

Position Paper

AMAN Coalition: Renewed Palestinian Authority Demand: A Means to Gain Time by Managing the Conflict and Perpetuating the Occupation

After 1994, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) endured several problems related to the exercise of its powers, mainly with regard to the management of public financial and administrative affairs and the overlapping role with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) at the political and national levels. Consequently, demands and initiatives emerged for internal reform and effective and accountable Palestinian institutions. There appeared as well external international attempts to reform the PNA institutions established before the elapse of the interim period in 1999, especially by the USA, the main sponsor of the Peace Process, and the EU, being the most important international donor—the calls aimed to build the capacities of the PNA institutions.

The local Palestinian reform projects focused on adopting binding policies and practices to promote the rule of law, good governance, and anticorruption efforts as the starting point toward ending the occupation and establishing an independent Palestinian state and democracy. These plans were first conceptualized by the first elected legislative council in 1996 in its Reform Agenda 2002 and the one-hundred-day plan for the Palestinian government; they also included a Reform Roadmap adopted by the Palestinian civil society and private sector in 2003, as well as the Palestinian Government Reform and Development Plan 2008 – 2010 and the National Government Reform Plan 2017–2023. As for the external reform projects, they included initiatives together with requirements and conditions for technical and professional development to pave the way for the revival of the peace settlement and gain time to manage the conflict status quo and propagate hopes of a political horizon that may lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state via the political process. These plans include the scenarios imposed on the PNA and political leadership such as: the PNA Institutions Consolidation Project led by the independent work team headed by Michel Rocard in 1998. This plan included

several essential steps that President Yasser Arafat was supposed to fulfill in the framework of the extension of the interim period, which was supposed to come to an end by 1999. Another example is the 2003 roadmap, which demanded changes in the Palestinian Basic Law to delegate part of the powers of the President to a prime minister. It also rescheduled the interim measures to revive the peaceful settlement after the Israeli assault on the Palestinian Territories in Operation Defensive Shield. It was followed by the Annapolis Peace Conference in 2007, which reiterated once again the necessity to spend a number of years building the PNA institutions to set the ground for the state.

Most recently, the same scenario has been reenacted following the events of October 7th and the subsequent aggression and genocide carried out by the Israeli occupation against the Gaza Strip. The United States of America led the proposal of renewed PNA to integrate it within the regional framework and present transitional arrangements for the management of the Gaza Strip and the post-war reconstruction. The proposal involves the Arab countries that normalized relations with Israel, Israel, Turkey, and the PNA. After the PNA is renewed to be acceptable by Israel, as it maintains security and receives financial support to administer the Gaza Strip. Following this step, a new round of political negotiations will start to establish a Palestinian State and bring a settlement to the conflict on the basis of the two-state solution. However, this proposal does not include the termination of the occupation, which should be the first step toward ending the conflict.

This historical development shows very clearly that the internal reform initiatives stemmed from real Palestinian needs and were not linked to Israeli aggression. Rather, they focused on completing the construction of state institutions and ending the occupation. However, they were not fully accomplished due to weak political will. On the other hand, external initiatives aimed at subjugating the PNA to conform with the Israeli conditions under the slogan of completing administrative and security institutional building to reassure the Israelis. Indeed, these plans aimed at gaining time and distracting the Palestinian side by preoccupying in successive stages without there being an obligation

to end the occupation, stop settlement expansion, restrain settlers, and stop the occupation's policies of Judaization in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Furthermore, they did not halt the legitimization of the discrimination and apartheid policies imposed by the occupation against the Palestinians in the areas occupied in 1948. The idea currently proposed by the US Administration under a regional umbrella falls within the same context and serves the same goal of gaining more time to manage the Israeli occupation and delay the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Not only this but also this series of external reform projects triggered contradictory and confused positions, especially among the Palestinian activists and reform agencies. These projects present an overlapping of reform efforts like combatting corruption and restructuring the security agencies with national reform agendas that focus on restructuring the PNA and its institutions and agencies.

The AMAN Coalition and other Palestinian sectors consider it an utmost priority to stop the genocide war against our people and launch a comprehensive national dialogue for reform after the ending of the aggression. Thus, we invite all Palestinian forces to adopt a national participatory comprehensive reform program that involves the PNA and the PLO; a program that is based on the rotation of power across generations via:

- Ending the political divide and unifying state institutions in addition to holding general elections.**
- Reiterating the independence of the judiciary,**
- The protection of civic rights and freedoms,**
- The promotion of the rule of law and social justice,**
- The management of public resources and services with transparency, specific schedules and budgets that respond to the national priorities of ending the occupation and reaching self-determination.**

Referring to the several Palestinian reform experiences and plans over the past three decades, which have not been successful due to the lack of a genuine political will and the absence of any monitoring and evaluation, any future plans must be based on key principles that lead to building a capable Palestinian state and ending the occupation. To achieve this goal, it is paramount to launch a national dialogue with all sectors to agree on a reform plan that is based on:

1. Inclusion: all government, civil society, and private sector together with the local governments and academia must take part.
2. Distribution of roles among partners in a complementary manner to assign specific tasks and powers to each party as well as accountability mechanisms. This can be achieved when all parties participate first in the drafting of the plan and later in the monitoring and evaluation process.
3. Provision of the necessary funding: budgets and qualified human resources need to be allocated to implement the plan. Training is also necessary to build human resources capacities and ensure the full implementation of the plan.
4. Specific timetable for all tasks that take into account national priorities, including setting specific dates for follow-up, monitoring, and evaluation of all the interventions to address any deviations, gaps, or hurdles.
5. An action executive plan: it must be prepared by all the partners and adopted as a reference. The plan needs a specific timeframe with performance assessment indicators. It needs to be smart and assessed periodically.
6. Assign a central coordination point for all partners to the plan to unify efforts and smartly distribute the different tasks to implement and monitor the plan. This central point may be a national committee with representatives from all sectors so that it does not become a plan for the government only.

7. Set monitoring, evaluation, and accountability standards to assess the progress periodically and hold all parties to account for the progress made, and inform citizens of all developments in a transparent and periodic manner.