as a member of the U.N. Security Council, to adopt a leading role in promoting opportunities for international peace and security and to place finding a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue at the heart of this endeavour.

4. Representatives of the GDOP met in Canberra on January 24 with the Head of DFAT's Middle East Department, Ms Lynette Wood, and provided a detailed presentation of the current situation in Palestine.

The representatives also submitted proposals to DFAT for the provision of services to diplomats from the GDOP, including the issuance of diplomatic cards and access to parking places assigned for diplomatic missions. The representatives emphasised linking these provisions to raising the status of the GDOP in line with the U.N. resolution that raised the status of Palestine to that of non-member observer state. Ms Wood promised to look into the GDOP's request and into the possibility of providing other facilities that may enhance the movement and performance of the GDOP.



Head of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Middle East Department
Ms. Lynette Wood

The GDOP also submitted reports and materials relating to the political situation in Palestine, ongoing settlement activities, the occupation, prisoners, and information about the *nakba* to the foreign ministers of Australia, New Zealand, East Timor and Vanuatu, as well as the Middle East departments of their ministries

5. The Australian Government announced the appointment of a new ambassador to Israel, Mr David Sharma. The Palestinian Ambassador met with Mr Sharma on the GDOP grounds to discuss various issues, including the goals of the new ambassador in Israel, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the political process between the parties. The two agreed on a strategy of systematic and ongoing consultation between the GDOP and the Australian Embassy in Tel Aviv.

6. The GDOP in Australia sent several letters to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia concerning the status of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and Israel's continued settlement activity. The letters were supplemented with reference materials and concept papers.



7. At the invitation of Prime Minister the Hon. Julia Gillard, the Palestinian Ambassador participated in the national day of Australia, "Australia Day", and met with her and other Australian officials throughout the day.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, Former Prime Minister the Hon. Julia Gillard, and Ms. Abdulhadi

8. To prepare for an exhibition of Palestinian history and handicrafts, the Palestinian Ambassador met with a member of the Victorian Parliament, Ms Bronwyn Halfbana. The exhibition was opened in Canberra on June 12 before the Chancellor of the Australian National University, former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Gareth Evans, and the Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, Ms. Maria Vamvakinou MP, and Chair of the Parliamentary Friendship Committee in Victoria, Ms Bronwyn Halfbana.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Gareth Evans

H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi outlined the positive role of the Palestinian and Arab communities in promoting and developing multiculturalism in Australia. He also touched on developments relevant to the Palestinian cause, obstacles facing the two state solution, and mechanisms to overcome these obstacles, especially Palestine's new status at the U.N.

9. Within the framework of the program of the GDOP to intensify its work in the Australian Parliament, the Palestinian Counsellor Suheir Gedeon on several occasions met the Chair of the Parliamentary Friendship of Palestine, Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP. She also met with Ms Susan Ley MP of the Liberal Party to discuss the same topics, which included the outcomes of Australia's parliamentary elections and the conduct of various activities at the Australian Parliament.

10. On June 26, DFAT held a reception to celebrate ten years since the founding of the Council of Australian Arab Relations (CAAR). The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon. Bob Carr, spoke of the positive feedback Australian ambassadors received from the Arab region following Australia's decision to abstain on the vote to raise the status of Palestine in the U.N. to that of non-member observer state.

11. The Palestinian Ambassador held a working lunch on June 27 with the Australian Representative in Ramallah, Mr Tom Wilson, in which the two discussed the common interests of Australia and Palestine and the activities undertaken by both the Australian mission in Palestine and the Palestinian mission in Australia.

12. The Palestinian Ambassador departed on August 4 for Palestine, where he met several Palestinian officials, including the Foreign Minister, and the Foreign Ministry's Head and staff of the Asia, Africa and Australia Department, the diplomatic adviser to the President, members of the Central Committee of Fatah, the Minister of Health, and representatives of Palestinian civil society. He also met once more with the Australian Representative in Ramallah. Lastly, he met with Palestinian students who have benefited from Australian scholarships.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and Palestinian officials

13. On October 3, the U.N. Security Council Task Force at DFAT gave a presentation on the Australian Mission to the U.N. Security Council, explaining its goals, planned activities and priorities. Representatives of the GDOP inquired about the agenda of Australia with regards to the Palestinian question and the extent of influence Australia has in its capacity at the Security Council to engage actively with this important issue, the context of Australian support for a two-state solution.

14. Following parliamentary elections and the victory of the Liberal-National Coalition, the GDOP sent letters of congratulations to the incoming Prime Minister, the Hon. Tony Abbott, and Foreign Minister, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP. Following a proposal for the GDOP, the Council of Arab Ambassadors sent similar letters to the new Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and to the Opposition's leader and deputy leader.



Prime Minister Tony Abbott and family celebrating victory

15. Following Australia's undesirable vote in the 68th session of the Fourth Committee of the U.N. General Assembly, in particular its failure to vote on resolutions relating to settlements and the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the GDOP launched a campaign criticising the new Government's change in policy. The following activities were undertaken:

1. A letter was sent on behalf of the Council of Arab Ambassadors to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP.
2. A press release was issued on November 36 expressing regret and deep concern at Australia's change in voting patterns on important resolutions on the question of Palestine. The release called on the Australian Government to reconsider its vote at the General Assembly of the U.N.
3. The GDOP issued a factsheet on Australia's voting patterns on all resolutions related to Palestine at the U.N. General Assembly.
4. The GDOP distributed U.N. publications on the Palestinian issue to solidarity and advocacy groups, diplomatic corps, members of Parliament, the ministries of foreign affairs in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, and lastly, Palestinian and Arab communities in Australia.
5. The Palestinian Ambassador conducted many interviews, some televised, during which he expressed regret and deep concern at Australia's changed voting pattern on Palestine in the U.N. and the direct effects of this vote on Australian-Palestinian relations and Australian-Arab relations.
6. The Ambassador also met with staff from the Middle East Department at DFAT to express his, and the Palestinian Governments', concern on the change of voting pattern. He urged the Australian Government to adopt a balanced approach in regards to relations with both Israel and Palestine.
7. The Ambassador joined DFAT's end of year celebration and met on the sidelines with Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP, extending to her a formal invitation to visit Palestine in 2014. The Minister thanked the Ambassador and welcomed the invitation.

16. The Ambassador met with Mr. Bob Carr, at this time the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, on the GDOP grounds on December 6.

The meeting focused on strategies to respond to Israeli settlements and on motivating the Australian public to respond to the damage settlements inflict on the implementation of the two state solution. The meeting included specific ideas for cooperation between Mr Carr and the GDOP.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and Former Foreign Minister Bob Carr

17. On March 4, the Palestinian Ambassador submitted his credentials as the non-resident Ambassador of the State of Palestine to the Republic of Vanuatu. Whilst in Vanuatu, he met the President, Mr Lolu Johnson Abbil, Prime Minister Mr Moana Carcasses Kalosil, and Foreign Minister Mr Edward Natapei. Talks between the two parties focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly Israel's settlement activity, and its continuation jeopardising the possibility of establishing a viable Palestinian state.



Ambassador Abdulhadi and President of Vanuatu Mr Lolu Johnson Abbil

The Ambassador also raised the issue of Vanuatu's vote against Palestine's membership in UNESCO. Regarding this issue, the Prime Minister noted that Vanuatu voted foremost with the national interests of its citizens in mind. The Ambassador sympathised with the national interests of Vanuatu, yet stressed that such interests should not conflict with the principles and applications of international law and bilateral relations with Palestine. The Prime Minister of Vanuatu assured continued support from his country for Palestinian rights and pledged that his country will support any solution to the conflict which is consistent with international law.

18. The GDOP sent identical letters to several Pacific countries, including Fiji, Tonga, the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Papua New Guinea, requesting the establishment of full diplomatic relations with the State of Palestine. This request was followed up directly with their ambassadors in Australia.



19. Responding to an invitation from the Embassy of Timor-Leste in Canberra, the Ambassador attended a reception on July 8 in honour of the visit of Timor-Leste's President and Minister for Foreign Affairs. He extended the greetings of President Mahmoud Abbas to the President of Timor-Leste and discussed with the President and Foreign Minister the possibility of cooperation between the two countries, especially in the area of technical cooperation and development.

No other representatives of the diplomatic corps attended this private event, indicating the depth of friendship between the two countries.



President of Timor Leste Taur Matan Rauk and Ambassador Abdulhadi

20. On May 30 the GDOP sent identical letters to the foreign ministers of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific island states with regards to the continuation and intensification of settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The GDOP also launched an intense campaign via the GDOP's web page and forwarded electronic press releases and documents relating to settlements to members of the Australian Parliament, members of the international diplomatic corps, Australian advocacy and solidarity groups, and the Palestinian communities of Australia and New Zealand.



RELATIONS WITH ADVOCACY GROUPS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

1. The GDOP provided advocacy groups in Australia and New Zealand with documents concerning settlement activity, the Israeli occupation and ongoing Israeli violations in Occupied East Jerusalem. The advocacy groups responded positively and used this information to support their activities for the benefit of the Palestinian people. Australian advocacy and civil society groups were able to launch campaigns in support of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails.

On July 3 the Palestinian Ambassador met with Bishop George Browning and Mr Gregor Henderson, President and Vice-President of the Palestinian Australian Advocacy Network (APAN). The meeting involved in-depth consultation and exchange ideas regarding the most suitable approaches and strategies to influence Australian public opinion and decision-making institutions, particularly the Australian Government. In the same context, and based on political developments in Australia, the parties agreed on the importance of working together to influence the Liberal Party's positions and policies through placing a higher focus on trade between Australia and the Arab world. They agreed to further consultations in the near future to determine the mechanisms of working with members of Parliament, the public, the media and other civil society institutions.

2. GDOP representatives met on June 3, in Canberra with Dr Emma Backtel, coordinator for Australians for Justice and Peace in Palestine (AJPP). They agreed on the importance of joint coordination and regular consultation and dialogue. They discussed the importance of strengthening the relationship between the local Palestinian community and AJPP in order to support AJPP activities. The GDOP agreed to regularly provide AJPP with important documentation and information to support AJPP's activities.

3. The GDOP participated in numerous activities involving the delegation of Arab Women, which included a representative from Palestine. The Arab delegates were invited to Australia by the Australian National University for dialogue between Arab and Australian women in Canberra on June 30. Ms Wafaa Abdel Rahman, Director of *Filistinyat*, represented Palestine and provided a working paper on the role of Palestinian women in resisting the Israeli occupation and the role of Palestinian women in the struggle for political and economic rights and social justice. She also discussed the role of Palestinian women in building Palestinian state institutions.



Zeina Dache, Counsellor Ms. Suheir and Ms. Wafaa Abdel Rahman

Ms Abdel-Rahman participated in a symposium at the National Press Club of Australia in Canberra, an important media forum with a high impact on decision-making in Australia.



4. The Ambassador participated in a ceremony organized by the *Zakat* Committee, one of Australia's most important Islamic institutions. In this ceremony, high achievers and outstanding members of Australia's Arab and Muslim communities were awarded certificates and prizes.

The Ambassador delivered a speech, stressing the importance of Australia's Arab and Islamic communities and their influence on decision-making processes, in particular assisting the Australian Government taking a more balanced and stable position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

He also urged Islamic organisations to coordinate and embrace clear, realistic visions and strategies to work with Australian decision-makers and public opinion. He stressed that this could be enhanced by integration into the Australian community and by avoiding insularity and isolation. In this context, he pointed out that the "good Muslim" is a "good Australian" too and that the Australian Muslim community must strive to exert more effort into liberating stereotypes about Islam and Muslims in Australian society.



Ambassador Abdulhadi and the Zakat Committee

5. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a gala dinner organised by the Australian Business Council to honor the Liberal parliamentarian and Shadow Treasurer the Hon. Joe Hockey MP. Mr Hockey is a prominent Australian politician and key cabinet member. Mr Hockey's family is of Palestinian origin, specifically of the Armenian community in Jerusalem, and he constantly expresses pride in this affiliation.

The Ambassador delivered at this occasion a welcome speech addressed to the Hon. Joe Hockey MP, urging him to play an influential role in the Liberal Party in forwarding justice and peace in Palestine. He also noted in his speech the importance of adopting a more balanced policy to a potential Liberal government.

To strengthen the partnership between the Australian Arab Business Council (AABC) and the Council of Arab Ambassadors, a working lunch was organised in Canberra on July 20. The parties agreed on an action plan to support Arab causes, especially the Palestinian cause, and to promote trade between Australia and the Arab world. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi was chosen to represent the Council at follow-up meetings with the Arab Business Council of Australia.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, Shadow Treasurer the Hon. Joe Hockey and gala invitees

6. On February 5, the GDOP met with Mr Bob Mitchell to discuss the goals, activities and implementation strategy for a project to support Palestinian children. This project was contributed to by the Hadassah Australia Foundation, the Evangelical Institution for Development, Hadassah Hospital in Mount Scopus, Jerusalem, in collaboration with the Palestinian Ministry of Health.



Mr. Bob Mitchell

Preliminary preparation for the project began eight months earlier when Hadassah Australia, the initiator of the project, began working in partnership with the Ministry of Health. The project aims to strengthen infrastructure and augment training and development of human resources in Palestine's health sector, in addition to providing direct assistance to Palestinian children exposed to disease and injury.

An important meeting of all partners was held on February 10 at the Palestinian Ministry of Health, in the presence of the Minister of Health, where it was agreed the components of the program would align with the priorities of the health strategy in Palestine. Partners also agreed on a project management mechanism.

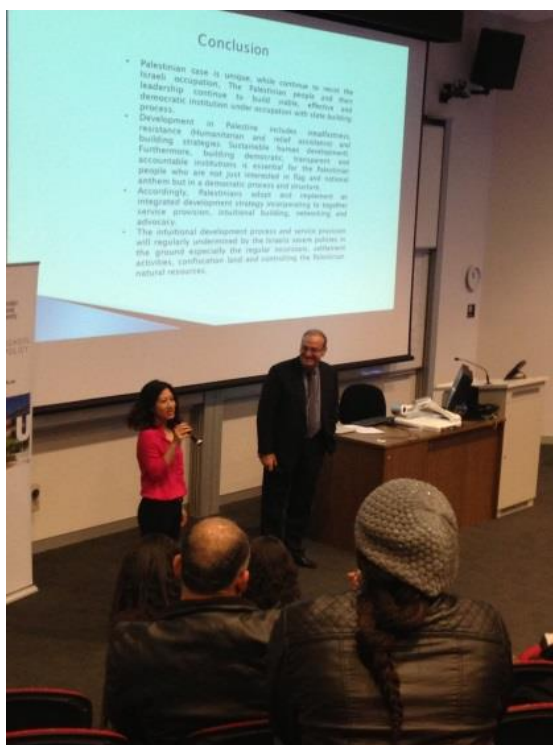
7. The Ambassador participated in a dinner organised by the Arab-Australian press in Sydney on May 9. He was joined by the Premier of New South Wales, other Arab ambassadors and many members of the Arab and Palestinian communities.

8. On May 23, H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi delivered a guest lecture at the Centre for Strategic Defense at the University of New South Wales on the topic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the Palestinian perspective. He examined the root causes of the conflict and the contemporary Palestinian strategy and vision to overcome it. He also clarified the Palestinian position on final status issues. Every year, the Centre presents a range of speakers before a large contingent of high-ranking military officers around the world.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and guests of a lecture

9. On May 24, the Institute of Public Administration at the Australian National University invited the Ambassador to speak on the subject of “Managing Transition from Relief to Development”. He focused on development in Palestine and the challenges the occupation there poses to any substantial and meaningful development progress. He also discussed current Palestinian development programs and strategies to implement these under the restrictions of occupation.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and guests of a lecture at ANU

10. On June 14, the Ambassador met with the Bishop of Melbourne’s Anglican community, Bishop Fryer, to discuss the Palestinian issue and how the Australian Anglican Church can become an active contributor in Palestine.

11. On June 24, the Ambassador participated in a seminar on strategies for working with Pacific island states at the Australian National University. The Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific affairs spoke about the importance of coordinating assistance provided to Pacific nations to best support the development of their emerging economies. In this context, the Palestinian Ambassador pointed to the success of the Arab-Pacific Summit, held in Abu Dhabi in 2009 and the follow-up undertaken by the Arab League, as an example of a strategic and comprehensive approach coordinating all stakeholders.

12. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a special gala dinner on June 25, held in the Australian Parliament Great Hall to mark the 25th anniversary of the Ethnic Business Awards. A member of the Palestinian community, a distinguished business owner, previously won the award for best business venture in 2011. Both Prime Minister the Hon. Julia Gillard and Opposition Leader, the Hon. Tony Abbott delivered speeches at the ceremony before a host of prominent public figures.

13. On July 30, the law firm Clayton UTZ organised a seminar in Sydney focusing on commercial arbitration between Palestine and Israel. The lawyer Mr Mazen Qubti, from Jerusalem, represented the Palestinian side and made a strong case to his counterparts from the Israeli side and numerous Australian judges and lawyers.

Mr Qubti spoke in detail about the goals of a joint initiative for resolving commercial disputes established by the Palestinian International Chamber of Commerce and the Israeli International Chamber of Commerce.

The Palestinian Ambassador was actively involved in the preparation of this seminar and participated on the day.



Mr Mazen Qubti

14. The GDOP participated in a conference on Palestinian rights at the ANU on September 11-12. Representatives of the GDOP contributed to preparations for this conference by carefully identifying potential participants. The GDOP representatives accompanied the participating delegates to activities and official ceremonies. This conference was the first of its kind in Australia to deal with Israeli human rights violations of the Palestinian rights to self-determination, housing, health, education and others. International participants included Professor Richard Falk, the U.N. Human Rights Council's Special Envoy on Palestine, and Dr Sara Roy, a lecturer at Harvard University who is a well-known supporter and advocate of Palestinian human rights.

The conference was organised by Dr Victoria Mason, a lecturer at the Faculty of Political Science at the ANU.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and Professor Richard Falk

15. Representatives of the GDOP met on September 23 with a delegation from the Association of International Relations at the ANU. The group viewed a documentary film about the Palestinian *Nakba*, which stimulated political discussion about the situation in Palestine and the vision and strategies of the Palestinian Government for resolving the conflict.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, Ms. Suheir and International Relations Students from ANU

16. On October 21, Counsellor Suheir Gedeon delivered a lecture about continued Israeli violations of human rights in Palestine, developments in the peace process and Israeli obstacles to a two state solution. She pointed to continued Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the ethnic cleansing and Judaization occurring in Jerusalem, and the blockade on Gaza as the major obstacles to the realisation of the two state solution.

17. Following an invitation from the Society of Friends of Palestine, Dr Mustafa Barghouti visited Australia between November 1-8. He visited a large part of Australia and met with representatives of civil society and solidarity and advocacy movements. He also delivered a lecture in Adelaide in remembrance of the great Palestinian thinker, Dr Edward Said. Dr Barghouti and the Palestinian Ambassador met with representatives of DFAT and the Australian Department of Education. The GDOP organised a reception at the Palestinian Ambassador's residence for Dr Barghouti on November 5. This reception was attended by representatives of DFAT, civil society, solidarity and advocacy groups, the international diplomatic corps, as well as parliamentarians and several Australian public figures.

18. Following an invitation by the Director-General of the Arab Bank in Sydney, the Palestinian Ambassador participated in a working lunch on November 15 and met with representatives of a number of civil society organisations that provide direct developmental support to Palestine, as well as representatives of the Arab media in Australia.

Participants discussed the vision, approaches and strategies for Palestinian development used to enable and strengthen marginalised groups in Palestinian society, such as women and youth. Representatives of development NGOs presented in detail their projects in Palestine and their impact in empowering the Palestinian community during Israeli occupation. The Ambassador thanked these organisations for their continued support of the Palestinian people and urged them to pursue further endeavours to strengthen the resilience and steadfastness of the Palestinian people and their state's democratic institutions.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and Members of the Arab Bank

19. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a study day focused on Australian foreign and security policy analysis organised in Canberra on November 21 by the Australian Institute of International Affairs, a think-tank close to DFAT. The Hon. Senator Bob Carr and of Mr Alexander Downer, Australian Foreign Minister for the Coalition government of 1996-2007 delivered key lectures during the event. The political adviser to the Prime Minister the Hon. Tony Abbott also gave an important speech. The day a wide range of debates and questions, including discussions raised by the Palestinian Ambassador on the changing pattern of Australia's voting in the U.N. This focused largely on Australia's abstention on the condemnation of Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and Former Foreign Minister Bob Carr

20. On November 18, the GDOP met with a Palestinian football delegation invited to Australia by the Rise Global Foundation with the sponsorship of the Australian Council on Foreign Relations and CAAR. The sports delegation presented their objectives and an outline of their planned activities. They discussed with the GDOP the potential means to enhance coordination and cooperation between sports organisations in Palestine and Australia.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and members of the Palestinian Football Delegation

21. On May 28, the GDOP received Ms Mona El-Farra, Director of the Palestinian Red Crescent in Gaza, who provided a brief attendees on the economic, social and political challenges faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, particularly in the face of the Israeli blockade.



Counsellor Ms. Suheir, Ambassador Abdulhadi, and Mona El-Farra the Director of the Palestinian Red Crescent

RELATIONS WITH ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATIC CORP

1. The GDOP participated in a host of national days at diplomatic missions and in other activities conducted by the diplomatic corps. Diplomatic relations between the GDOP in Australia and other diplomatic missions in Canberra have continued to strengthen.

2. The GDOP contributed to a book issued by the international diplomatic corps on the centennial anniversary of the establishment of Australia's national capital Canberra. The book included an overview of the capital cities of each participating country and brief messages from the respective ambassadors. It was presented to the Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory.

3. The GDOP plays an active role within the Council of Arab Ambassadors, which strongly supports issues raised by the GDOP on the Palestinian question. Notably, members of the Council sent coordinated correspondence to the foreign ministers of Australia and New Zealand on all important concerns relating to the Palestinian issue, including the status of Palestinian detainees in Israeli jails and the continuation of Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Most recently the council wrote to the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop, regarding the change in Australia's voting pattern on Palestine at the UNGA.

4. The Palestinian Ambassador held individual meetings with all Arab ambassadors to exchange opinions and advice on the policies of the governments of Australia and New Zealand. An emphasis was placed on how to strengthen and clarify the Palestinian position towards the peace process and the final status issues, as well as wider goals of informing each other of recent developments and discussing the annual plan of the Council of Arab Ambassadors. This annual plan was proposed by the GDOP on September 5.

5. The Council of Arab Ambassadors invited the then Shadow Foreign Minister the Hon. Julie Bishop to a working dinner on May 13 in order to discuss bilateral and multilateral issues. Of particular focus was the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and more so Israeli settlements as illegal according to international law and the key obstacle to a two state solution.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and Julie Bishop

However, the Minister did not accept the illegality of the Israeli settlements and put forward that international law does not contain any materials definitively describing the settlements as illegal. The Council of Arab Ambassadors agreed to provide her with further information and legal texts about the position of international law on Israeli settlements.

6. The Council of Arab Ambassadors invited the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Bob Carr and his ministerial assistants for a working dinner on May 15 to discuss parliamentary elections in Australia and the position of the Australian Government towards the peace process. The ambassadors thanked Mr Carr for his position regarding all settlements as illegal according to international law.

They also discussed the implications of the Arab Spring in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia and its impact on the Palestinian cause.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, Former Foreign Minister Bob Carr and the Council of Arab Ambassadors

7. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a gala dinner organised by the Council of Arab Ambassadors to honor the Secretary of DFAT, Mr Peter Varghese AO, on October 21. The dinner held special significance, as it was timed immediately after the Australian parliamentary elections, presenting the ideal opportunity to inquire about any significant changes to Australia's foreign policy. Mr Varghese raised two important points in response to inquiries on the Palestinian issue: a significant change in the pattern of Australia's votes at the U.N., and potential change in the size of financial aid delivered to Palestine. The meeting proved also an opportunity to exchange views with DFAT on many other issues of mutual interest.

8. A delegation from the Arab League, headed by a political advisor to the Secretary-General of the Arab League and the Head of the Asia, Africa and Australia Department, visited Australia and New Zealand during December 2-10.

The delegation undertook a series of meetings with Australian officials and Arab communities, in which it exchanged viewpoints on major political affairs. It aired the resentment of the Arab League on Australia's changed voting pattern concerning Palestine at the U.N. The delegation also discussed establishing an Office of the Arab League in Australia. This initiative was welcomed by the Australian Government, considering this an important step towards stronger ties between Australia and the Arab states. The delegation met with the Council of Arab Ambassadors for serious discussion of Australian foreign policy, especially on the Middle East. The Palestinian Ambassador made important contributions to all discussion on the Australian Government's stance towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The visit proved successful in stimulating constructive dialogue with the new Australian Government and in explaining the Arab position.



9. The Palestinian Ambassador participated in a memorial service for the late President Nelson Mandela at the Australian National University, together with the diplomatic corps and many other political figures. H.E. Ambassador of Morocco Mr Mohamed Ma-el Ainin, Dean of the Arab Diplomatic Corps, made a speech on behalf of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in which he praised Mandela's leadership in ending the apartheid regime in South Africa.



Memorial Service at ANU for Nelson Mandela

RELATIONS WITH ARAB AND PALESTINIAN COMMUNITIES

1. The GDOP continued to consult stakeholders for the purpose of establishing an umbrella council for the Palestinian community. This project faces many obstacles, beginning with the vast distances between Australian provinces. Sensitivities are also playing an important role in preventing any consensus on the appropriate organisational form. However, attempts will continue to establish such a council in 2014.

2. The GDOP organised, in cooperation with Canberra's Palestinian community, Palestinian participation in the Canberra-based National Multicultural Festival on February 9. Many creative and innovative activities were undertaken, including a much admired showcase of Palestinian embroideries and craftworks, which was complimented by a *Dabke* performance by a group of Palestinian youth from Sydney and Canberra and led by trained folk dancer Mrs Amber Hansen.

The National Multicultural Festival is one of the most important cultural festivals in Australia, attended by more than 300,000 visitors from all Australian states and territories. Palestinian participation in this festival was highly distinctive and reflected the unique and vibrant culture of Palestine.



Dancers at Multicultural Festival in Canberra

3. The GDOP organised a reception welcoming Mr Ahmed Ghoneim, Commissioner for External Relations in the Fatah movement, which was attended by prominent members of the Palestinian community. Mr Ghoneim gave a comprehensive speech in which he discussed the political situation in Palestine, especially the challenges faced by the city of Jerusalem with its situation of ongoing ethnic cleansing of the population by the Israeli occupation forces. He also noted the effects of the Arab Spring on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the need and importance of reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas at this critical political juncture. Mr Ghoneim took many insightful questions from the audience.



On March 23, the Palestinian Ambassador met the delegation, including its Australian coordinators Mr Eddy Zananiri, Mr Abdelkader Qrnouh and Mr Samir Musalam to discuss views on the Palestinian question and recent developments in Canberra. The Ambassador gave a detailed presentation on the foundations and components of Australian foreign policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the evolution of the Australian-Palestinian relations.



Meeting at the Delegation of Palestine with Mr Ahmed Ghoneim the Commissioner for External Relations in the Fatah movement and Australian coordinators

4. The GDOP coordinated the participation of an Australian-Palestinian academic delegation at An-Najah National University, Nablus, on March 4. The delegation included Dr Bassam Dally, Dr Ibtisam Abu Daho and Miss Liana Kayali. The conference, under the slogan "Let's Go Back", was organised by the Department of Expatriates of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Dr Dally and Dr Abu Daho presented a joint working paper analysing the role of Palestinian academics in Australia in supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people and the obstacles preventing the Palestinian community from strengthening its role in Australian politics and society.

5. The GDOP organised a public meeting with the Association of the Palestinian Community in Sydney on May 11, which included in its membership Palestinians expelled from Iraq who afterwards migrated to Australia. During this meeting, techniques were discussed about how to pressure the Australian Government into approving the reunification of families, who are largely located in Cyprus and Syria.

The GDOP and the Association developed a clear action plan to work with the Departments of Immigration and Foreign Affairs, federal parliamentarians, civil society organisations and human rights organisations, amongst others. A follow up workshop was held on October 5.

The GDOP sent letters to the Australian Immigration Minister, most recently on September 5, urging him to facilitate the reunification of families and make the decision to grant them permanent residency in Australia.

The Palestinian community in Sydney collected donations to support immigration applications submitted by Palestinian refugees seeking reunification with their families.

6. On October 5, the GDOP participated in a ceremony, organised by the General Union of Palestine Workers in Sydney, to mark the anniversary of the Palestinian *Nakba*. The Ambassador delivered a speech in which he recalled the meaning and values of the *Nakba*, lessons learnt and the current Palestinian strategy to establish an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. Mr Eddie Zananiri, head of the Fatah movement in Australia, also delivered an address.

The same occasion also included a graduation ceremony for outstanding students from within the Palestinian community, who were presented awards by H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi.



Ambassador Abdulhadi celebrating Nakba

7. The GDOP comprehensively covered the *Nakba* anniversary through a variety of activities, most importantly a symposium at the GDOP's grounds on May 19, attended by many members of the Arab and Palestinian communities. A film about the *Nakba* was screened and extensive discussion on the *Nakba* occurred, including its causes, effects, and lastly how to overcome the effects of the catastrophe and establish a Palestinian state with its capital as East Jerusalem.



Ambassador Abdulhadi and guests discussing Nakba

An editorial on the GDOP's webpage about the anniversary of *Nakba*, further uploads to the site and widespread distribution of many important documents on the topic from official Palestinian institutions, including the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, the PLO Department of Culture and Information, the Office of the President, and others, featured among the work of the GDOP on the *Nakba* anniversary.

8. The Workers Union of Palestine organised for July 14 a Ramadan breakfast for Muslim, Christian, and secular members of the Palestinian community. The Palestinian Ambassador joined in the social occasion to mark the holy month. He was able to exchange ideas and opinions on the current situation in Palestine.

The Ambassador also participated in numerous breakfast banquets during Ramadan, including the Lebanese Association breakfast on July 27, the Bluestar Intercultural Association on August 2, and other *Iftars* organised by the Arab ambassadors.

9. Archbishop Hanna Atallah visited Australia from September 5-14. The Ambassador met Archbishop Atallah to discuss the current situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the core issues of concern to the Arab community in Australia, and communication between representatives of the church in Palestine and Arab communities in Australia.



Bishop Hanna Atallah and Ambassador Abdulhadi

At a symposium organised by the Association of Beit Jala in Melbourne, H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi delivered a speech about the current political situation and the role of the Palestinian community and Arab communities in Australia in finding a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Archbishop Atallah Hanna also participated in the symposium and stressed the importance of national unity and the fraternity of Christians and Muslims in Palestine.



Ambassador Abdulhadi

10. At a working lunch organised by the Council of Arab Ambassadors on October 23, the Palestinian Ambassador met with the Mufti of Australia, Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohammed, and Mr Bob Carr, the former Foreign Minister. The meeting focused on how to formalise the relationship between the Muslim community and the Council of Arab Ambassadors and on strategies and means to influence Australian policy towards Arab and Palestinian issues.

Mr Carr proposed some excellent ideas on the subject. The Palestinian Ambassador also made a contribution on strategies and methods of advocacy and influence, discussing the importance of the role of the media. The Ambassador also presented a plaque on behalf of the GDOP and the Palestinian community to the Mufti in recognition of his efforts to support the Palestinian cause.



Dr Ibrahim Abu Mohammed, Ambassador Abdulhadi and the Council of Arab Ambassadors

11. The non-governmental Australian-Palestinian Council organised with the GDOP a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the independence of Palestine in the NSW Parliament, Sydney, on November 13. Many dignitaries participated in this celebration, including representatives of the diplomatic corps, international and local civil society movements, Palestinian solidarity movements, and Arab and Muslim communities. Mr Bob Carr praised the struggle of the Palestinian people and their insistence on their rights to self-determination and establishing an independent state on their land. He criticised the change in the U.N. voting pattern of the new government, especially its failure to vote in favour of the U.N. General Assembly resolution condemning the Israeli settlements and the resolution on the Fourth Geneva Convention.



Ambassador Abdulhadi and the guests at the celebration of Palestine's Independence

H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi gave a speech and referred to Israel's intransigent abuse of Palestinian national rights, especially its ongoing policy of settlements, ethnic cleansing, and the Gaza blockade. He pointed to the importance of a rights-based approach and of international law as the legitimate framework for a lasting solution in Palestine and the wider Middle East. He also praised the accelerated development of bilateral relations between Australia and Palestine during the previous five years.

12. The U.N. Information Centre (UNIC) in Canberra, in collaboration with the GDOP and the Council of Arab Ambassadors, observed the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on November 26. A significant number of the international diplomatic corps, including all Arab ambassadors, participated, together with academics, members of civil society, Palestinian advocacy groups and Australia's Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian communities. Speeches at the event were complemented by an exhibition of photographs and Palestinian handicrafts, as well as live world music from a group of talented young Australians.



Ambassador Abdulhadi and the guests

13. The Palestinian Olive Kids Foundation organised an ambitious celebration in Melbourne on December 1 to mark the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in particular reflecting on the plight of Gaza's children. It was attended by many parliamentarians, Arab and Muslim community members, and by representatives of Palestinian advocacy and solidarity movements. The Ambassador delivered a speech on the significance and importance of the occasion and highlighted the responsibilities of the international community in finding a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian issue. During this ceremony, a fundraising campaign for the benefit of children and water security projects in the besieged Gaza Strip was launched. Olive Children, a non-governmental organisation, aims to support and empower Palestinian children, particularly those of prisoners and those with special needs.



14. The Ambassador participated in a lunch in honour of the new Maronite Bishop of Australia on November 12, hosted by the Middle East Time Journal. The ceremony was attended by Mrs Margie Abbott, wife of Prime Minister the Hon. Tony Abbott, NSW Premier the Hon. Barry O'Farrell MP, Arab ambassadors, representatives of the Lebanese community, and the media.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, Ms. Abbott, wife of Prime Minister Tony Abbott and the new Maronite Bishop of Australia

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE GDOP AND OTHER GENERAL ACTIVITIES

1. The GDOP continued to align its financial procedures with those followed by the Palestinian National Fund in the interests of achieving effective and transparent financial management.

2. Consular services to the Palestinian community in Australia and New Zealand have improved in quality through strengthened systemisation of procedures and their clear publication on the web page of the mission.

The consular work of the GDOP increased tremendously with an increased number of Palestinian refugees seeking asylum in Australia and New Zealand.

3. A Department of Public Relations and Media was created within the GDOP of Palestine. The GDOP is developing a comprehensive vision for the goals, activities and approaches that it will use to contact and communicate with all stakeholders in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific island states.

4. Updates and development continue on the GDOP's webpage, a hub to disseminate and promote important information, analysis and activities from the GDOP.

5. The GDOP sent regular reports to the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on developments in Australia and New Zealand, in particular on the electoral process and electoral outcomes and local media coverage of the Palestinian issue.

Individual reports were also sent about meetings with foreign ministers on the *Nakba* celebrations.

The GDOP responded to directives from the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on bilateral relations between Palestine and Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific island states.

6. The GDOP implemented media campaigns on Palestinian prisoners, the judaisation of Jerusalem and the construction of settlements. The campaigns consisted of forwarding documents to concerned parties and stakeholder, including the foreign affairs ministries in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, members of parliaments in Australia and New Zealand, advocacy networks, civil society, and the Arab and international diplomatic corps.

7. The GDOP completed its Annual Report for 2012 in both English and Arabic and distributed the report to all stakeholders and concerned parties in Palestine, Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. The mission received generally positive assessments of the report, which served as an important means to promote transparency and accountability in the work of the GDOP.

The GDOP continued to issue general administrative and financial reports every four months and forwarded these to the relevant authorities.

8. The GDOP continued to participate in meetings of the Council of Arab Ambassadors and to play an active role in strategic dialogue between the Council and the ministries of foreign affairs of Australia and New Zealand. The Council showed active support for the Palestinian National Authority and attached political program.

9. The GDOP designed and implemented a fellowship program (internship program) to support specific activities, mainly related to research and media reports.

10. The GDOP has followed up on issues emerging from grants provided to the Palestinian National Authority by the Australian Agency for International Development, in particular addressing certain problems and challenges faced by Palestinian students granted scholarships to study in Australia.

11. The GDOP prepared for, and participated in, Canberra's National Multicultural Festival in February 2014. This involved holding meetings with the local government department managing the festival and coordinating with others taking part in the Palestinian-related activities.

12. The GDOP formulated a position paper on the foreign policy of the new Australian Government and prepared an effective strategy for engagement.

13. The GDOP prepared a brief paper on Australian advocacy and solidarity groups which included ideas for strategies, objectives, activities, organisational structure, and suggestions on how to develop the relationship and cooperation between the GDOP, these groups and wider civil society in Australia and New Zealand.

14. The GDOP distributed educational and political materials to relevant political actors in Australia, New Zealand and Pacific island states, including reports from the World Bank, human rights organisations and the PLO's Negotiations Affairs Department and Department of Culture and Information.

15. The Palestinian Ambassador and representatives of the GDOP participated in many activities organised by the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim communities in Australia.



Evaluation



The activities of the GDOP in 2013 improved credibility with relevant influential powers and stakeholders in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region. The activities executed this year were an effective response to diplomatic needs in Australia and New Zealand and the majority of objectives proposed for the year were achieved. The operations of the GDOP have been improved to enable more effective and sustainable results in the long term. Despite financial limitations and strain on human resources, numerous and ambitious activities were successfully and professionally implemented. Given restricted resources, the GDOP is proud of the comprehensive program delivered in 2013.

Considering the aforementioned, the following observations have been made in regard to challenges faced by the GDOP:

1. The tumultuous political environment in Australia in 2013, followed by an election resulting in a new government that consequently changed Australia's policies on the Palestinian question. In fact, despite its public support for a two state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this government has made a regressive shift towards unconditional support for Israel. That being said, the development of effective tools and the implementation of an active strategy for dialogue addressing the issues related to Palestine might encourage a more balanced position.

2. The resumption of direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine allowed the GDOP to make significant progress in bilateral relations with Australia and New Zealand. However, the resumption also strained relations with advocacy groups and the Palestinian community, some of whom do not support negotiations prior to the cessation of Israeli human rights abuses. In response, the GDOP publicised the Palestinian Authority's position, explaining the value and necessity of such negotiations irrespective of Israel's continued policies concerning the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank. The collapse of negotiations resulted in a loss of credibility for all Palestinian advocates in the eyes of influential parties throughout Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, creating further obstacles to the performance of the GDOP.

3. The work of the GDOP to improve relations with the mainstream Jewish community has enhanced its credibility. The GDOP engagements are inclusive and transparent, affirming the importance of an all-encompassing vision, free of restrictions based on political or religious alignment. This approach has garnered the respect and commendation of multicultural societies across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

4. The GDOP faced difficulties improving bilateral relations with New Zealand. Activities in New Zealand included a visit by H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi, traveling as part of the Council of Arab Ambassadors delegaton, and the widespread circulation of information regarding Israeli human rights violations to the country's advocacy and civil society groups.

Letters on issues relating to Palestine were delivered to New Zealand's Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Murray McCully, by the Council of Arab Ambassadors. The GDOP contributed to the agenda of initiating official talks between New Zealand and Palestine. Unfortunately, these activities were insufficient to exert any serious or sustainable influence in New Zealand, especially in proportion to the consistently supportive position New Zealand takes to the Palestinian question. That said, considering the financial restraints, limited human resources, and the GDOP's lack of a residential representative, the work in New Zealand should be deemed as a foundational success.

5. Relations between the GDOP and the Pacific island states improved substantially in 2013. Various visits by the representatives of these countries, H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi's visit to Vanuatu, and the Ambassador's meeting with the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Timor-Leste, all contributed to increasingly warm relations between the Pacific and Palestine. The small states of the Pacific have expressed great interest in pursuing further relations with the Arab world. Both regions of the world share similar histories of colonialism and hold on tightly to their indigenous traditions and culture. The Pacific has the potential to play a strong and sympathetic role in the future of Palestine and an effective and sustainable strategy for relations with the Pacific island states is essential, particularly in light of their U.N. votes on the Palestinian issue. To this end, links between the interests of the Pacific and the Middle East should be identified and leveraged in future relations with these countries. Unfortunately, a number of obstacles currently inhibit effective relations with this region.

- i. The absence of any clear strategy from the Arab League and other Arab nations to cooperate financially and technically with these countries, hinders the GDOP's ability to sustain meaningful and effective relations. Additionally, Arab countries' insistence to work individually instead of as a unified body weakens the influence of the Arab world in the Pacific.
- ii. The lack of coordination between the GDOP in Australia and other Palestinian delegations throughout Asia has resulted in a lack of regional strategy. Our delegations and embassies in Asia could employ these positive relations to assist in the establishment of a positive dialogue between the GDOP and the Pacific countries. A coordinated and cooperative approach may lead to more favourable outcomes for Palestine in numerous international forums.
- iii. Enhancing cooperation and coordination with our observer mission at the U.N. in regard to the exchange of information and regional coordination strategies could assist the GDOP in implementing effectively in the Pacific.
- iv. Limited financial resources constrain the GDOP's ability to foster effective relations with these countries, especially due to the travel expenses that direct, face-to-face talks entail.
- v. The Pacific region generally conforms to the influence of larger powers in the region, particularly Australia and the United States. As these powers tend to favour Israeli interests, their influence drives the stance of smaller countries in the region. This will continue to be an obstacle for the GDOP.

6. Despite the importance of media relations, the GDOP remains without a dedicated media officer, a reflection of the realities of the GDOP's stretched financial and human resources. In 2014, the GDOP will consider alternative solutions to this shortcoming, including the utilisation of professional media consultants, the development of an appropriately skilled volunteer team within the GDOP, or the employment of a local media industry professional to assist in improving work in this field. The media in Australia and New Zealand focuses on news from the Asia-Pacific and interest from these countries in information from the Middle East can be weak, further inhibiting the implementation of an effective media strategy.
7. Relations between the GDOP and parliamentarians in Australia and New Zealand were significantly weaker than desired in 2013. In Australia, this shortcoming can be attributed to internal conflicts within the Labor government and the ensuing change of government. Parliamentarians were preoccupied and reluctant to make any definitive statements during the election period and the GDOP felt it inappropriate to attempt to implement the larger program it had planned. This program becomes a high priority for 2014 and the GDOP will focus on newly elected parliamentarians, specifically those within the ruling Coalition.
8. The increase of pressure on the GDOP's consular section given recent events in Syria drew time away from the projected program, further highlighting limited human resources.



9. An important lesson was learnt this year. The GDOP now recognises the utmost importance of focusing and achieving a select number of outcomes with the greatest political and diplomatic impact. The members of the GDOP remain passionate and enthusiastic to undertake a comprehensive and impressive program, but will endeavour to more realistically and effectively prioritise activities in the future. It is essential that the GDOP focus its vision on activities with strategically tangible outcomes, given a shortfall in resources that is unlikely to improve in 2014.



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