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## Interview: Faisel Hussein

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# 'There is no way to address the Palestinians but as a people'

*Faisel Hussein is one of the best-known Palestinian leaders in the Israeli Occupied Territories. On March 12, he led a 10-man Palestinian delegation which met with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker in Jerusalem, a meeting which had been proposed by the United States. The stated purpose of Baker's trip, in order to meet with the Israeli government and the Palestinian delegation, was to find a solution to the Palestinian problem, in the aftermath of the war with Iraq.*

*In his remarks before Congress on March 6, President George Bush referenced U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338, which demanded that Israel withdraw from the Occupied Territories. Bush and Baker have also claimed that the Palestine Liberation Organization and its chairman, Yasser Arafat, are "discredited" and not relevant to the peace process. The Israeli leadership has rejected the concept associated with these U.N. resolutions—"land for peace." It also insists that it will not meet with the PLO.*

*Hussein was interviewed by telephone by Joseph Brewda on March 17.*

**EIR:** Mr. Hussein, you met with Secretary of State Baker together with other Palestinians last week on possible new U.S. initiatives toward Arab-Israeli peace and a solution to the Palestinian problem. How would you characterize the meeting and your view of the U.S. position?

**Hussein:** I believe the meeting was a frank meeting, and straight to the point from both sides. I believe that it was constructive because of that. We were facing the reality as it is.

From our side, we make it clear that there is no way to address the Palestinian people except as a people. Not as inhabitants of a certain place, not as refugees, not as a minority, but as a people. Because of that, we asked Mr. Baker to respect the will of the Palestinian people, the structure of the Palestinian people, which is the PLO, which is an organization which has been elected by the Palestinian people, and to respect the PLO leadership, which has been elected by the Palestinian people. We can discuss the differences, the misunderstandings, and the difficulties between the leadership of our people and the leadership of other nations. But, at the same time, this discussion can only take place within the context of respect between our leadership and other leader-

ships in the world.

We made it clear that there is no way to try to create any alternative leadership, because there is no alternative leadership in the area. And the reason for that is that we would like to solve the whole problem of the Palestinian people, so that we can solve the problems of the Middle East. The only one that can deliver the whole Palestinian people is the PLO.

From Mr. Baker's point of view, he was trying to tell us that there are difficulties, because the Arab states are not ready to talk with the PLO, that Israel is not ready to deal with the PLO, and that there is a very high level of criticism of the PLO leadership. Because of that, he would like to go on trying to solve the problems step by step, gradually, and not go to the main problem. We cannot accept this, because we believe that the Israeli government is just trying to gain time. By trying to avoid the main problem, this government of Israel will succeed yet another time to win another 14 months, as they did the first time [that Baker conducted negotiations, earlier in the Bush administration]. And we will find ourselves in the end at the same point that we started from.

**EIR:** During the war and even before, the Israeli government imposed a curfew in the Occupied Territories that led to malnutrition, and carried out arrests of Palestinian leaders on various pretexts. Now we see aggressive statements by figures in the Israeli government, notably the new minister, Rehavam Zeevi, but also Foreign Minister David Levy and others. What do you consider the policy of the Israeli government, in the aftermath of this war, toward the Palestinians? Do you see a new policy of expansion, a new effort to crush the Palestinians?

**Hussein:** Actually, the Israelis' main concern is not the PLO, or who will represent the Palestinians. It is not the Palestinian people. The main thing which is worrying the Israelis is the land. This government is working to keep the land in its hands. It is because of that, that they refuse the principle of land for peace. They want the Occupied Territories. They want these territories for their use in the future, for immigration. It is because of that, that they are against any solution. And so they are using the reality of the PLO, the reality that the Palestinian people are inside and outside, as

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a pretext not to withdraw.

Because of that, any attempt by the external world, and especially by the U.S., to start solving this problem, must begin by insisting that Resolution 242 be implemented, and the principle of land for peace be respected. After that, they will find that the Israelis will change their minds and be ready to talk with the PLO, when the Israelis find that there is no way that they can avoid withdrawing from the Occupied Territories.

**EIR:** What about the clear policy of the Israeli government to settle Soviet Jewish immigrants on the West Bank, in order to permanently alter the demography of the region? Did you address that point with Baker, and what is your view of that situation?

**Husseini:** Yes, we addressed this matter with Mr. Baker and especially the settlements themselves. Maybe the Israelis will not send any Soviet immigrants to the West Bank; but what they could do, is put them inside Israel, and push others onto the West Bank from the old communities within Israel. So we made it clear to Mr. Baker that we are against any settlements in the West Bank and Gaza strip, regardless of where the people come from. I believe that, in this case at least, he is in full agreement with us.

**EIR:** There have been various plans floated in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* of forming some sort of Palestinian entity without full sovereignty, so-called self-rule, along the lines that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir proposed last year, which in effect would create a supposed Palestinian state, but without control of much of anything, except garbage collection and matters like that. Is that being pushed by the Israelis and the Americans again?

**Husseini:** The Americans did not say anything about that in particular. But they tried to go back and ask about finding a solution in stages, about the old initiative of Mr. Shamir. Our answer was that we are ready for any proposal if it is a package deal where it is clear that in the end there will be a Palestinian state. We can talk about stages, we can talk about schedules, we can talk about timing, but not before reaching this understanding that in the end there will be a Palestinian state.

Other matters, from our point of view, just lose time, and allow the Zionists to change the reality in this area. By the way, Mr. Shamir himself said that the aim of everything he

is doing, saying, and proposing, is just to gain time so he can have a greater Israel, a stronger Israel, which can force the Arabs to accept what he will offer them, and no more than that.

**EIR:** There are reports of Kuwaiti military units slaughtering the Palestinians in Kuwait, with the implicit or explicit backing of U.S. troops. What can you say on that situation?

**Husseini:** What I can say is that this is one of the reasons that we are in need of a homeland, of a state. Those Palestinians in Kuwait did not stay there because they wanted to stay in Kuwait during the war, with the bombs, guns, and fighting. And when they stayed after the Iraqis withdrew, it was not because they wanted to stay there. It was simply because they had nowhere to go, they have no passport, they are not acceptable anywhere. So the only thing they can expect is to face a massacre. This is the tragedy of the Palestinian people, and because of that we would like to build a homeland for them, to protect them from such a destiny. We said the same thing in Lebanon. We are facing this in Kuwait, and we faced the same thing in Syria and other places. We are a people who have no homeland, no state, no identity, no passport, and we need a state so that we can protect our people and ourselves.

**EIR:** There are indications that the Israelis are considering stepping up massacres of Palestinians within the Occupied Territories, either in a supposed response to some stabbing incidents, or other incidents, which provide the Israelis a pretext for massacring Palestinians. Do you think this represents a danger over the coming days?

**Husseini:** It is not necessary to be a physical massacre. What they are doing now is an economic massacre, a moral massacre, the humiliation of the Palestinian people, the destruction of the infrastructure of the Palestinian people. Forbidding people from working, forbidding them from traveling to their own factories, closing down the West Bank into sectors so that you can not move from one sector into another without permission, forbidding Palestinians from going to Jerusalem, forbidding them from going to Gaza, forbidding them from going anywhere. So it is another kind of massacre. But I also believe that in time, the soldiers in the Occupied Territories will be ready to implement [a massacre] when they are asked.

Today I was stopped at a checkpoint in Jerusalem, and some soldiers started to talk to me when they recognized me.

They told me that there is no way to go but the policy of Ze'evi, which is, "You Palestinians must leave this area and go to Jordan; this area is only for the Jews." They told me, "Look we were waiting and dreaming for the moment that we could meet you, just to kill you, but now we would like to talk." So they didn't kill me. But I believe even those people who are saying all of these things are saying them because of the influence of their government, their parties, against us. I'm sure that after my talk with those soldiers, their attitude changed completely. Unfortunately, Israel is ruled right now by a government which is the main obstacle and the main element against peace and any political solution.

**EIR:** Is the policy continuing of firing large numbers of Palestinians and replacing them by Soviet Jews?

**Husseini:** Yes. Not only this. Now our laborers are losing their work inside Israel. So there is no more income for these laborers. At the same time, our people who had been working in the Gulf, and who sent their money to us, also have lost their jobs and their ability to send money. So they came back here to try to find jobs, and now the number of unemployed has become even greater. Third, those people in the Gulf who were sending money for their families that lived here, are now themselves in a desperate situation in Amman or Kuwait and other places, and so we are funding them ourselves and sending them our money.

At the same time, because of the curfews inside the West Bank and Gaza strip, because of this policy of cutting the West Bank and Gaza strip into zones which can't communicate with each other, we cannot send the production of one zone into another. People cannot travel to their factories, to their fields. What we are seeing is a complete destruction of the economy. People have no money to buy, and so the producer is not able to produce, and closes his factory. Now we are really in need of international protection, the implementation of the Geneva Convention [protecting refugees], and not to be left to the Israeli government. This is the responsibility of the U.N. and the U.S., because the U.S. came up with the idea, this idea of a new order, this idea of respect for Security Council resolutions, and U.N. resolutions, and international legitimacy. The only thing we are asking of the Israelis to respect these things, to respect international legitimacy by respecting the Geneva Convention, to respect the U.N. by respecting their resolutions and withdrawing from these areas, and to allow peace in the Middle East.

Unfortunately, we see that until now the Americans are not really pushing. When the matter concerns the Palestinians, they are so tough. Even if it comes to a Security Council resolution against Israel, the U.S. will not use their veto. But, after that, we do not see the U.S. actually push to implement these Security Council resolutions. This is a disaster. Everyone here feels that there is a double standard again in dealing with matters in this area.

## Palestinians and the 'new world order'

by Hanna Siniora

*The following article has been made available for English language publication in EIR by Mr. Siniora, the editor of the Jerusalem Arabic daily Al-Fajr.*

What do Palestinians in the Occupied Territories think about the "new world order" that everyone is talking about? Do they feel that it would open up the possibility of solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in a manner guaranteeing their inalienable rights, particularly those of self-determination and statehood? *Al-Fajr* interviewed Palestinians from all walks of life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

**Hilmi Hanoun**, mayor of Tulkarm, said that the "new world order" people refer to is still so unclear that it is difficult to judge its impact. What is important, he said, is not to deviate from the current track of pursuing international legitimacy. The Palestinian issue, he said, is a test case for the world community.

**Bashir al-Barghouthi**, editor-in-chief of the Jerusalem-based Arabic weekly *Al-Tali'a*, thinks the Palestinian question will not be long at the top of a priorities list for the American administration. He foresees the Americans spending more time strengthening the alliance they established against Iraq and turning it into a strategic coalition. He said the strategic alliance will most likely tackle internal problems and avoid anything the members of the alliance may not be ready to handle, namely an American solution to the Palestinian question. Barghouthi sees the Americans strengthening the alliance by allowing it to work toward common goals, first and foremost being the establishment of a military-economic alliance already under way; toppling the Iraqi regime; and changing the PLO leadership or finding an alternative to it altogether. Barghouthi fears such developments would set the stage for a Camp David-like solution to the Palestinian question.

The deposed mayor of Nablus, **Bassam Shaka'a**, said the dismantling of the socialist camp and the problems resulting with the Soviet Union have created a feeling in the West that the international arena is a fair game for all manner of imperialist ambitions. Shaka'a thinks this reflects negatively on the international scene and on the nations of the developing world, particularly since international developments and the rapid move toward détente did not coincide