

Whether they write them off or not, it's almost the same, because Jordan will not be able to pay its debts. The question is, will they be written off now as a good will gesture, or later, when reality asserts itself?

EIR: What is Jordan's total foreign debt?

Dr. Fanek: The original debt to America was \$705 million, of which \$225 million was written off last year and \$275 million was to be written off this year. And with that, the whole \$705 million would be written off, because of internal reserves. So, had the \$275 million been written off, the official debt to America would have become zero. The total foreign debt is \$6.9 billion, assuming the American debt is zero.

Interview: Hon. Freih Abu Middain

The peace process is going to hell

Hon. Freih Abu Middain is the minister of justice of the Palestinian Authority. Muriel Mirak-Weissbach interviewed him in Gaza on March 11.

EIR: What are the main obstacles to the peace process?

Abu Middain: The main problem is financial. The Palestinian Authority lost its credibility, and lost its majority. Credibility depends on showing improvement, whereas the situation now is worse, not better than it was before. Prices are up 30-40%, prisoners are still in prison. It is like waiting for Godot. We have a Palestinian flag, a television and radio stations, Chairman Arafat and the Palestinian Authority. But what about the empty stomachs? If we can't give children a shekel to have something to eat, we cannot convince citizens that peace is worthwhile.

EIR: How do you see the security problem?

Abu Middain: This is all linked to the security question. Unemployment here in Gaza is at 60%. In this situation, it is easy to recruit someone for \$50 to throw grenades. These two elements are linked. When we signed the DOP [Declaration of Principles] in Oslo and in Washington, the U.S.A. and Europe put pressure on Arafat. We were promised \$720 million for infrastructure. We were starting, not from zero, but from below zero. We have received almost nothing. A further aggravation to the economic crisis is that the Israelis have closed the borders, so tens of thousands of Palestinian workers can no longer earn a living. Morally, I think the Israelis should open the borders. For 27 years they have

used Palestinians for menial labor, now they are harping on "security." Israel controls *all* checkpoints, so it is their responsibility, not ours. We have no tear gas, no sophisticated weapons.

EIR: How do you see the future?

Abu Middain: If the economic situation is not improved, in the future it will be very bad. I blame the donors, the World Bank. They talk about accountability. We have no time for that. If we are not qualified in their eyes, we say to them, to the European Union, for instance, "You have a \$259 million project for a sewage system, for waste water treatment; fine, come here and do it yourselves."

The real challenge for the Palestinian Authority is how to create 30,000 jobs. Right now, everything is coming from Israel, all products we use, and we have nothing of our own. When the British and French left Africa, they left behind some infrastructure, but here the Israelis have taken everything, even ripping up the rails. What was left behind were the 2,000 settlers here who are provoking our people.

Oslo is going to collapse, the whole peace process is going to go to Hell within three or four months, if things don't change. Rabin's two ears listen to the military, who do not believe in peace. All their negotiations are conducted from the military standpoint, by military, not civilians. The situation has in many cases worsened since the peace treaty. To give you some details: We have problems in sending students from Gaza to the West Bank, or in sending people to the airport in Tel Aviv, or to a hospital in Israel. Before, under occupation, there were no problems like this.

EIR: How do you see the problem of the settlers?

Abu Middain: The main obstacles to peace are the settlers and the settlements, and Jerusalem. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, in Gaza, how many of them are there? Certainly fewer than the settlers here. They, the settlers, are the real terrorists. They stole our land. This is the source of the security problem. Unfortunately, Rabin is no de Gaulle. Now Rabin wants to prevent elections. The DOP demands withdrawal of Israeli troops before elections, which Rabin does not want. What we have now are ghettos, bantustans on the West Bank; he wants three on the West Bank and one in Gaza.

The new idea that has come up recently is that of "separation." What that really means is isolation of the Palestinian people. But, if he is ready to talk about the final status, then so are we.

After the DOP was signed, confidence has decreased. We need a new era to be opened. Let us go then to the final settlement. Rabin was elected by his people to make peace, but he is wasting time. He is taking one step forward and two steps backward. I fear they are looking to the 1996 elections in Israel and in the U.S. In the meantime, everything will be frozen in the peace process, and it will be a golden chance for extremists.