

Newsletter

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Shabab FM is a community radio station broadcasting on 97.9 FM in Birzeit and Ramallah areas, in Palestine. It is an independent media, promoted by the civil society and the local community and lead by youth and women. The objectives of Shabab FM are the following:

- strengthen social cohesion and participatory processes in Palestine, also in order to promote conflict resolution practices by communication tools
- empower the social protagonism of women and youth in Palestinian society
- spread independent information and build networks with international media involved in human rights issues

The project is promoted by [COSPE](#), [PYU](#) and [AMISnet](#), cofinanced by European Commission.

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Troubled Waters in OPT: the new report by Amnesty International

The report published by [Amnesty International](#) on 27 October about water access for the Palestinians is a clear statement against Israeli policies. In [the 112-pages report](#), the human rights organization accuses Israel harshly, especially for the policy of "negation" and "rationing" of drinking water carried out by Israeli army against the Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). This policy has become increasingly restrictive since the beginning of the military occupation, after the Six Day War in 1967.

Stressing that water is not a luxury but a "fundamental right to survival", Amnesty accuses Israel to grant Palestinians from West Bank and Gaza Strip only access to a small fraction of water from the aquifer in Israel and OPT, that, indeed, is largely located in Palestinian territory. According to Amnesty, Israel "uses more than 80 per cent of the water from Mountain Aquifer, the only source of underground water in the OPT", while is limiting access for Palestinians to a mere 20 per cent. This discrimination is even more evident when considering that the 450 thousand Israeli settlers living illegally in the OPT consume drinking water equal or more than the water available to 2.3 million Palestinians. The average daily consumption per capita of an Israeli is 300 litres of water, while for a Palestinian is 70 litres. In some Palestinian rural communities per capita consumption may fall even to 20 litres, the minimum deemed necessary for domestic use in an emergency situation. Furthermore, the number of Palestinians who have no access to running water would stand at around 180 to 200 thousand units. The report continues: "Swimming pools, lush irrigated vineyards, herb farms and lawns" in the colonies "stand in stark contrast to the parched and arid Palestinian villages" around them. Palestinians, in fact, are not allowed to dig new wells or to rearrange the old ones without Israelis permissions, which are almost never issued.

Furthermore, in Gaza Strip there are major disruptions in the use of drinking water, not only because, as Amnesty states, "the 90-95% comes from a coastal aquifer whose water is contaminated and unsuitable for human use". In fact, in Gaza Strip the situation has steadily worsened especially after the last "Cast Lead" military operation. The Israeli offensive has strained water supplies, wells, sewers and pumping stations: property damage in addition to those is determined by the unilateral embargo on the Strip issued by Israeli government. For this reason it is even prevented the import of pipes and other metal raw materials for reconstruction, under the pretext that they could be used for the production of handmade rockets to be used against Israel.

Israel's response to allegations of Amnesty has been indignant: "The gap between the consumption of water among Israelis and Palestinians really exists - declared the Israeli Authorities for Water - but certainly not in the way described by the report". Similarly, both Israeli Army and Minister of the Infrastructure Uzi Landau define the report as "unilateral" and "partisan", comparable to the one edited by Judge Goldstone about the military operation "Cast Lead" in Gaza, in which Israel has been accused of war crimes.

Michele Gidoni
Radio Shabab FM
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Solar energy for the Shifa Hospital

The human rights group "Action for peace" is working to bring energy to Shifa Hospital, one of the main hospitals in Gaza, suffering the consequences of the last army attack and the embargo from Israel. The Italian engineer Andrea Micangeli talk with us about this project. "We will do a photovoltaic system. It will guarantee the autonomy of some hours for the operational theatre in case of black-out".

Khaldoun
Radio Shabab FM
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Radiodervish: Italian-Palestinian sound

Radiodervish is a music band born in 1997 at Bari, in southern Italy, from the artistic partnership between Michele Lobaccaro and Nabil Salameh who was part of the older group called "Al Darawish". The band, promoting a new CD in this days, is very wellknown in Italy and is considered as a peace ambassador between European and Arabic sides of Mediterranean sea. By an interesting interview to the Palestinian Nabil Salameh, we explore Radiodervish experience, always devoted to promote dialogue and exchange among Mediterranean cultures, also cooperating with Israeli artists.

Marzia Coronati
Radio Shabab FM
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Obama's empassse

Obama's Middle-Eastern initiative seems to be tail-spinning around the shuttle leading from Netanyahu to Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen): first Mitchell, the Special Envoy then Hilary Clinton, the Secretary of State. President Abu Mazen stands firm in his refusal to resume negotiations unless there is complete freeze of the Israeli settlements and the Israeli Prime Minister remains as firm in his request to endure their 'natural growth'. Obama's speech in Cairo last June seems to have become a distant memory: at that time the Israelis were requested to completely freeze the settlements without exception as Secretary Clinton repeatedly voiced in her statements. As a result, Abu Mazen took on these demands as he could not ask for less than the US President even though after Netanyahu's election he had stated he was prepared to resume negotiations where they had broken off with Olmert. With the former Israeli Prime Minister negotiations had continued for over a year without building stopping in the settlements which had in fact registered a 25% increase.

However, as time went by the US position has progressively changed. The Israeli positions contributed to the change: in his speech on June the 14th, in Bar Ilan, for the first time the Israeli Prime Minister accepted the two nations two states solution, albeit a demilitarized one, so long as Jerusalem remained the only and undivided capital of Israel and on condition that the Palestinians and the Arab States recognised Israel as a Jewish State. Hard and possibly unacceptable conditions, although negotiations are there because one negotiates and unquestionably there had been a step forward.

Certainly the domestic pressure on Obama also contributed, following a letter promoted by AIPAC, the powerful Jewish American Lobby,: the letter was signed by 73 US Senators (out of a total of 100) and it stated that while backing the President's peace initiative, they were calling for him not to forget the historical and friendship ties with the Jewish State, and its security interests. Likewise, the approaching state and city elections will also have borne their influence on him.

Whatever the case maybe, in her recent mission to the area, Secretary Clinton adopted a very different tone and choice of language: she stated that although the US remains in favour of a total freeze, the Israeli Government had unquestionably made significant steps forward, adopting unprecedented restrictions on the settlements, which will have a meaningful impact on slowing growth down. No new settlements will be built, no more land claimed (expropriated), no new building nor building permits will be issued. In the US Secretary of State's words a total freeze cannot be a precondition to negotiation.

This is the de facto acceptance of the Mitchell mediation, which foresaw 3,000 new buildings in the large settlements close to Jerusalem and the exclusion of east Jerusalem from the freeze – with a view not to predetermine the outcome of the final negotiation on the city – and the Israelis would undertake to avoid further provocations against Palestinian residents.

Thus President Abu Mazen was left in an unexpected position: after very strong pressure



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had been exerted on him he had accepted the US and Israeli request to postpone the debate on the Goldstone Report on Gaza which condemns Israel and Hamas for war crimes and this had weakened him.

In fact this had left the Palestinian president open to vicious Hamas attacks, the latter having organized shoe-throwing against his picture in Gaza, had led to a fall in his popularity among the Palestinians, especially in the Strip which felt betrayed by the decision, although it had subsequently been modified.

In conclusion, the US President probably set the mark too high which has led to problems such as the weakening of President Abu Mazen's leadership, and led to divisions in the Arab world. The US President also failed to address the Israeli public opinion directly, and they felt second fiddle to the Arab public opinion, which helped Netanyahu avoid isolation and with the positions expressed in Bar Ilan, taking up the centre of the political spectrum and displacing Kadima with its leader Tzipi Livni. He took on the role of the strong and wise leader, able to successfully resist the excessive pressures the US President had placed on his country, while appearing moderate and open to negotiations. His only risk is that if he continues to make President Abu Mazen's role increasingly meaningless he could have to face the crumbling of the Palestinian Authority and end up with Hamas as the main interlocutor. Victories such as these may be dangerous.

Janiki Cingoli
[CIPMO](#)

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