



State of Palestine

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

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Cover Image

Ambassador Abdulhadi and supporters in front of Parliament House

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

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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| The Political Context | 3 |
| - Australia | 4 |
| - New Zealand | 8 |
| - The Pacific | 9 |
| Objectives and Strategic pathways | 10 |
| Activities | 14 |
| Evaluation | 62 |

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

STRENGTHENING RELATIONS



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For the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific (GDOP), the year 2014 was a distinguished year par excellence. Despite being faced with a host of new challenges from serious and tumultuous developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the GDOP was able to respond with original and appropriate strategies to make the best of every situation. In this way, this year has truly enriched the experience of the GDOP, as well as its role in the region.

2014 was a very significant year indeed, in light of its assignment as the U.N. International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The launching of the Year of Solidarity at Parliament House demonstrated a deep and profound support in Australia for the Palestinian people, symbolic of the recent change in public opinion towards Palestine exhibited by large segments of Australian society.

For instance, the Israeli Assault on Gaza that began in July triggered a wider understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Australian society. The immense tragedy endured by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip was felt around the world and certainly in Australia received an unprecedented level of attention, provoking widespread reactions from all sectors of society. Citizens from all walks of life attended large demonstrations across the country, as well as in New Zealand, to show solidarity and support to the innocent Palestinian civilians affected by this catastrophe.

The GDOP undertook a high volume of work in this period in particular. By this stage, the GDOP had managed to effectively draft and maintain a consistent and politically moderate message. Managing strategic dialogue with the Liberal-coalition Government played a large part in the GDOP's successes this year. The approach of direct meetings with the current Government and the maintenance of robust and serious relationships with all influential stakeholders involved in political decision-making kept the GDOP in a prominent position.

In this context, it is important to highlight this year's positive and tremendous shift in the position of the state branches of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The various state branches of ALP clearly agreed that recognising a Palestinian state was on the table if they were to win government, especially in the case of continued Israeli illegal settlement construction. The GDOP followed this closely, contributing where it could.

Having said that, all was not perfect and rosy in 2014. The GDOP witnessed several serious challenges appear this year in the Australian political arena. Kick-starting the year was a concerning statement by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP, during her participation in the funeral of the former Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon. The Minister, in an interview, questioned the consensus view that Israeli settlements are illegal under International Law. Augmenting this controversy was the statement that followed by the Australian Attorney General, Senator George Brandis, which declared the Australian Government would no longer use the term "Occupied East Jerusalem". To end the year, Australia's negative vote on the resolution to end the occupation, submitted on December 31 by the Palestinian leadership to the U.N Security Council, of which Australia was an elected member for 2014, further complicated bilateral relations. The GDOP did its best to address these issues and with assistance from the Council of Arab Ambassadors, and others, achieved marked success.

Despite the political seesawing occurring in Australia, which demanded the full attention of the GDOP at times, the GDOP took New Zealand as a specific focus this year. I am proud to report bilateral relations with New Zealand have enjoyed a clear improvement. The initiation of formal negotiations between Palestine and New Zealand, as well as the much-appreciated assignment of a New Zealand representative to Palestine, are the result of the GDOP's attention to this arena. Timing could not be better for better connecting with our respected friends. The Palestinian leadership and the Arab nations have thrown unequivocal support behind the election of New Zealand to its non-permanent member seat at the U.N. Security Council for 2015 and 2016. Its reputation as a player long dedicated to the multilateral system and International Law brings good prospect for increased peace and stability in the world.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all the involved actors for their continued support of the GDOP. To name a few, the Council of Arab Ambassadors, Arab and Islamic nations, civil society in Australia and New Zealand, the Federal Parliamentary Friends of Palestine committee, led by Craig Lundy MP and Maria Vamvakinou MP, as well as members of the Arab and Islamic communities. In particular, I would like to give a special recognition to the Palestinian community, notably in Sydney the General Union of Palestinian Workers, the Australian Palestinian Club and the Australian Palestinian Professional Association (APPA), as well as in Melbourne the Palestinian Community Association and the Beit Jala Society. I also extend my deep appreciation to our Australian interns who supported the GDOP; thank you for your time and efforts to improve the GDOP's work. Finally, I would like to express a heartfelt thank you for my colleagues at the GDOP, Counsellor Suheir Gedoen and my PA Nada Abu-Rahmah, as without their consistent and exceptional contributions, the GDOP could not have accomplished all that it has.

Warm Regards,



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

The Political Context



AUSTRALIA

In the term leading up to the 2013 Australian Federal Elections, the political dynamic between Australia and Palestine had improved markedly.

This was largely the result of the 2012 appointment of Senator The Hon. Bob Carr as Minister for Foreign Affairs by Julia Gillard's Labor Government. He took a lead role in the foreign policy of the Labor Government, who began to more carefully address Australia's position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Australia's abstention in the 2012 UN General Assembly vote on the upgrading of the status of Palestine to observer non-member state was regarded as a tremendously important shift in policy. On this platform, the Government went on to fulfil two chief measures: moderating Australia's voting patterns at the UN General Assembly on the Palestinian issue and increasing aid substantially.

Nevertheless, the Liberal-National Coalition's election to government in September 2013 has brought significant revision of the bilateral relations of Australia and Palestine. In this respect, 2014 has proved an eventful year. The outbreak of the Israeli assault on Gaza in July required particular attention because of the Australian and New Zealand position on this assault. Additionally, proclamations from members of the Australian political elite towards Israeli violations in East Jerusalem were of grave concern. Also of high concern was the Australian Government boycott of the Geneva conference in Switzerland, a conference held on the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Occupied Arab and Palestinian Territories. The local, regional and international implications of these developments could not be overlooked, requiring the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific (GDOP) to engage in strategic dialogue and lobby the Australian Government.

The world witnessed a change in Australian voting patterns at the UN. The Government reversed the previous Government's positive vote on two important resolutions: the condemnation of Israeli settlements and the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).



Prime Minister the Hon. Tony Abbott and Foreign Minister the Hon. Julie Bishop

Such dramatic political change provoked widespread reaction from the Australian community. Because of the ad hoc nature of the decision, the Australian media displayed a large interest in the reaction of the GDOP. In numerous interviews, H.E. Ambassador Izzat Abdulhadi emphasised the applicability of International Law on the Occupied Palestinian Territories that considers Israeli settlements as illegal.

In the face of this, the new Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, The Hon. Julie Bishop MP, raised controversy during a trip to Israel to attend the funeral of ex-Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon. In an interview with The Times of Israel, she said she was skeptical of the fact that Israeli settlements are considered illegal under international law.

Furthermore, the Australian Ambassador to Israel, Mr Dave Sharma, made an unprecedented move by holding a meeting in Occupied East Jerusalem with the Israeli Minister of Construction, Uri Ariel. This was the first time an Australian ambassador had publicly conducted a meeting with Israeli officials in Occupied East Jerusalem. It was considered a serious matter and drew condemnation from the Palestinian Authority.

To add, the Attorney-General of Australia, George Brandis GC, released an unprecedented and provocative statement. He declared that the Australian Government would refrain from using the internationally accepted term, "Occupied East Jerusalem", and elaborated that such a description is pejorative and prejudges.

The Attorney-General's statement generated a strong reaction from within the governing and opposition parties, as well as Australian civil society and the Islamic, Arab and Palestinian communities of Australia. His statement was interpreted as a shift in Australia's position to a lack of balance. It was considered a substantial shift in the historic policies agreed upon by Australia's large political parties and their traditions of international law and diplomacy.

In response, the GDOP played a figurehead role in gathering Arab and Islamic ambassadors in Canberra. The GDOP called an urgent meeting for the ambassadors to prepare a letter to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The letter expressed deep concern at Mr Brandis' statements towards Occupied East Jerusalem and called on the Australian Government to withdraw from this stance.



Attorney General the Hon. George Brandis

Furthermore, it called on the Australian Government to commit itself to international law and UN resolutions, which consider the annexation of East Jerusalem to Israel as an unacceptable and illegal act. Likewise, the Palestinian and Jordanian Governments summoned their Australian representatives to express their disappointment in the statement. The Arab League also called the Australian Ambassador in Cairo and sent messages to the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs expressing their dissatisfaction. Furthermore, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) issued a series of statements condemning Mr Brandis' statement and asked the Australian Government to withdraw the statement.

Under considerable pressure, Ms Bishop issued a statement declaring that Australia continues to support UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and a solution comprised of two secure states living side-by-side with defined borders. Included was a promise that the Australian Ambassador in Tel Aviv would hold no future meetings in East Jerusalem. Additionally, she clarified that any foreign policy issue is her responsibility, and that of the Prime Minister, only.

These events set the stage for serious beginnings of strategic dialogue with the Australian Government on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The GDOP was able to use in its interest the attention brought by the Australian media, who covered the legality of Israeli settlements and the status of East Jerusalem to an excellent standard. The statement by Ms Bishop was enough to initiate stern discussions on Australian foreign policy on the Palestinian question, which eventuated into regular, direct meetings between the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Arab and Muslim countries' ambassadors, and the GDOP.

The next important development was the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip, which involved the killing of over 2,500 Palestinians, the majority civilians.

In response to the assault on Gaza, the Prime Minister the Hon. Tony Abbot MP assured the right of the Israeli people to exist and defend their nation. As the conflict developed, the Prime Minister moved to stress the importance of an immediate ceasefire. This was especially considering the increasing number of civilian victims from the Palestinian side, following the Israeli bombardment of UNRWA schools sheltering refugees. Throughout the conflict, he denounced the rockets fired by Hamas and other groups into Israel from the Gaza Strip. The Hon. Julie Bishop MP, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, emphasised the right of Palestinians and Israelis to their own states, to exist side by side. By August 5, the Minister had released a more comprehensive statement, calling on both parties to reach an agreement and cease the civilian deaths. The Australian Government pledged two packages of a total of \$15 million in humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.



Israeli aggression on Gaza

The Shadow Foreign Minister, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, issued a press statement calling for an immediate ceasefire. This release requested both parties to cease the violence and put an end to the humanitarian suffering of the people of Gaza. She emphasised once again the position of the Australian Labor Party as supportive of the two state solution. Labor has condemned the bombardment of UNRWA schools and at the same time denounced rockets being fired from the vicinity of these schools. In an unprecedented move, more than seventy Australian parliamentarians signed a petition denouncing the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip and the killing of Palestinian civilians during this assault.

Australian civil society and advocacy and solidarity groups for the Palestinian people also denounced, in the strongest possible terms, the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip. They condemned the indiscriminate killing of civilians and the destruction of Palestinian homes and civil infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. Demonstrations were held in various cities in Australia to protest the Israeli assault on the Gaza Strip.

This period simultaneously witnessed an increase of Israeli violations in East Jerusalem. On numerous occasions, settler extremists with the support of the Israeli Government entered the grounds of the Al-Aqsa Mosque Compound /Al Haram Al Sharif. Israel, the occupying power, failed to stop extremists from using blatant and unlawful use of force against one of the holiest sites of Islam. As a result of these intrusions, fires broke out that damaged mosaics, rugs, and facilities within the Al-Aqsa Compound. These actions provoked fears and anger, not only amongst Palestinians, but also amongst the world's 1.6 billion Muslims. Provocations and encroachment by Israel of this sacred site and others served to inflame religious sentiments, deepen distrust, and threatened to ignite more violence.

In a move that exacerbated the situation, Israeli forces arbitrarily detained the employees of Al-Waqf Department, the national authority responsible, under International Law, for the administration, maintenance and custodianship of the holy sites.

All this demonstrated a violation of the Israeli government's obligation to maintain public order and civil life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). The Israeli measures also represented a direct violation of International Law and U.N. resolutions, the Israeli-Jordanian Peace Treaty of 1994, which includes the custodianship of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the Muslim and Christian shrines in East Jerusalem, and the agreement signed between his Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan and H.E. the President of the Palestinian National Authority Mahmoud Abbas on 31 March 2013.

Despite these challenges, a positive and substantial development during this period was the adoption of a number of resolutions passed by the Australian Labor Party in various regional conferences throughout Australia. The trend was to adopt resolutions in the interest of the Palestinian people, particularly a policy of recognition of the State of Palestine, to be implemented in the case of an ALP victory in the upcoming federal election of 2016/7.

Other major events included the evaluation of the Australian aid program for Palestine and the participation in a training course, held by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), by the Palestinian Desk Officer for Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. All these developments required active participation and action from the GDOP.

To end on a positive note, the Australian government continued to provide financial support to the Palestinian people this year. In the face of substantial cuts to foreign aid, the financial aid to Palestine has been unaffected. The continuance of this aid is considered an indication of clear support of the Australian Government towards state building, institution building and development in Palestine.

NEW ZEALAND

This year witnessed consistency and continuity in New Zealand's foreign policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The most important development was the agreement to start formal bilateral consultations between the two parties. The first round of consultations were held in Ramallah at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 25 June. The consultations tackled various issues related to bilateral and multilateral relations, including the peace process, implications of the negotiation freeze, New Zealand's aid to Palestine, and technical and institution building assistance. The recent conflicts in the Arab world were also discussed, in addition to the interest of New Zealand to hold a seat at the UN Security Council in 2015.

New Zealand's UN voting style on the Palestinian issue remained the same in 2014. New Zealand voted in favour of Palestine in relevant resolutions, especially those regarding settlements. Preparations are currently underway for New Zealand parliamentary elections. At this stage there is no obvious frontrunner; the polls indicate the leading parties (National and Labour) are close. Regardless, there is no expectation that a new Labour government would bring any change to foreign policy on Palestine. Historically, the policy has remained consistent through consecutive New Zealand governments. Lastly, it is important to mention that New Zealand voted in favour of upgrading Palestine to a non-member observer state at the UN in 2012 and continues to provide limited annual financial aid to Palestine.

On the issue of the Israeli Assault on Gaza, the New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Murray McCully, responded by issuing a press statement that expressed his deep concern for the Israeli violence, in particular the killing of innocent civilians. He called on both parties to enact self-restraint in order to avoid further civilian deaths. This included a demand to avoid any further escalation, from Hamas by ceasing rockets fired towards the border towns in Israel, and from the Israeli Government by showing a more proportionate response. The Minister expressed his wish to see further maturation of the peace process for reaching a sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



New Zealand Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Murray McCully

THE PACIFIC CONTEXT

1. VANUATU, TIMOR-LESTE AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA

This year generally showed little development in bilateral relations with the Pacific Islands.

As far as Papua New Guinea is concerned, the GDOP has maintained communication to establish full diplomatic relations and has sent an application for full recognition to their Foreign Ministry. However, it is still in process despite the recognition of the state of Palestine by Papua New Guinea.

East Timor and Vanuatu have granted full diplomatic recognition of Palestine. Unfortunately, financial and technical cooperation between Palestine and these two nations have not been achieved. This cooperation would play an important role in the enhancement of bilateral relations. For instance, one approach to enhance the relationships between Palestine and these islands is to encourage the Arab League's attempts to draft an agreement to create an Arab-Pacific Forum. This issue was raised in previous Arab League meetings and is up for discussion. For the GDOP, the materialisation of this is a priority to achieving cooperation in the region.

In this context, the GDOP conducted a study on the Pacific islands, which reached the following recommendations:

1. Palestine should prepare and offer the Pacific islands its assistance in both medical research and facilities, as well as sending Palestinian doctors to the Pacific islands to assist in providing more modern medical care.
2. Palestine should use its vast agricultural knowledge and experience to benefit and encourage agriculture in these countries, particularly given its similar economic context. Such a program would have many benefits for the local economies, potential for trade with Palestine, and Palestine's reputation in the region.
3. Palestine should encourage tourism to the Pacific islands, marketing the vastly different landscape, culture and people. Equally, Palestine should encourage the Pacific islands to increase marketing of Palestine as a travel destination by highlighting the country's Christian relics.
4. Palestine should encourage greater private sector investment in the Pacific islands in order to bring greater economic and diplomatic ties to the region.
5. Palestine should increase its representation in the region. The planned office of the Arab League in the Pacific provides a useful start. More time and effort in developing personal relationships in the region, brought about by increased representation, will have marked positive impacts.
6. Palestine should engage with Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific Forum, and the Melanesian Spearhead Group, to ensure that these key stakeholders and institutions support Palestinian policies for, and relationships with, the Pacific islands.

Finally, Palestine needs to act quickly to ensure that it can capitalise on the current political situation of increased Arab involvement in the Pacific.

Objectives and Strategic Pathway



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In 2014, 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.

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

The strategic objectives to achieve this were as follows:

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

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



STRATEGIES

1. To initiate and engage in heartfelt strategic dialogue with the 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.



Activities



BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

1. On 6 January, Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in a dinner organised by the Australian National University in honour of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, The Hon. Julie Bishop MP. The dinner included discussion on the voting patterns of Australia at the UN and the issue of Israeli settlements. The Ambassador expressed to the minister the dissatisfaction of the Palestinian Government in regards to the recent Australian abstentions on two UN resolutions - the condemnation of Israeli settlements, and the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Ambassador reflected that the new voting pattern contradicts Australia's trend and official position towards the two-state solution. In response, the minister assured support of the two-state solution and emphasised that the voting is meant to assure Australian even-handedness towards this issue. She stressed that any peace reached should be through direct negotiation of the two parties.



Dinner with the Minister of Foreign Affairs the Hon. Julie Bishop

2. The statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs during her visit to Jerusalem on January 5, in which she questioned the position of the international law on the illegality of settlements, has negatively affected the relations between the Australian Government and Palestine. There has been much in depth discussion in Australia towards this important issue, especially after the statement by the previous Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bob Carr, that all settlements are illegal under international law.

The Ambassador conducted a number of interviews with the press criticizing the position of the Minister. He discussed in depth the position of the international law towards the Israeli settlements. In addition, a number of analysis articles emerged on this topic in the Australian press, most importantly the article written by the Chief Palestinian Negotiator, Dr Saeb Erekat, which was published in The Canberra Times and The Sydney Morning Herald, as well as the article of the well-reputed international law expert, Professor Ben Saul of the University of Sydney.

Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Riyad Al-Malik sent a letter to his Australian counterpart, denouncing her statement and requesting a written explanation on this new Australian position. The GDOP sent a detailed legal document to parliamentarians highlighting the fact that international law considers all Israeli settlements illegal. In response to Julie Bishop's statement, the GDOP also issued and distributed a press release and numerous PLO releases and information packages to parliamentarians, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and to Julie Bishop's office. On January 21, a representative from GDOP also met with Mr Marc Innes-Brown, Head of the Middle Eastern Department at DFAT, to express the dissatisfaction of the Palestinian Government with Julie Bishop's statement. On the same note, on January 30 the Ambassador delivered a letter from the Palestinian Foreign Affairs Minister to Mr Paul Robilliard at DFAT, to be forwarded to the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

3. On June 12 Australian Attorney-General George Brandis issued a statement in regards to the status of Occupied East Jerusalem. His statement declared the terminology of "Occupied East Jerusalem" is inappropriate and mentioned that the Australian Government would refrain from using this term in future. This statement created considerable controversy within elements of the Australian political landscape, particularly within the Arab and Palestinian communities, civil society, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Arab and international diplomatic corps.

Australian civil society institutions, advocacy groups and the Arab and Palestinian communities have responded quickly to and advocated against the new Australian position in regards to the legal status of East Jerusalem. The GDOP distributed a large number of legal materials to parliamentarians and various stakeholders in order to explain the Palestinian position towards these issues and support this with legal evidence.

The Arab and Muslim countries' ambassadors met with The Hon Julie Bishop, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, to discuss Mr Brandis' statement. They expressed their deep concern at the statement and asked the Minister to clarify Australian position towards this crucial issue. The Minister was clear that this indicated no shift in Australia's policy towards the legal status of East Jerusalem. She reaffirmed Australia still supports the UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and the two state solution vision.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs the Hon. Julie Bishop, and Arab Ambassadors

Furthermore, the Arab and Islamic ambassadors met with the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Bill Shorten MP. The MP emphasised the Labor Party’s position of considering East Jerusalem as an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Ambassadors of Islamic and Arab countries met with The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, who reconfirmed the Shadow Prime Minister’s stance.



Ambassador Abdulhadi and the Opposition Leader the Hon. Bill Shorten

The GDOP conducted an extensive outreach media campaign with the aim of explaining the Palestinian and Arab position in regards to the legal status of East Jerusalem, which is considered an integral part of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Palestinian Ambassador conducted numerous interviews with the Australian media, both print and broadcast. He called upon the Australian Government to adhere to its commitments to international law, diplomacy and UN resolutions. These campaigns, activities and proactive policies by the GDOP were constructive, as they brought attention to the major legal issues concerning the Palestinian question. These events also opened the door for strategic dialogue with the Government and the Opposition on all issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



4. In cooperation with the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, the GDOP organised the launching of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at Parliament House on March 4. More than thirty-eight parliamentarians and Australian senators participated in the event, in addition to representatives from the Arab and international diplomatic corps. Also attending were representatives from solidarity and advocacy groups on Palestine, representatives and leaders from Australian civil society, and Palestinian community leaders. The Palestinian Ambassador delivered an address focusing on the importance of the international decision to support the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination. He also mentioned the illegal Israeli settlements as the main obstacle to reaching a comprehensive and just peace to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



Ambassador Abdulhadi at the Launch of the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

Mr Craig Lundy MP, from the Liberal party and the Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, gave an address to reaffirm the right of the Palestinian people for self-determination and their legitimate aspirations to establish an independent Palestinian state. He seized the opportunity to reiterate his, and the Liberal party's, support for the two state solution.

Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP, from the Labor Party and Co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, followed with an address in which she also referred to the Palestinian people's aspirations and right to establish an independent state on their land. She voiced the support of Australian parliamentarians for these aspirations. She also emphasised that Israeli settlement activities are currently the main obstacle to the peace process.

Mr Christopher Woodthorpe, Director of the UN Information Centre in Canberra, read a message on behalf of Secretary-General of the UN, Mr Ban Ki-Moon. This message reflected on the importance of the right of the Palestinian people to establish their own state and achieve just and sustainable peace.

Mr. George Browning, head of the Australian Palestinian Advocacy Network (APAN), also spoke. As a representative for advocacy groups, he called upon the Australian Government to adopt policies in support of the Palestinian people and the two-state solution. Moreover, he condemned settlements, declaring all settlements illegal under international law and obstacles to peace.

The success of the event, emphasised through the attendance of large and diverse audience, was a pleasant reminder of the important role played by the GDOP and the status and respect it has worked for within the Australian official arena, as well as the Arab and international diplomatic arena.



Ms. Maria Vamvakinou, Ambassador Abdulhadi, and MP the Hon. Craig Lundy

5. As part of the GDOP plan to interact with parliamentarians, Ambassador Abdulhadi met with a delegation of parliamentarians headed by Senator Penny Wong, the Leader of the Opposition in the Australian Senate, on March 27. During this meeting, the Ambassador explained the Palestinian position regarding the negotiation process, final status issues, Palestinian reconciliation, and other relevant issues. The Ambassador highlighted Israeli accountability for the collapse of the peace negotiations, pointing to the continuous illegal settlement activities within the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

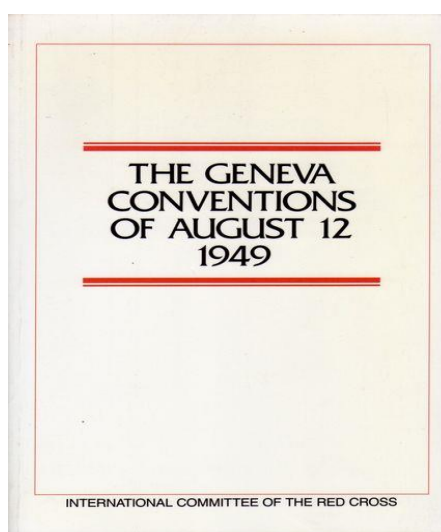
Ambassador Abdulhadi also met with the Shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mrs Tanya Plibersek, on June 8. During this meeting, the Minister criticised current Australian policy towards the Palestinian question and expressed her sureness that all Israeli settlements are illegal under international law. Additionally, she expressed her support for an independent Palestinian state on the land occupied since 1967.

The Ambassador also met with Senator Sam Dastyari from the Labor Party. The two discussed means of cooperation between the GDOP and the Parliament, as well as the latest developments on the Palestinian question. Senator Dastyari has expressed his opposition to the Israeli settlements and has delivered influential speeches on the Palestinian question to the Australian Senate.

On June 26, the Ambassador met with the Leader of the Australian Greens, Senator Christine Milne, who expressed her full support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their right to establish an independent state according to 1967 borders. She considers all settlement activities illegal under international law.

The Ambassador met with Craig Lundy MP and Maria Vamvakinou MP in their capacity of co-chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine. The three discussed the latest developments on the Palestinian question and working arrangements with the Australian Parliament. It is important to mention that the number of senators and MPs supporting the Palestinian position is constantly increasing.

6. On April 4 and on June 14, H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi and Counsellor Suheir Gedeon met with Mr Marc Innes-Brown, Head of the Middle East Department at DFAT, to discuss the collapse of the negotiation process and explain the position of the Palestinian leadership. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi explained the reasons for the collapse in negotiations. He mentioned the responsibility of Israel for this collapse, especially Israel refusing to release the fourth group of Palestinian detainees according to the previous agreement between both parties. He also described how Israel's continuous policy of settlement construction is another primary reason for the collapse of negotiations. Attention was brought to the last 800 settlement units that Israel chose to construct during negotiations. As a result of the collapse, the Palestinian Authority has decided to join 19 international agreements, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, as a means to enhance the legal status of Palestine and commit to democracy and international law.



7. The GDOP participated actively in regular DFAT briefings in regards to the Australian activities and role within the UN Security Council. During these briefings, the GDOP emphasised the importance of Australia focusing on the Palestinian question. The GDOP continuously highlighted the responsibility brought with Australia's holding of the seat to conduct discussions with the Palestinian side in order to reach a mutual understanding on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Advancing the interests of Australia and Australians internationally

8. The GDOP continued to follow up the partnership agreement between the Australian Government and the Palestinian Authority. An important contextual development was the recent changes on the status of AusAid. The new Government decided to integrate the agency as part of DFAT, rather than as an external department. This move has left many wondering the reasoning behind this structural centralisation.



The new Government made the decision to halve its total contribution to Official Development Assistance (ODA) from 8 billion dollars to 4 billion dollars. However, despite this, the annual aid to Palestine remained steady at 56 million dollars. The GDOP met with the DFAT representatives in charge of development to discuss these changes and future strategies of Australian aid to Palestine. The Ambassador met in Palestine in mid-April with Head of Development at the Australian Representative Office in Ramallah. The two had a profound discussion on the new Australian strategies and aid policy.



9. The Ambassador also attended a dinner organised by the Australian representation in Ramallah and was joined by representatives from civil society. The Ambassador met with the Australian Representative to the Palestinian Authority, Mr. Tom Wilson, several times during his trip to Ramallah. They discussed the latest political developments and ways to enhance cooperation and exchange of information between the GDOP and the Australian Representative Office in Ramallah.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and representatives from civil society

10. On March 12, Ambassador Abdulhadi presented on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to a number of diplomats in Arabic as part of DFAT's language practice program. The presentation centred on the failure of the negotiation process, focusing on Israeli policy and the illegal settlements in the Occupied Territories, as well as shortcomings in the Australian approach towards the Israeli-Palestinian question. The presentation proved fruitful and provoked robust discussion between participants about the Israeli-Palestinian question and related Australian foreign policy.



11. The first session of official negotiations between the GDOP and members of the New Zealand Ministry for Foreign Affairs took place on June 25. Prior to these official negotiations, a number of informal meetings took place to draft official documents and the agenda for the meeting. The GDOP has contributed tremendously to these papers.

To this end, a meeting between H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi and the New Zealand Ambassador to Palestine, Mr. Jonathon Curr occurred on July 17 at the GDOP premises in Canberra. In this meeting, the bilateral relations between the two countries were discussed, as well as the means to further enhance them through formal negotiations. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi thanked New Zealand for its positive vote towards upgrading the membership status of Palestine to non-member observer state at the 2012 UNGA sitting.

12. The GDOP attended two important seminars at the New Zealand High Commission. The first, on August 8, was a private briefing for cross-accredited missions on the New Zealand economy and budget by the New Zealand Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Hon. Bill English MP. The Minister included an outline of the vision and strategy of New Zealand in the case of its appointment to the U.N. Security Council. The second, on September 11, was delivered by the experienced New Zealand political journalist and commentator, Mr. Colin James. Mr. James described in-depth the election mechanisms in New Zealand.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, Ms. Noura Saleh a desk officer at Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

13. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi and Ms. Noura Saleh, the Palestinian Desk Officer for Australia and New Zealand, took part in a celebration organised by the New Zealand High Commission in Australia for the occasion of the eve of the New Zealand federal election.
14. The GDOP drafted a report on the New Zealand parliamentary election, with particular focus on the impact of the election results on policy towards the Israel-Palestine question. Please note that the conservative National Party won the election, the Labor Party placing as the opposition.

15. The GDOP participated commendably in the National Multicultural Festival in Canberra, which took place on February 9 2014. This event is considered one of the most important annual cultural activities organised by the Australian government. Over 300,000 people from all walks of life participate annually. Most of the diplomatic representatives and embassies also contribute to the festival. The Palestinian stall included an exhibition of a wide range of Palestinian embroideries and handmade crafts. The stall also included information on tourism in Palestine and the religious and cultural landmarks of Palestine. A particular climax of the festival was the Palestinian dabke dance performed by the Palestinian community members.



16. Two identical letters were sent to the Hon. Julie Bishop MP, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Hon. Murray McCully, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for New Zealand, regarding the Israeli assault on Gaza, explaining extensively the loss of life and livelihoods that the Gaza Strip faced. The letters called for Australia and New Zealand to intervene immediately by making diplomatic moves to convince Israel to cease its aggression on Gaza, as well as to support the request of the Palestinian people to end the siege of Gaza. Additionally, a letter from the Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Dr. Riyad Al-Maliki, was forwarded to The Hon. Julie Bishop MP and the New Zealand Minister for Foreign Affairs, The Hon. Murray McCully.
17. The GDOP issued three press releases on this conflict and distributed these widely to parliamentarians, DFAT, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), advocacy groups in Australia and New Zealand, the Arab and international diplomatic corps, and naturally, the media.
18. Members of the GDOP participated in various grass-roots public demonstrations against the Israeli assault on Gaza. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi delivered a speech at one of these rallies in Canberra. The GDOP followed closely other activities of wider civil society and community advocacy groups on this matter.



Ambassador Abdulhadi and fellow supporters outside Parliament House

19. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi was interviewed several times by print and broadcast media. He took opportunity in these interviews to refute any claims regarding the assault on Gaza by Israel to Israel's right to self-defense and any claims that Palestinians use civilians as human shields. He further focused on elaborating the root causes of the conflict, namely the siege, settlements and a long outstanding occupation.
20. Counsellor Suheir Gedeon from the GDOP met the DFAT Desk Officer in charge of Palestine and Israel. During this meeting, the Counsellor put forward an extensive explanation on the Palestinian position towards the

Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip. The two then discussed the possibility of the Australian Government further supporting the Palestinian people in the wake of the assault on Gaza, through joining the international coordination of the humanitarian assistance.

21. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi met the New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia, H.E. Chris Seed, and briefed him with current information on the Israeli assault on Gaza and the official Palestinian position towards the assault. In addition, the GDOP received correspondence from the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in which the position of the New Zealand Government towards the Israeli assault on Gaza was outlined.
22. The GDOP website and social media forums were immediately assigned to cover the events related to the Gaza assault. The various positions and political statements that were issued in relation to this subject, from all parties, were monitored and disseminated.
23. The GDOP closely monitored the 15 million AUD of emergency humanitarian aid donated by the Australian Government to Gaza, as well as the fundraising efforts of civil society and Palestinian, Arab and Islamic communities in Australia.
24. Representatives from the GDOP met with those in charge of the international development desk at DFAT (formerly institutionalised as AUSAID) and briefed them on the requirements of the Gaza Strip in this time of need. To reciprocate, representatives from this desk briefed the GDOP on the emergency aid allocated to Gaza. In this meeting, the GDOP stressed the urgency for further support to somewhat address the devastation that took place during the assault.
25. The GDOP closely observed the activities undertaken by the Australian and New Zealand parliamentarians concerning the Israeli assault. In this context, the GDOP supported the initiative taken by seventy Australian MPs condemning all Israeli aggression against the Gaza strip. A number of press releases were issued on this matter in particular.
26. To create an informed and accurate opinion within Australia on the events occurring in Gaza, a campaign of information sharing and dissemination was enacted by the GDOP. A number of press releases, statements and important documents related to the assault on Gaza were distributed to parliamentarians, civil society, advocacy groups, ministries of foreign affairs, the Arab and international diplomatic corps, and Palestinian, Arab and Islamic communities. These documents were sourced from various organisations in Palestine, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Department of Culture and Information and the Negotiations Affairs Department, as well as the State of Palestine Mission to the UN office in New York.
27. The GDOP closely monitored the positions of the Australian and New Zealand governments, as well as ensuring similitude with the official Palestinian position. A report was drawn up in Arabic and English on the various positions of the Oceanic region on the assault on Gaza and forwarded to the Palestinian MOFA.

28. Members of the GDOP took part in a special communal mercy prayer focusing on the civilians of Gaza. This prayer was organised by the Christian Cultural Centre in Canberra and was attended by a large number of interested people, including Christians, Muslims, Jews, and followers of other religions. Representatives from various religions led prayers and delivered profound speeches. The Head of the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN), Bishop George Browning, delivered a speech. He referred to the historic injustices inflicted on the Palestinian people, which, he declared, sadly continue through injustices like the latest Israeli assault on Gaza.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, Mr. George Browning the head of APAN and Counsellor Suheir Gedeon

29. Community and civil society organisations coordinated a number of public rallies to demonstrate support of the Palestinian people and condemnation of the assault on Gaza.

Substantial rallies took place in Brisbane on July 11, in Melbourne on July 12, in Sydney on July 13, in Perth and Adelaide on July 19, and in Canberra on July 13 and July 19.



Rally in Sydney calling for the end of the assault on Gaza

In New Zealand, advocacy groups organised an extensive rally in Auckland on July 19. Speakers at the rally agreed on a common message: the denouncement of Israeli aggression towards the Gaza Strip, considering Israeli actions as war crimes against civilians. They all also considered the assault as a clear violation of international law and a violation of numerous international agreements and UN resolutions that comprehensively cover the protection of civilians during times of war. Speakers affirmed that the main obstacles to peace are not the rockets fired by Hamas and similar groups, but rather the ongoing Israeli occupation, the siege of the Gaza Strip and the Israeli settlement construction. They called upon the New Zealand and international community to pressure Israel to immediately cease its assault and to commit to the ceasefire that was agreed upon in 2012.

30. The APAN media release issued on July 14, entitled "Stop the Bombing on Gaza". This statement called for an immediate ceasefire and considered the Israeli aggression on Gaza as a violation of international law. The organisation called upon all solidarity groups in Australia to rally and denounce Israeli aggression against Gaza. Their statement called upon the Australian government to play a more effective role in ending the assault by calling for an immediate ceasefire.
31. The Australian Democratic Jewish Society (ADJS) released a statement, which called for an end to violations of Palestinian rights, illegal settlements and the bombardment and killing of civilians and children.
32. The Australian National Imams Council also issued a statement denouncing the aggressive tactics of Israel and the collective punishment of innocents in Gaza. They called upon the Australian Government to pressure Israel to end its unjust aggression on the Palestinian people.
33. The GDOP received a letter on August 8 from Mr. Angelo Gavrielatos, the Federal President of the Australian Education Union. The letter condemned, in the strongest possible means, the Israeli assault on Gaza. The letter included a promise of action by the President. It also denounced the statement made in support of Israel by the Australian Minister for Education and Training, the Hon. Christopher Pyne MP, during his visit to Israel. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi responded to this letter on August 18 and thanked the President for his moral position in line with international law. The Ambassador wrote that his denouncement of Israeli aggression, particularly on the destruction of Palestinian schools, is highly respectable and appreciated.
34. As far as the Australian Government is concerned, the response to condemn Israel's actions was hesitant, particularly from the Prime Minister the Hon. Tony Abbot MP. On July 17, the day Israeli ground troops were sent into Gaza, the Prime Minister hesitated to condemn Israel's actions and stated on two different occasions Israel's right to exist and right to self-defense. By July 31, at which point civilian fatalities were nearing 1,400 and a U.N. school had been hit by Israeli shells, the Prime Minister demonstrated more urgency in his assessment, calling for an immediate ceasefire by both sides. Once again he repeatedly emphasised Israel's right to exist and right to self-defence as a fundamental condition for a solution. On August 1, the Prime Minister continued to condemn the missiles from Gaza to Israel, deploring "any actions which result in civilian deaths".

The Foreign Minister, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP, released several official statements positioning the Australian Government on the matter. Condemning violence against civilians, breaking ceasefires, and emphasising support for a long-term two state solution were recurrent themes. On July 17, the statement issued blamed Hamas for the broken ceasefire, commended Israeli leadership for having accepted it, and called for all Palestinian factions to accept the ceasefire.

On July 28, Ms Bishop announced that Australia would provide \$5 million in humanitarian assistance to Gaza through UNRWA, World Vision, and APHEDA. She stated that the Australian Government was deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. A more comprehensive statement on Australia's position was released on August 5. Israel's right to self-defence was re-stated, however the grave humanitarian situation on the side of the Palestinians was emphasised, including the shelling of three U.N. schools. Hamas was once again condemned for ceasefire violations. On August 8, further financial humanitarian assistance to Gaza was announced, \$10 million channelled through the UNRWA and the ICRC.

35. The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development, released a statement where she emphasised the importance of an immediate ceasefire and called on both the Labor and Liberal parties to denounce the violence to assist in ending the suffering of the civilian population. She went on to emphasise that the Labor Party supports a comprehensive final solution to the Israeli-Palestinian question through the establishment of two states.
36. A number of Australian MPs criticised the Israeli assault on Gaza. The Hon. Melissa Parke MP of the Labor Party expressed her deep and profound concern regarding the civilian casualties in Gaza. She especially mentioned the disproportionality of Israel's response to the rockets fired from Gaza and the excessive use of force by the Israeli occupation force. Senator Lee Rhiannon denounced Israeli aggression on the Gaza strip as a clear violation of international humanitarian laws and conventions and called upon the Australian Government to take a clear position in denouncing the Israeli assault. Both Senator Lee Rhiannon and David Shoebridge MLC from the Greens condemned the silence of the Labor Party on the issue and denounced the collective punishment that Israel conducts against the Palestinian people.
37. The NSW branch of the Greens released a statement calling for all Australian political parties to denounce the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip. Additionally, the statement called the rockets fired from within Gaza to cease. However, it was noted that these rockets should not be used as a pretext for the collective punishment of the Palestinian people.



38. To draw attention to this important issue and to encourage the Australian and New Zealand governments to act to save the integrity and sanctity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque from settler violation and violence, the GDOP undertook the following activities:

- Counsellor Suheir Gedeon met with H.E. Mohamed Mael-Ainin, the Moroccan Ambassador to Australia and New Zealand and the Dean of the Council of Arab Ambassadors, and briefed him on the latest violations of the holy sites of Jerusalem, in particular Al-Aqsa Mosque. She urged him to lead the Council of Arab Ambassadors to call on the Australian and New Zealand governments to act to condemn these violations.
- In this context, the Council requested an emergency meeting with the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop MP. Responding to the request, the Minister met the Council on November 17 and was handed a letter drafted by the GDOP on behalf of the Council of Arab Ambassadors. This letter contained a brief on the nature of the Israeli violations and the position of international law and the Palestinian Government in relation to these violations.

In the meeting, the Dean of the Council of Arab Ambassadors gave an explicit explanation regarding the Israeli violations, in particular those on the holy places, including Al-Aqsa in Jerusalem, and urged the Australian Government to pressure for an end to these violations. Julie Bishop MP welcomed the Arab delegation and stressed her position of ending the cycle of violence in Jerusalem. She reemphasised the Australian Government's position of supporting the two state solution.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs the Hon. Julie Bishop, and Arab Ambassadors

- The GDOP circulated a number of documents related to the Israeli violations on religious sites throughout Australia and New Zealand. Advocacy and solidarity groups for the Palestinian people, civil society organisations, the Palestinian, Arabic and Islamic communities, and media outlets all received these documents.

39. The Australian Labor Party is currently preparing for its National Conference to be held in July 2015. In preparation, the party organised three regional conferences for New South Wales (Sydney), Queensland (Brisbane) and South Australia (Adelaide). These three regional conferences involved major outcomes towards the Palestinian question.

The state branches reached two main decisions. The first confirmed that the state Labor divisions considered all Israeli settlements illegal under international law. The second agreed, in the case of a Labor Party victory in the next election, to consult with other like-minded countries to consider the recognition of the State of Palestine.

This move was largely orchestrated by Mr. Bob Carr, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, who made a concentrated effort for these resolutions to be drafted and voted on.

However, despite this positive development within the Labor Party philosophy and policy, there is undeniably a strong lobby within the Labor Party that is still against the recognition of Palestine as a state.

Therefore, even in the face of these important decisions, it remains possible that under the pressure of the right-wing faction of the party that the federal conference may adopt content and language that might differ from the decisions of the regional conferences. Additionally, these resolutions are non-binding for any new government formed by the Labor Party.

The GDOP undertook a number of activities to support these positive progressions from the Labor Party:

- I. The GDOP provided the organisers of these conferences, as well as Mr. Bob Carr, with relevant documents and necessary information regarding Israeli settlements and the Palestinian state.
- II. A number of meetings were conducted by the GDOP with parliamentarians, including, but not restricted to, Senator Sam Dastyari, Maria Vamvakinou MP and Melissa Parke MP.
- III. The GDOP participated in a symposium in Canberra, held by the Australian Capital Territory branch of the Australian Labor Party on 25 September. The Ambassador gave an address outlining the current situation in Palestine and discussed the Palestinian position on final status issues. His speech especially focused on the Palestinian position towards settlements, considering them as not only illegal under international law, but also the main obstacle to successful negotiations. He commended the Labor Party on their latest resolutions regarding Palestine and urged the party to adopt these positions as official and binding positions.



- IV. The Ambassador participated in a dinner held in honour of Mr. Bob Carr on September 18. In his speech, the guest of honour referred to the important role the GDOP is playing in educating Australian public opinion on content related to the Palestinian question. He also mentioned the GDOP's important role in influencing Australian foreign policies. He praised the latest decisions taken at the various Labor conferences in NSW, QLD and SA in relation to the Palestinian question.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Bob Carr

- v. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi attended a luncheon with Senator Sam Dastyari and his team at the Federal Parliament on November 27. The Palestinian Ambassador thanked Senator Dastyari for his support of the Palestinian people and legitimate justice, and his active role in achieving the resolutions on Palestine during the regional-conferences.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, Senator Sam Dastyari, and APAN

- VI. On December 9, H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in the launching of Labor for Palestine, a new group based in NSW. The establishment of this group was an extremely important initiative, as it includes a number of figurehead leaders from the Labor party and is now considered an influential forum that affects real decision-making within the Labor Party. At this launch, H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi gave an address commending the establishment of the branch group. He indicated the GDOP's willingness to support and cooperate with the group by providing all necessary information related to the Palestinian question. He demonstrated this by vocalising a long explanation on the latest on the Israeli-Palestinian question, focusing on the current Palestinian strategy of moving into multilateral strategy and engaging the UN to end the occupation of Palestine.



Ambassador Abdulhadi giving a speech during the launch of 'Labor for Palestine'

- VII. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi delivered a speech on August 5 at the Labor Party Canberra branch meeting. The Ambassador complimented the recent development in the Labor Party's political position towards Palestinian national rights. He also outlined the Palestinian leadership's position on the major issues of the conflict, namely the issues of Jerusalem, settlements, borders, security, and refugees. The Ambassador then responded to questions on the Australian Liberal Party's and Australian Government's position on these issues.



40. The Australian position on the U.N. Security Council resolution was faced with reservations from within Australian civil society and advocacy groups, as well as opposition from the Council of Arab Ambassadors. The negative voting was parallel to Australia boycotting the conference called by the Swiss Government on the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Occupied Palestinian Territories. This boycott was also viewed critically by Australian civil society and civil rights organisations. On this issue, the GDOP undertook the following activities:
- I. On December 31, the Ambassador was involved in numerous interviews. At various forums he condemned, in the strongest terms possible, Australia's negative voting against the Palestine draft resolution. He made it clear that he considered it an unfortunate and non-constructive progression that does not do any favours in enhancing Australian-Palestinian relations.
 - II. A number of representatives from advocacy groups and the Palestinian community published media articles denouncing the Australian choice, expressing it as the wrong move towards the peace process and relations with the Arab and Islamic countries.
 - III. The GDOP sent letters to both ministers for foreign affairs in Australia and New Zealand, calling them to engage in the Geneva conference to discuss the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and to support the final declaration of the conference.
 - IV. The GDOP circulated the relevant papers of the conference, including the final declaration, to civil society organisations, advocacy groups and community organisations. The GDOP called upon these groups to use this material to lobby the Australian Government.
 - V. The GDOP called upon the Palestinian, Arab and Islamic communities, as well as advocacy and solidarity groups, to write letters to the Australian Government to ask them to attend and support the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.
41. For the very first time, in an indication of the strength of development of bilateral relations, DFAT decided to allocate a training scholarship for a Palestinian diplomat, Ms. Noura Saleh, the Desk Officer for Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific at MOFA. She attended training at DFAT between August 5 and October 1.



Ms. Noura Saleh, Ambassador Abdulhadi, Ms. Nada Abu-Rahmah, Counsellor Suheir Gedeon

This included a number of proficiency trainings in important subjects: including introduction to international law, international relations, communication tools and skills, bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, and other areas important for any successful diplomat.

According to feedback from Ms. Saleh, the training course succeeded in providing her with new skills and knowledge that will greatly assist her in performing more effectively and successfully in her future career.

In addition to her in-house training at DFAT, her visit helped her tremendously in following up her day to day work at MOFA, through her presence in Australia and her introduction to various Australian political, economic, social, environmental and other decision-making organisations. To support this, the GDOP undertook the following activities:

- I. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in the welcoming reception hosted by DFAT for the participants on August 4.
- II. On August 8, the GDOP invited Ms. Noura Saleh, her counterpart at DFAT, Luke Heilbuth from the Levant and Iran section of the Middle East branch, and other staff from DFAT to join the Ambassador and the staff of the GDOP for a dinner.
- III. Ms. Saleh visited the GDOP on September 12, where she took an in-depth look at the work of the GDOP and how day-to-day business and operations are conducted there.
- IV. On the eve of the New Zealand election on September 20, Ms. Saleh took part in a celebration organised by the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra and was introduced to the Commission's staff.
- V. On September 20, Noura Saleh, together with the Ambassador and Counsellor Gedeon, attended a fundraising dinner organised by the Palestinian, Arab and Islamic communities. The worthwhile cause was to help support and relieve the Gaza Strip humanitarian crisis.



Counsellor Suheir Gedeon and Ms. Noura Saleh at the Farewell dinner

- VI. The GDOP, represented by Counsellor Gedeon, also took part in the farewell dinner for the trainees at DFAT. The dinner on October 1 was attended by Ms. Gillian Bird, Deputy Secretary General of DFAT and now the Australian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

ENHANCING RELATIONS WITH ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATIC CORPS

A constructive and proficient relationship with the Arab and international diplomatic corps has been sustained. The GDOP has always participated actively in the activities organised by the corps and the GDOP enjoys a well-respected status amongst the corps.

The relation with the international and Arab diplomatic corps has been viewed by the GDOP as an integral part of its diplomatic mandate and operations. The work of the GDOP and the Palestinian cause has been heavily supported by both the Arab ambassadors and the international diplomatic corps.

To this end, the GDOP would like to take the opportunity to extend all gratitude to the Arab diplomatic corps in Canberra. They have never hesitated to support the GDOP. Through active participation in the GDOP activities and through initiatives undertaken by the Arab Council of Ambassadors in support of the Palestinian question, they have demonstrated an invaluable friendship.

To strengthen this distinguished relationship, and to further promote the Palestinian cause, the GDOP has undertaken the following activities:

42. The GDOP has enthusiastically participated in various events related to the Arab diplomatic corps and played an active and influential role within the Council of Arab Ambassadors. For instance, the GDOP has participated in most of the events organized by the Arab embassies, such as national day functions, dinners and meetings, amongst others. The GDOP has also participated in the various official activities of the international diplomatic corps, including national day functions, farewell receptions, special dinners and panels, amongst others. The GDOP also actively partook in many cultural events organised by the diplomatic corps, including film festivals, cultural festivals, musicals, fundraising events, exhibitions, and book launches



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and Arab diplomats and Ambassadors

43. The Launching of the Australian Parliamentary Friends of the Arab League took place on November 24 at the Federal Parliament. Ambassadors from the Arab nations attended, as well as the committee coordinators, Maria Vamvakinou MP from the opposition and the Hon. Bruce Scott MP from the governing coalition. The Minister for Trade and Investment, the Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP delivered one of the key addresses. He highlighted the current success of Australian-Arab bilateral relations and also future prospects for fruitful cooperation with the Arab World. He indicated that this group would be an important forum and platform to enhance relations between Australia and the Arab World. The Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Head of the Opposition, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, also gave a speech, elaborating on the profound relations between Australia and the Arab World and highlighting the importance of enhancing existing relations.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, Council of Arab Ambassadors

It is important to mention that the GDOP, on behalf of the Council of Arab Ambassadors, organised the event, taking charge of technical and managerial responsibilities to launch this initiative. The GDOP proposed the goals and activities of the friendship group and has undoubtedly played a crucial role in its establishment.

44. The Palestinian Ambassador visited Ramallah in October 2014 and met with Mr. Tom Wilson, the Australian Representative in Palestine. In their meeting, a number of important issues were brought up. These included coordination for official and non-official visits from Australia to Palestine, Australian aid to Palestine, current political issues, and lastly ways to enhance communication between the GDOP and the Australian Representative Office in Ramallah
45. The GDOP plays an essential role within the Council of Arab Ambassadors, ensuring continuous participation in the monthly and extra meetings and contributing effectively and positively towards major issues and outcomes, particularly in regards to Palestine.

46. On August 24, Ambassador Abdulhadi attended the dinner at the Saudi Arabian Embassy, along with the various Arab ambassadors and the Hon. Andrew Robb AO MP, Minister for Trade and Investment. The Minister is considered an extremely influential politician and is well respected from both within his party, and in general. The meeting was considered highly important, as the attending Arab Ambassadors put forward to the Minister their views on the various strategic bilateral economic and trade relations of Australia and the nations of the Arab World. Ambassador Abdulhadi highlighted the importance of, and opportunity presented by, investment in Palestine, regardless of the obstacles imposed by the Israeli occupation. In the framework of this meeting, the Minister expressed a professional interest to visit Palestine soon.
47. The GDOP has constantly strived for an active leadership role in the meetings that take place between the Council and governmental and non-governmental organisations in Australia and New Zealand. The GDOP has called, regularly, for emergency meetings to discuss new developments occurring in the Palestinian issue and to discuss appropriate strategies in contacting the Australian and New Zealand governments.
48. The GDOP has also managed various technical sub-committees mandated by the Council. Comprising of a conglomeration of members of Arab embassies, these sub-committees managed specific projects with different partners.
49. The GDOP has consistently encouraged the Council to support various advocacy groups and facilitate communication between them. The GDOP circulates information related to the Palestinian question to the Council on a regular basis, in order to keep them well informed.
50. On February 19, the GDOP hosted the monthly meeting for the Council to discuss the plan and itinerary for the year to come. A guest of honour, the leader of the Anglican Church in Australia and Archbishop of Melbourne, Philip Freier, was invited to attend the second half of the meeting.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, Counsellor Suheir Gedeon and Archbishop Philip Freier

51. The GDOP continues consultation with the Council of Arab Ambassadors, either as a whole or as individual ambassadors, to discuss the latest developments on issues related to the Palestinian question. In response to these endeavours, the Council has sent a number of letters to the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and even met with her to discuss important issues of interest. For example, one letter to the Minister brought to attention the statements she made on the legality of Israeli settlements. The Council also campaigned to denounce the statements by Attorney-General Brandis on the legal status of Jerusalem. In response to the Attorney-General's statements, the Council worked together with the Arab League, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), and the Arab and Islamic community.



52. The Arab ambassadors met with the Arab League's representatives during their visit to Australia and New Zealand earlier this year. The main purpose was to discuss the possibility of opening an office branch in Australia. Both the Australian and New Zealand governments welcome the opening of this office and arrangements are currently underway. The Council gave the visiting delegation a brief on Australian and New Zealand foreign policy. It should be noted that the Council was involved in the organisation of the visit of the VIP team from the Arab League.
53. Furthermore, several meetings took place between the GDOP and its counterparts in the diplomatic corps with the aim of exchanging information and discussing experiences and programs to enhance bilateral relations with Australia and New Zealand. These meetings also involved exchanging information on economic and political relations with the various countries.
54. To accelerate the establishment of full diplomatic relations, the GDOP has sent several letters to various Pacific Islands states and conducted numerous meetings with their high commissioners and ambassadors.

55. The GDOP has met with colleagues and ambassadors from the international diplomatic corps to discuss issues of common interest, especially Australian and New Zealand foreign policy and its effect on bilateral and multilateral relations.
56. The GDOP participated in two presentations at the New Zealand High Commission on the subjects of the New Zealand election and the role of New Zealand as a future member of the U.N. Security Council.
57. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi also participated in a workshop at the Australian National University, held by the U.N. in Canberra on July 14. Along with the international diplomatic corps, he investigated the outcomes and impacts of the Millennium Development Goals.

ENHANCING RELATIONS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND ADVOCACY ORGANISATIONS

Last year was distinguished by substantial and productive relations between the GDOP and Palestinian advocacy organisations in Australia and New Zealand. Most especially, relations were highly productive with the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN), the umbrella of many civil society organisations, including churches, NGOs, and Palestinian community organisations. A partnership between the GDOP and APAN ensured the exchanging of views, information and analysis on their respective strategic political programs and planned activities. To ensure this reciprocal exchange, the GDOP undertook several activities:

Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN)

58. Three consultative meetings took place between the GDOP and APAN. During these meetings, the two parties discussed strategies, policies and recent activities and, as a result, both agreed to enhance coordination and cooperation on strategies and mechanisms for lobbying Australia and pressuring Israel, particularly mechanisms that work with the Australian Government and federal parliamentarians.



59. The GDOP participated in an important meeting at the General Union of Palestinian Workers in Sydney on May 10. The meeting included Head of APAN Mr George Browning, APAN members, and members of the Palestinian community. The focus was on substantial discussions on APAN's role and its relationship with the Palestinian community and wider Australian community. Strategies to communicate effectively between the GDOP, the Palestinian community and APAN were discussed in depth. As a result, it was agreed a regular report on APAN's work should be sent to the Palestinian community organisations, in order to enable members of these organisations to contribute to the decision-making and planning of APAN's activities.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, Mr. George Browning, APAN members

Australian Arab Business Council (AABC)

60. The GDOP has participated in the AABC trade conference and exhibition on March 18 at the NSW Parliament in Sydney. The Ambassador gave a thorough presentation on the Palestinian economy, investment opportunities and investment laws in Palestine. The GDOP also contributed with an outstanding stall, which included comprehensive information on general investment and investment opportunities in Palestine. It also incorporated a section on Palestinian embroideries, ceramics and handicrafts.



Ambassador Abdulhadi at the AABC trade conference

All other Arab ambassadors, as well as an Australian delegation, participated in this conference and presented papers on investment dynamics in their respective countries. Many interested Australian businessmen had been invited. All contributors agreed on the importance of holding this event annually, along with the need to follow up and implement the recommendations generated at the event. The GDOP not only participated in the conference but also represented all Arab Embassies as the liaison embassy with AABC.



Lunch with Australian businessmen

The Australian Arab Businesswomen's Forum

61. The Ambassador also represented the GDOP in the Australian Arab Businesswomen's Forum that took place in Sydney March 6-7. A number of distinguished Arab and Australian women participated. There was much discussion over successful economic models in the Arab world and the difficulties faced by Arab women in managing their own entrepreneurial projects. The participants discussed prospects for future collaboration between Arab and Australian women and the importance of designing and implementing creative consultative framework for business cooperation and coordination. The Ambassador met with most of the participants from the Arab world and briefed them on Palestinian women's experience in business. He explained that women used income generation projects as a major source of income and as a steadfastness, resistance and state building strategy whilst facing Israeli occupation.



Ambassador Adulhadi at Australian Arab Businesswomen's Forum

Australian Middle East Media

62. Ambassador Abdulhadi visited the Australian Middle East Media headquarters on March 3 and met with Mr Wally Wehbe, the Managing Director, Mr Remy Wehbe, the General Manager, Mr. Tony Kazzi, the Editor in Chief for the paper El-Telegraph, and Councillor Khal Asfour, the Mayor of Bankstown. The General Director gave a brief on the programs and activities of the organisation and its role in providing the community with news, analysis and information regarding the Arab world. The group also highlighted the role of the organisation in bridging the gap between the Arab community and the wider Australian community, as well as promoting connectivity between the Arab world and Australia. They indicated the fruitfulness of enhancing relations between Arab media organisations and the Council of Arab Ambassadors.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, and members of Australian Middle East Media

63. El-Telegraph, a widespread and popular Arabic language newspaper, conducted a lengthy interview with the Ambassador, which tackled the latest on the ground developments in regards to negotiations and Palestinian reconciliation.



Ambassador Abdulhadi interviewed by El-Telegraph

64. The Ambassador attended a dinner held by Australian Middle East Media. Other invitees included representatives from the Australian Government, including the Premier of NSW Mr Mike Baird MP, members of the Arab diplomatic corps, representatives of the clergy, prominent businessmen and members of the community. The Ambassador gave an important speech on behalf of the Council of Arab Ambassadors, highlighting and appreciating the work of the media organisation in supporting Arab issues and concerns. He pointed out the significance of the organisation in introducing such issues to the Australian public and its role in enhancing relations between Australia and Arab world through its distinguished professional and diverse media outlets. He emphasised it is in the highest interest of the Council of Arab Ambassadors to enhance relations with such an impactful institution.



Ambassador Abdulhadi at a dinner held by the Australian Middle East Media

The Middle East Peace Run

65. This year the GDOP coordinated with Mr Pat Farmer, an ex-parliamentarian and head of an Australian NGO aimed at enhancing peace and fighting poverty through long distance running. On several occasions he visited the GDOP to organise a program called Middle East Peace Run, to be conducted within Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine and Israel. He aimed to shed light on the unique issues of this part of world, and to encourage peace there, especially between Israelis and Palestinians. He wished to reveal to Australians the real people on the ground and the reality of daily life for Palestinian people. Mr Farmer mentioned a media crew from the Australian Channel 9 was organised to follow him, step-by-step during the trip.

Mr Farmer crossed into Palestine on May 19, where he ran from Jenin to Jerusalem, crossing through Nablus, Ramallah and Bethlehem. The Palestinian Olympic Committee facilitated his visit, in coordination with the GDOP and the Australian Representative Office in Ramallah. This included organising the necessary logistics to guarantee a successful visit for Mr Farmer. It also included facilitating the press conferences and meetings with Palestinian officials during the trip.

Before beginning his trip, Mr Farmer held a launch at Parliament for his peace run initiative. He invited the Prime Minister The Hon. Tony Abbot, parliamentarians, and representatives of the Arab diplomatic corps, including the GDOP, Jordanian Embassy and the Israeli Embassy. The GDOP thanked Mr Farmer for his initiative.



Mr. Pat Farmer and Counsellor Suheir Gedeon

It was inspiring to see a journey that managed to shed light on the individuals of Palestine and reflect upon Palestinian suffering and the daily life of Palestinians living under occupation.

Civil Society and Cultural Activities

- 66. An Australian NGO invited the Ambassador to speak at the Arab Cultural Forum in Canberra on February 1. The agenda of his speech was centred on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the effect of the Arab Spring on the Palestinian situation. The Ambassador spoke at length on the recent social and political changes taking place in the Arab world and their immediate, but long-term, effects on the Israeli- Palestinian question. The Ambassador was honoured with a certificate of gratitude during the Forum’s annual meeting, held on June 7.



Ambassador awarded a certificate of gratitude from the Arab Cultural Forum

67. On February 5, the An-Nahar Arabic newspaper, published in Sydney, conducted an interview with the Ambassador to investigate the current issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This discussion extended to democracy in the Arab world and the democratic conundrum.
68. The Ambassador participated in the book launch of Senator Bob Carr, the previous foreign minister, at the Australian National University (ANU) on May 7. In his speech, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Bob Carr, complimented the efforts of GDOP. He discussed the Palestinian question and reflected upon his experience as the previous foreign minister and his particular role in Australia's abstention on the UNGA vote to upgrade Palestine to a non-member observer state. In Mr Carr's book, *The Diary of a Foreign Minister*, he refers to the role played by the Zionist lobby and its influence on Australian foreign policy.



Ambassador Abdulhadi and Former Foreign Affairs Minister Bob Carr

69. Ambassador Abdulhadi attended a festival on the grounds of Telopea Park School, the oldest school in Canberra, celebrating the anniversary of the francophone tradition in Australia. This event was attended by many of the international diplomatic corps, particularly those of the francophone countries. It was an occasion to show the multicultural diversity of Australia and its promise for the future.



Students from the Telopea Park School

70. As part of the outreach activities, on May 15 the Ambassador attended an event on multiculturalism at the ACT Assembly in Canberra, organised by Blue Star Intercultural Centre. This group is the first intercultural organisation established by Muslims in the ACT specifically to build relationships between communities. It has a strong representation for the Turkish community in Australia. The theme for the event was based on multiculturalism in Switzerland. The Swiss Ambassador gave a presentation discussing multiculturalism in Switzerland as a prototype for harmonisation, under law, between diverse sectors of community. He made a comparison between the Australian and Swiss examples of multiculturalism and harmonisation.



Swiss Ambassador giving a speech

71. The GDOP participated in a launching for a book written by the Australian-Lebanese Dr. Paul Matar. The launching was highly anticipated within the Arab community of Australia and took place in Canberra on September 4. The book contained a comprehensive analysis on lobbying strategies of the Australian Arab community, with specific focus on lobbying strategies adopted by the Palestinian community. The event was attended by a number of Arab community leaders, as well as Arab Ambassadors.



Ms. Noura Saleh, Counsellor Suheir Gedeon, Ambassador Abdulhadi and Arab community leaders

The Australian National University

72. As part of the special ongoing relationship between the Australian National University and the GDOP, on September 9 H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in a brainstorming workshop at the ANU Centre for European Studies. As a result, a five-year program to enhance cooperation between Australia and Europe was developed.



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Uniting Church

73. A delegation from the Uniting Church, led by a previous Archbishop, Rev. Gregor Henderson, visited Palestine on September 25. The GDOP played an important role in coordinating important meetings for the visiting delegation in Jerusalem and Ramallah.



AusAid

74. On September 2, Ambassador Abdulhadi attended an important meeting hosted by the Department of Development at DFAT on September 2 to evaluate the Australian program of assistance to Palestine. The meeting was attended by representatives from a number of relevant bodies. These representatives included those from the World Bank, UNICEF, and the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as the Head of the Middle East and Africa Division at DFAT and the Head of the aid program in Ramallah (via video conference). They reviewed the recent performance of the programs and outlined the future policies.

A meeting was held on September 11 between the GDOP and DFAT to further discuss the future of the Australian aid program in Palestine. The Ambassador and Counsellor Gedeon met with Mr. Grant Morrison, representing the Middle East Development section at DFAT, and Mr. Borhan Ahmed, representing the Middle East and North Africa Program. The group began by reflecting on the new Australian aid strategy that had materialized after the absorption of AusAid into DFAT. DFAT voiced a clear focus on the contribution of aid to the economic development. The Palestinian unity Government was discussed as a factor in the allocation of future Australian aid, especially due to the fact that Hamas, which Australia considers a terrorist organisation, is now part of this government. A general track for future aid from Australia to Palestine was deliberated, in light of the five-year agreement expiring in 2015.

Anglican Overseas Aid (AOA)

75. In the framework of the distinguished relation between the GDOP and the Anglican Church in Australia, and the Anglican Overseas Aid organisation, the GDOP hosted a luncheon in honour of its work in Gaza. Invited from AOA were the Head of the Board, the Executive Director, and two doctors from the foundation who attended the wounded in Gaza and served at the Al-Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza. The Ambassador of the State of Qatar, H.E. Yousef Al Khatir, was also in attendance at the luncheon on September 2.



Union Aid Abroad (APHEDA)

76. Another prominent Palestinian activist, Ms. Olfat Mahmoud, the founder and director of the Palestinian Women's Humanitarian Organisation in Lebanon, was invited to Australia. Her trip was organised by Union Aid Abroad, an Australian aid NGO, and began on October 25. Ms. Olfat gave a presentation at the Federal Parliament on October 28, which was organised by the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine and attended by Counsellor Gedeon. To follow up, Ms. Mahmoud and an APHEDA delegation visited the GDOP on October 29 and met with Counsellor Gedeon, who briefed on the work of the GDOP and the Australian Government's position on the Palestinian question. In return, Ms. Mahmoud explained the many aims of her visit and described the suffering and situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.



Ms. Mahmoud, APHEDA delegation and Counsellor Suheir Gedeon

Narrabundah College

77. Counsellor Gedeon delivered a presentation at Narrabundah College in Canberra on November 19, in which she discussed components of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with a historical perspective. The presentation was attended by a large number of students from the college and she was thanked for her educational talk.



Dar al-Fatwa

78. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi was invited by His Eminence Sheikh Malek Zeidan, the Representative of Dar al-Fatwa in Lebanon, to participate in an honorary dinner at the Federal Parliament on November 27. This event was attended by the Minister for Social Services, the Hon. Kevin Andrews MP, and the speaker of the House of Representatives, the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop MP, in addition to a number of Arab and Muslim community representatives and Arab ambassadors.



The Hon. Kevin Andrews

Meeting the Maronite Bishop

79. On November 4, Counsellor Gideon participated in a working breakfast at the Australian Parliament in honour of the visiting Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros al-Raai, the worldwide head of the Maronite Church.



Counsellor Suheir Gedoen and Patriarch Mar Bechara Boutros al-Raai

The speakers at this event discussed the relation between the Australian Government and the Islamic community, focusing on terrorism in the Arab World, as well as discussing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The speakers highlighted the centralised importance of this conflict in the context of events in the Arab World.

STRENGTHENING RELATIONS WITH THE PALESTINIAN, ARAB AND ISLAMIC COMMUNITIES

Relations between the GDOP and the Palestinian community remain excellent. Strong mutual respect and consistent cooperation exists. The GDOP participates actively in the activities organised by the Palestinian community and, in turn, the community strongly supports the activities organised by the GDOP.

In spite of the absence of a federal umbrella body for the Palestinian community, the coordination between the various Palestinian community organisations has



been especially excellent in 2014. These organisations undertook a number of commendable activities, particularly during the Israeli assault on Gaza. To support their ongoing activism and commitments, the GDOP focused on undertaking the following activities in particular:

Commemorating the 66th anniversary of Al-Nakba

80. Ambassador Abdulhadi attended an event organised by the General Union of Palestinian Workers, the Palestinian Club and the Palestinian Graduate Association. This day commemorated both the memory of the 66th year of Al-Nakba (The Catastrophe) and the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This included a graduation ceremony for distinguished Palestinian-Australian students. The event was attended by the ex-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Bob Carr, a number of Australian parliamentarians, representatives from advocacy and solidarity groups, and members of the Arab, Islamic and Palestinian communities.

In an address, the Ambassador thanked the organisers for an outstanding event and expressed gratitude for the tradition of celebrating the graduation of distinguished Palestinian Australian students. He emphasised the important role the younger generation of the Palestinian community plays in leadership, solidarity and advocacy for Palestine. He called on the students to become more involved in capacity building programs to further integrate the community into the wider Australia society and to gain more advocacy competencies. The Ambassador also discussed lessons learnt from Al-Nakba (The Catastrophe) and related them to the contemporary situation. He referred to recent developments that have enhanced Palestinian identity and brought Palestinians closer to the full achievement of their inalienable rights. He made special mention to the importance of the UN move to declare 2014 as the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. The Ambassador noted this indicates international support of the Palestinian's inalienable rights, in particular the right to self-determination and establishing an independent state.

Mr Carr also addressed the audience, calling on the Palestinian community to play a more effective and efficient role in influencing general Australian policies. He also referred to the illegality of Israeli settlement construction and how it contradicts international law. He stated he considers settlements the main obstacle ahead in finding a sustainable, comprehensive solution for the conflict in the Middle East. Furthermore, he emphasised the importance of the two-state solution.



Former Minister of Foreign Affairs Bob Carr

Mr Eddie Zananiri, a prominent leader of the Palestinian-Australian community, thanked the graduates for their hard work and dedication. He encouraged them to exemplify the Palestinian community by having a more active role in the political and social spheres. He also gave an analytical view of Australian foreign policy, in particular the policy of the two major parties, on the Palestinian question. Mr Zananiri highlighted the historic effort that the Palestinian community has undertaken to promote the Palestinian position in the Australian context.

Other addresses included those by Head of APAN Bishop George Browning, Senator Lee Rhiannon from the Greens, and other representatives from Australian labour unions.

It is important to mention that this annual event is considered a very significant time for introduction to the new generation of the Palestinian community. It is an opportunity to enhance cooperation with this group to together implement important future community and advocacy projects and programs.

Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC)

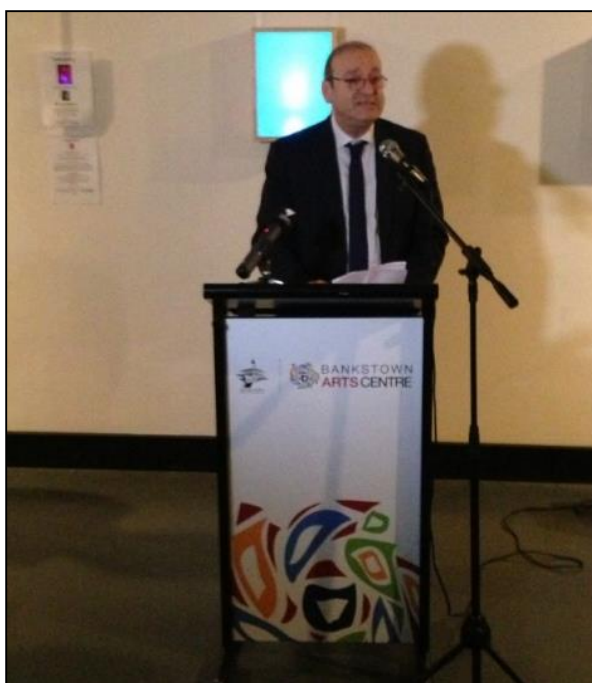
81. The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC) celebrated their 50th anniversary at a dinner party in the Federal Parliament. Ambassador Abdulhadi joined a large number of Australian officials, including Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove and representatives of the Prime Minister and the Shadow Prime Minister, the Hon. Bill Shorten MP. Diplomats and prominent members of the Arab and Islamic communities also attended. The celebration included speeches, most importantly by AFIC's President, Mr. Hafez Kassem, who addressed the Israeli-Palestinian question and asked Australia to support the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and their right to establish an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital. Mr Kassem then discussed the important role the Islamic community plays in Australia, especially in forwarding economic and social development.



Ambassador Abdulhadi at AFIC dinner

"Threshold" Art Exhibition

82. Ambassador Abdulhadi opened an art exhibition, "Threshold", by the prominent Palestinian Australian artist Marcelle Mansour. In his opening speech, the Ambassador explained the significance of the exhibition and commented on the art produced by Marcelle Mansour. Through manipulation of light, the art is able to express international human sadness, but at the same time reflects themes of justice based on international law, human rights and equality. The Ambassador emphasised the role that can be played by the Palestinian community outside of Palestine through all means. He complimented how the artist and many others give a good image to the Palestinian resistance and state building efforts through their creativity, arts and their various talents and success. He commented on the role of Palestinian artists in resistance of the Israeli occupation and the narration of the Palestinian question in a creative and humane way. He wished the artist every success in her future endeavours.



Ambassador Abdulhadi presenting at art exhibition

Youth to Youth Programs

83. A request was received from the Palestinian Foreign Ministry and Palestinian Olympic Committee to recruit Palestinian Australian youth for summer sport camps in Palestine. In response, the GDOP sent letters to Palestinian community to encourage youth between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five to participate. The GDOP believes the sport camps play an important role in introducing the Palestinian youth in the diaspora to their home country and engaging mutual cooperation and communication between the two. A number of youth in Australia showed interest, however, the Israeli assault on Gaza resulted in the cancellation of this event.

Meeting the Palestinian Community Members, Craig Laundy MP: BBQ at Auburn

84. The Palestinian community in the area of Auburn, Sydney, organised a luncheon in honour of Head of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, Mr Craig Laundy MP. During the luncheon, the groups discussed domestic issues in Auburn (which falls under Mr Laundy's electorate), and general concerns, obstacles and issues relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The group spent some time particularly on the failure of negotiations, the reconciliation process, and position of the Australian Government. Mr Laundy expressed his support for the Palestinian people and their legitimate national rights, especially self-determination and the establishment of their own state. Additionally, he condemned settlements as illegal according to international law and an obstacle to the two-state solution. The Ambassador explained the Palestinian position on the topics that were discussed, especially in regards to the Palestinian Authority's position on the negotiation process and reconciliation. It was evident that Mr Laundy was deeply influenced by the personal stories of some of the refugees from the Palestinian community.



Ambassador Abdulhadi, the Hon Craig Lundy and the Palestinian community

Palestinian Community Council

85. The GDOP is still holding consultation, through several channels, for the aim of establishing a unified coordination body for the Palestinian community in Australia. Although the process is slow, it is a high priority of all parties to achieve this important goal.
86. In addition, the GDOP has endeavoured to participate in all events and dinners taking place organised by the Palestinian community in order to honour visiting VIPs or special events such as anniversaries and special Palestinian events.

UN Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and Palestinian Independence Day

87. In context of the 2014 year being the U.N.'s International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the GDOP took a figurehead role in celebrating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People on November 29.

88. On the evening of Tuesday 2 December, a celebration for the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was held at the Parliament House Soccer Pitch. The event was organised by the United Nations Information Centre for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific (UNIC), in partnership with the Council of Arab Ambassadors, the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, and the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine. The celebration included a reception, ceremony, and a soccer game between an Australian Parliamentary team and members of the ACT Palestinian community. Over 150 interested persons, representing all walks of life of the Australian community, attended the celebration.



Mac Miller giving Ambassador Abdulhadi soccer balls as a donation for the Palestinian kids in Gaza

Maria Vamvakinou MP, Co-Chair of Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, introduced the event by welcoming the attending parliamentarians, ambassadors, members of advocacy groups, members of the Palestinian community, and friends of Palestine in Australia. The MP invited UNIC Canberra representative, Ms Julia Dean, to deliver UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

H.E. Mohamed Mael-Ainin, Ambassador of Morocco to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands and Dean of the Council of Arab Ambassadors, delivered a speech on the day. His Excellency reflected that the day was an opportunity to renew support for the Palestinian people and their right to a state. He also mentioned the strengthening

international support for the Palestinian people and reconfirmed the Arab states endorsement of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' plan in the UN to end Israeli occupation by 2016. Lastly, he thanked the Australian Government for its material support to the Palestinian people and encouraged it to recognise a Palestinian state by joining those in Europe who have begun to do so.

H.E. Izzat Abdulhadi spoke about a contrast between the deteriorating conditions of Palestinians locally, and the slow progress that Palestine has been achieving in the international arena. He commented that contemporary times were witnessing a shift of attitudes and values towards Palestine. He highlighted the importance of justice through international law. Finally, he expressed confidence that with continued solidarity the Palestinian people would be afforded peace through the UN forum, despite a recalcitrant Israel.

Co-Chair of Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, Craig Laundry MP, thanked The Hon. Melissa Parke MP and Ms Vamvakinou for their tireless efforts in promoting the Palestinian cause in Australia. Mr Laundry also introduced the young Mac Millar, who described his charity work and, in a touching gesture, presented a donation from his organisation Play It Forward, of soccer balls and a cheque earmarked for the purchase of more. Mac mentioned that it was his dream to one day play for Australia in the World Cup, against the children of Gaza who had trained with the balls.

Mr Laundry closed the ceremony with a resounding message. He spoke about how Australians, people who value their freedom passionately, can identify with the plight of the Palestinians, particularly their loss of home and displacement. He encouraged all attending to continue their work to raise awareness.

A highly competitive soccer match between the Palestinian community team and the parliament team followed – which turned out to be a tight 8/7 victory for Palestine. This was also a celebration to foreshadow the participation of the Palestinian team in the 2015 AFC Asian Cup.



Soccer players from Palestinian community

89. In the same context, on November 29, the Australian Palestinian Professional association (APPA), the Union of Palestinian Workers and, the Australian Palestinian Club, organised a large celebration in Sydney for the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Over 120 persons representing the Palestinian community and civil society joined with Australian parliamentarians to attend the celebration.

The Palestinian Ambassador gave a formal speech at the event, in which he commended the role played by the Palestinian community and its organisations. He urged the community to continue growing more united to exert more influence on decision-makers and the Australian Government in their deliberation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



Ambassador Abdulhadi and APPA members

90. The Council of Australian Palestinians, a non-government organisation, organised an event to commemorate the anniversary of the independence day of Palestine at the Sydney Parliament on November 12. The celebration was attended by a large number of Arab and international diplomats, as well as prominent community members and civil society representatives. Speeches were delivered by H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi, a representative for the NSW Government, a representative of the NSW Labor Party opposition, and the Head of the Council of Australian Palestinians, Mr. Albert Jubian.

Fundraising Dinner for Gaza

91. The Beit Jala Association in Melbourne organised a large fundraising event for the benefit of Gazan families, who suffered great loss due to the Israeli assault on Gaza.

H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi delivered a speech in which he highlighted the devastation that took place as a result of the Israeli assault and bombardment of Gaza. He called for the lifting of the siege that has been imposed on Gaza for more than eight years, as well as the halting of settlement construction, stating he considered these actions as the root cause of the perpetuation of contemporary conflict.

Iftar for Palestinian Students in Canberra

92. The GDOP organised a Ramadan breakfast for all the Palestinian students who had arrived for Australian Government scholarships in Canberra. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi welcomed the students and wished a happy and fruitful stay in Australia. It is important to mention that this program is related to the state institution building program in Palestine, which Australia actively supports through the sponsorship and enhancement of human resources employed in various Palestinian ministries.



Ambassador Abdulhadi with Palestinian students during Ramadan

Preparations for the Visit of the Palestinian National Football Team

93. The GDOP was involved in preparations to welcome and host the Palestinian soccer team who qualified for the AFC Asian Cup, which took place around Australia during January of 2015. Preparations involved a focus on having the team meet and interact with the community, and other sports organisations in Australia. The GDOP played a figurehead role in encouraging the Palestinian and wider Australian communities to attend games to support the team. The GDOP is also undertook close coordination and cooperation with the Arab ambassadors, who welcomed their own teams that took part in the Asia Cup.



Ambassador Abdulhadi at AFC Asian Cup

In expectation for the Palestinian National Football Team to compete in the 2015 AFC Asian Cup, to be held in various stadiums around Australia, the GDOP undertook a number of preparatory activities, including:

- I. The establishment of a real partnership between the GDOP and the Palestinian Football Association. Under this partnership, the logistical and technical preparations for the team to reach Australia and participate fully in this championship were delivered. This work included reserving accommodation, booking training fields, rallying and preparing the Palestinian community to welcome the team, and organising the participation in the matches occurring throughout the country.
- II. The GDOP designed and printed a poster to advertise the Palestinian National Football Team, which included match dates, a brief on the team, and the logo of the Palestinian Football Association. This poster was distributed nationally.
- III. The GDOP managed to establish a partnership relation with the Asian Football Confederation. This partnership involved a number of meetings with representatives from committees, as well as careful cooperation and coordination with regards to issues related to the Palestinian team. The GDOP also distributed a number of AFC promotion materials on the championship. The Chief Executive of the AFC Local Organising Committee, Mr. Michael Brown, visited the GDOP premises on December 10 to consult with H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi.
- IV. The GDOP supervised the Palestinian community's participation in the various committees set by AFC in Canberra. These committees notably undertook many promotional activities for the AFC Asian Cup. For instance, the GDOP was involved in the AFC participation in the Floriade flower Festival, and set up a stall to promote the Palestinian team. This stall was also able to display Palestinian culture and food, in collaboration with Zar, the Palestinian Café in Canberra, which provided samples of Palestinian national cuisine.



Ms. Nada Abu- Rahmah at the stall

- V. The GDOP welcomed the Palestinian National Football Team to Australia at the Sydney airport on December 31. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi and members of the GDOP were joined by a large crowd from the Palestinian community.

- VI. H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi conducted a number of print and broadcast media interviews concerning the participation of the team in the AFC Asian Cup. A particularly important series of interviews were conducted for the hour-long ABC documentary that focused on the Palestinian National Football Team's participation and journey leading up to the Asian Cup
- VII. An important mission of the GDOP is preparing a report on the participation of the Palestinian National Football Team in the 2015 AFC Asian Cup that took place between December 31 and January 21. The GDOP is in possession of a number of preliminary materials to achieve this outcome.

Managing Relations with the Australian Media

- 94. 2014 was distinguished by an active media strategy by the GDOP, which was necessary due to the important developments on the Palestinian question that were attracting the attention of the media and public opinion in Australia and New Zealand. The events that particularly seized the attention of the media included the Israeli assault on Gaza on July 8, the statement made by the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs on the legal status of settlements the Occupied Palestinian Territories, the Attorney-General's statement on the legal status of East Jerusalem and the negative voting of Australia on the UN draft resolutions.

Throughout the year, the GDOP and H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi undertook a concerted effort to conduct a number of intensive media interviews to explain developing situations. The Ambassador conducted a number of interviews with the newspapers The Australian, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Age and The guardian. Various programs on ABC radio interviewed the Ambassador extensively, as did many television stations, including SBS, Sky News, Channel 10, and ABC 24. During these interviews, H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi clarified the Palestinian position, in particular with regards to the international status of East Jerusalem, the illegality of Israeli settlements, and the relevant international laws governing these issues. He also explained Israel's direct responsibility for ending negotiations between the two parties, and the Palestinian Government's position on issues like the final status agreement items.

The GDOP circulated a number of press releases issued by the Palestinian leadership to the Australian media, as well as a numerous important documentations and position papers related to the official Palestinian position on core issues.

Nevertheless, relations with the media in Australia and New Zealand are still ad-hoc, more reactionary rather than institutionalised and systemised. Therefore, the GDOP is at the moment preparing a strategic implementation plan for the media engagement to be executed in 2015. This strategy includes a number of important agendas that address a clear media vision. The realisation of this vision aims to influence decision-making in Australia and New Zealand and to further shift public opinion towards the official Palestinian position, which is in line with international law.

Evaluation



This year witnessed significant developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The GDOP focused on its central mandate of highlighting the evolution of the conflict to the Australian and New Zealand governments and public, as well as proposing appropriate strategies and undertakings to address key developments.

This was no easy task. The representatives of the GDOP faced tremendous difficulties explaining the official Palestinian position to Australian and New Zealand public opinion, particularly in the context of the extensive condemnation of rockets fired from the Gaza Strip by HAMAS and other groups.

Rebutting the Israeli “self-defense” argument, which was used to justify wars on the civilian population of Gaza, proved a considerable challenge. To increase knowledge of the conflict, the GDOP focused on a political narrative highlighting the roots of the conflict and the contemporary factors of perpetuation, including the unjust eight year blockade on Gaza, the continuous illegal settlement construction by Israel, and its occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The GDOP explained that the disproportionality of response and abuse of power by Israel has eventuated in the deaths of a large number of innocent civilians. The GDOP rebuked Israel’s claim that only HAMAS fighters were targeted in the assault on Gaza.

The Israeli assault on Gaza triggered a wider understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Australian society. As a result, the GDOP has observed increased support for the Palestinian position, stemming mainly from Israel’s deliberate policy of targeting innocent civilians and the concurrent systematic destruction of civil infrastructure, schools, hospitals, and homes.

The GDOP, through its distinguished role and relations with the Australian and New Zealand governments, civil society and media, managed to counter Israeli propaganda and assist in shifting public opinion further towards support of the Palestinian position on the Gaza issue.

Similarly, another major achievement testament to the influence and effectiveness of the GDOP was the GDOP’s active policy in reacting to the statement made by the Australian Attorney-General, Senator George Brandis, on the legal status of East Jerusalem. This announcement declared that Australia would no longer officially use the term “Occupied” East Jerusalem- a move contradicting to international consensus. Subsequently, active policy from the GDOP, and a widespread movement to push the Attorney-General to retract his statement, resulted in the Australian Government withdrawing from their position on the status of East Jerusalem.

The Attorney-General’s statement triggered indignant outcry from Arab and Islamic nations, communities in Australia, civil society, solidarity and advocacy organisations, and the Labor Party. The GDOP took the figurehead role in the campaign against these statements, demanding a revision of the Attorney-General’s statement in a number of letters sent to the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs. Emergency meetings with Arab and Islamic ambassadors were organised and constant coordination and contact with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the Arab League ensued. This lobbying was complimented by a GDOP media campaign to expose the statement and pressure the Australian Government to revise and clarify it. As a result of this campaign, DFAT withdrew the Attorney-General’s statement and announced that Australia will continue to comprehensively support U.N. resolutions 242 and 338. The efficiency and effectiveness of this campaign by the GDOP has since been held as a model of good planning and action to reach a constructive objective.

Two examples mentioned above demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of the GDOP's operations on generating substantial change in Australian and New Zealand government positions and public opinion. Likewise, the GDOP has initiated similar planning strategies regarding other activities:

1. **Relevancy:**
The GDOP quickly responded to directions from the Palestinian MOFA, whether these were general strategies or emergency requirements. The GDOP also responded promptly to any activities or priorities in relation to other parties, including governments, civil society, solidarity and advocacy groups, and the Palestinian, Arab and Islamic communities.
2. **Effectiveness:**
The GDOP has been well-organised in implementing planned activities. In the current year, the GDOP implemented over ninety activities, reaching the majority of target groups.
3. **Efficiency:**
The work of the GDOP has been highly productive, considering the amount of outcomes achieved compared to the financial resources available. It is difficult to imagine implementing this amount of programs and activities within a very limited budget and with only three employees, including the Ambassador himself. As proud as the GDOP is to achieve the results with the limited resources, the GDOP believes resource constraints continue to be a significant problem that needs addressing. The GDOP maintains that further financial and human resources must be made available as soon as possible and as soon as practical. In light of this, managing programs and activities this year required high calibre managerial practices and rules to achieve an institutionalisation of practices, in order to fulfil a clear vision on project management.
4. **Impact:**
It is difficult to quantify exactly and assess the amount of political influence and impact that the GDOP exerted through its political programs and contributions towards decision-making on the Palestinian question. Many other active parties add to this process in Australia and New Zealand. Yet there are several indications of the GDOP's success, including the GDOP's competent campaigns to influence policies and practices regarding the response to the Israeli assault on Gaza and the legal status of East Jerusalem.
5. **Sustainability:**
Finally, it is important to highlight that the internal institutionalisation process is a continuous process and therefore efforts to invest in enhancing institutionalisation across the board are still underway. For instance, much work is still being done on program management, public relations activities, and the enhancement of professional and managerial capacities within the GDOP. Once more, it is important to highlight that the lack of human and financial resources of the GDOP needs to be addressed urgently to enable the GDOP to better succeed in policy shifts towards the Palestinian question and enhancing relations with other nations like the Pacific islands.

Internal Institutional Development

The GDOP continued with internal institutional development to enhance the managerial and programmatic professional capability of the GDOP, keeping in mind the limited human and financial resources available. Improving the professional, financial and administrative capacities for the GDOP has this year been a major objective that the GDOP is still working hard to achieve to best potential. In this regard, the GDOP has undertaken the following activities:

1. The GDOP started cooperation with the Australian National University (ANU), one of the most prominent Australian universities, to implement an internship program to welcome student volunteers to undertake research related to the vision, role and activities of the GDOP. As a result, the GDOP has already assisted two ANU students in finalising two comprehensive academic papers.

The first paper was entitled “The Pacific Islands and the Arab World: Exploring Diplomatic Relations between Island States and Arab States”, and the second entitled “Australian Foreign Policy: Israeli Settlements, East Jerusalem and International Law”. Both papers concluded with a number of important recommendations. The first related to the historical policy positions of the various Australian governments in relation to the status of settlements and East Jerusalem. It focused in particular on policy in relation to settlements and the legal status of East Jerusalem, and reflected on how these positions cohere with or contradict international law. The second paper examined the positions of five Pacific countries towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the perspectives of these countries towards full diplomatic relations with Palestine. It also explored the existing and potential relations between these countries and the Arab World.

These papers are essential to the GDOP by setting guiding principles for determining policies in these areas. These papers were highly valued as they supported the vision and work of the GDOP in setting certain important policies to follow up on these two issues. The internship program has been established as a continuous program and the GDOP will continue to welcome interns.



Ms. Nada Abu-Rahmah and interns

2. The GDOP opened a Facebook page on September 11 called "General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific." It may be accessed at the following: <https://www.facebook.com/palestineaustralia>

H.E. Ambassador Abdulhadi indicated in the opening welcoming statement of this page the importance of this venue in enhancing dialogue between the GDOP and all other interest groups in the political arena and those interested in the Palestinian question. This page includes the activities of the GDOP in Australia and the most important official positions (Palestinian Government, Australian Government, the UN, NGOS, etc.) regarding developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

3. The GDOP is revamping the consular section to meet the demanding needs of Palestinian community members in Australia. In this sense, a major development occurred in regards to the connection between the consular section of the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the consular section of the GDOP. A more defined relation including constant, mutual consultations and coordination was established. The GDOP also continues its attempts to develop more proficient online service through its website. The GDOP continues to improve its consular services in order to arrive at a high professional standard and level of service delivery to the Palestinian community and Australian and New Zealand citizens in general.
4. The GDOP continued to issue ad-hoc reports on major developments taking place in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, and cabling these to MOFA in Palestine. The GDOP has prepared a number of professional reports for MOFA on the latest evolutions on the Palestinian issues and the developments in Australian and New Zealand foreign policy towards the Palestinian question. These reports provided context for the reports the GDOP also sent on the activities of the GDOP itself. Additionally, media watch reports that have monitored the media's reaction on relevant issues have been provided to MOFA.

The GDOP worked diligently to issue a number of important reports related to key subjects, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Australian foreign policy, bilateral relations between Australia and Palestine, the reaction of relevant parties in Australia towards the Israeli assault on Gaza, the reactions of Australia to Palestinian issues, the reactions of parties towards the Attorney-General's statement on the Palestinian Territories, and the legal status of East Jerusalem. The GDOP distributed an important report on the advocacy organisation of Australia, including the movement's vision, strategies, and relation with the GDOP. The report was considered highly essential, as it was the first profile report that tackled profoundly the methods of the advocacy and solidarity groups of the Palestinian people in Australia. With the assistance of the interns, a report on Palestine's relation with the Pacific was finalised, as well as a report on the Australian Government's position and legal standing towards settlements and East Jerusalem.

5. A financial reporting process has been implemented, with the intention of improving financial monitoring and aligning processes with Palestinian National Fund procedures.

6. The Annual Report for 2013 in English and Arabic has been finalised, but for logistical reasons has, as of yet, not been distributed.
7. The GDOP has successfully prepared an annual plan for operations, in line with strategies and visions stemming from MOFA.
8. Ms Nada Abu-Rahmah joined the team in 2014 as a PA to the Ambassador, as well as with an extended capacity as an administrative and financial officer. She began her work after the resignation of Ms Valentina Alama, who joined our friends at the Qatari Embassy.
9. The Ambassador met with Foreign Minister Dr Riyad Al-Maliki during his visit to Palestine in April. He also met the Head of the Australia, Africa and Asia department at MOFA, Dr Mazen Shameyeh, as well as desk officer for Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, Ms Noura Saleh. The Ambassador was able to discuss with them the activities of the GDOP and various components of Australian and New Zealand foreign policy.

Ambassador Abdulhadi met also with Dr. Majdi Al-Khalidi, the diplomatic advisor for H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas. Furthermore, he met with the team in the Negotiation Affairs Department and discussed with them means of enhancing the working capacity of operations, particularly more efficient cooperation in exchanging information and analysis. He also met Dr Mohammad Shtayyeh, member of the negotiating team and Director-General of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (BECDAR).



Ambassador Abdulhadi and various diplomats

The GDOP aims to improve its website, to better reflect its media activities, programs, and consular work in a more effective, efficient and accessible way.



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