

Palestine International Institute

**Aspiring to Bind Palestinians in the Diaspora
and Expatriates to the Homeland**

The Palestinian Community In Sweden

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Foreword

The Palestine International Institute (PII) pioneers in producing studies provided by researchers in the Diaspora in coordination with the Institute, under the broad category, 'Palestinians in Diaspora'. This time we are pleased to present our readers with the 2008 reviewed and updated edition of our study titled, 'The

Palestinian Community in Sweden'. This study falls under the category of the 'Horizontal Studies' series which examines the emergence and evolution of communities and tackles issues related to the origins, structure, makeup, size, problems and challenge of Palestinian communities in the Diaspora. The PII also issues the 'Parallel Studies' series which are supplemental studies with indirect bearing on communities, such as the study on Arab-European relationships. These studies are overseen and supervised by the executive chairman and the research team. In addition, our scientific committee, comprising Dr. Mohammad Mikdashi, Dr. Hasan Al-Charif, Dr. Emile Nemah Khoury and Dr. Nabil Dajani, looks over the upgrading and maintenance of the PII website, as well as the update of the 'Vertical Studies' series which are studies on the elite, focusing on activists of Palestinian communities in the Diaspora.

Before scrutinizing the data, statistics and information contained in this study, we wish to indicate that it presents academic insight based on scientific and objective research. This is indeed one of the goals for which PII has been established.

Our researchers have exerted considerable effort in order to overcome the difficulties imposed by the scarcity of resources and documents in an attempt to achieve integrated, rather than fractured data at a time when scientific research is considerably lacking and insignificant. The importance of this study, as well as other PII studies, emerges from a number of factors, the most important of which are the following:

- It comes as an early harvest in virgin territory, where documents and sources of information on these subjects, in both Arab and foreign libraries, are virtually nonexistent, including the Internet and centers which specialize in Palestinian issues.
- No scholar or institution has come up with a partial, needless to say complete, series of studies about Palestinians in the Diaspora in countries where they exist, or about communities in the countries which have hosted Palestinians.

Despite all, we acknowledge that the present study is in its early stages and is open to further development and expansion on the basis of professionalism, authenticity, transparency and documentation, and with the intent of being broadened and updated. Our mission and duty dictate that we ensure it is subject to the above processes in each of its new editions.

The PII welcomes any comments on the development of its studies and scientific and research references with the aim of achieving its final goals and aspirations. If it appears that we are slightly lagging, it is because our human and financial resources are limited and the conditions under which research is being conducted are difficult.

The time to pick the fruits of our labors is near. All this has been the result of efforts exerted by a dedicated team, despite our humble resources. Our gratitude goes to all scholars and researchers who have contributed to this and other studies which aim to reach those interested, address their patriotic, national, human and intellectual aspirations, and reveal facts and data previously unknown to those who have previously had no access to such information.

We further reiterate our desire to receive feedback and urge our readers to send us their comments and suggestions which would serve to improve or advance our studies.

As'ad Abdul-Rahman,
Executive Director

Acknowledgement

The Palestine International Institute wishes to extend its heartily appreciation and gratitude to all those who contributed to this study in various ways, including research, gleaning information, translation, editing and typing ... etc.

Thanks are due to all PII staff, including researchers and technical support, for their hard work and dedication, which is why this study has been produced with useful content and in proper form.

Introduction

This study is the first serious attempt to acquaint the reader with the Palestinian community in Sweden. Through research and contacts, we have realized that, in its interaction with the host country's political, economic and social structure, the Palestinian community in Sweden is part of the Islamic community at large. That is why we shall concentrate and elaborate primarily on the status of the Islamic community in Sweden, while reflecting on the Palestinian community in some areas. We have also determined that data on the Islamic community is much more abundant and accessible than data on the Palestinian community. This is due to the size and importance of the Islamic community, which constitutes an independent group in its own right in the Swedish social network.

We have also concluded that the Palestinian community, despite its interaction with the larger Islamic community, has its own independent character, separate institutions and specialized activities which distinguish it from other communities. It is hoped that this study will lay down the basis for future research in this area.

Chapter One

Overview of the Social and Political System in Sweden

Overview of the Social, Economic and Political System in Sweden

Palestinians in Sweden encounter many social and economic problems which render assimilation in the host society difficult and riddled with obstacles. Before elaborating on these problems, we must briefly explain the general policy in Sweden, towards its citizens, by giving a short description of the social and political systems in the country.

The Swedish government undertakes full social and economic care of the individual and the family, especially when the family's breadwinner is unemployed. The state, in this case, pays compensatory benefits, not only to the parents, but also to every member of the family. The state allocates equal rights and duties to all citizens in all areas, with men and women treated equally.¹

When an immigrant to Sweden is granted a permit of residence, he/she automatically becomes entitled to all rights enjoyed by the Swedish citizen, except the right to participate in parliamentary elections and military service. These rights are obtained only after naturalization, which is acquired after the immigrant has resided in the country for at least three to four years.

Pillars of the Social System

The Child

Child rights are guaranteed and safeguarded as those of an adult, and the family must care for the child's needs until the age of 18, after which the adolescent leaves the family and acquires an independent residence. The child starts receiving financial aid, paid to his mother, from the time he is born until the age of 16. All children enjoy this benefit, regardless of the family's financial status. From the time the parents get a job, their child is allotted a place in kindergarten, where he is taught his rights.

The state quickly intervenes in family affairs if differences arise between the parents, or when children are subjected to abuse or neglect. This point will be discussed later because of its effect on Palestinian families residing in the country. This intervention is usually partial to the wife and the child, especially in cases of divorce or separation. In many cases, the parents are deprived of their children, especially when there is proof of negligence or mistreatment. Because

of the fact that Arab and Islamic traditions urge children and women to be obedient to their fathers or husbands, some clashes between these values and those of Swedish society are likely to surface. Problems facing Palestinian families and their ability to adapt will be discussed below.

Education

Education in Sweden is free at all grade levels. The school plays a basic educational role in the life of children, competing with that of the family. There are also schools for adult education. These are necessary in Swedish society as the unemployed resort to them to raise their levels of education, in order to secure better employment opportunities. These schools teach Swedish to immigrants of all nationalities. Students also attend them to raise their overall average, to become eligible for admission to universities.

Employment

Unemployment is high in Sweden but the economic situation forces everybody to seek employment. This is done either personally or through the labor office. The government, as mentioned earlier, completely covers its citizens, especially the unemployed. Should the unemployment period persist, the unemployed goes to an adult school in order to increase his chances of finding a job.

The Political System

Sweden is a democratic parliamentary kingdom. The government usually has to win the approval and support of parliament on all issues. Having no authority, the king has only ceremonial status. Sweden, in spite of its membership in the European Union, maintains its status as a neutral state. In addition to their general rights to participate in parliamentary elections, municipalities and regional parliaments, citizens have a say in political decision making by participating in political parties and public organizations. This right is safeguarded by law, and the government supports this right financially and morally.

The government is open to criticism, no matter how acrimonious it might be; it absorbs people's anger by admitting its failures. An example is the government's tardy response when hundreds of Swedes were killed during the catastrophic Indian Ocean tsunami, where it subsequently took responsibility for being short on action. In parliament, the government is obliged to act according to the will of the majority, whereby political resolutions and new laws must always be in harmony with public desire. Swedish law stipulates that democratic values are the guidelines for all of society.

Democracy in Sweden was successfully introduced during the first two decades of the 20th century. In 1909, the right of men to vote in general elections was reformed. In 1921, women had the right to vote in general elections, which, for

the first time, equated women and men with respect to political rights. In 1917, parliamentary reforms were adopted, whereby the government had to win a vote of confidence from the parliament before assuming its duties. Previously, the king had full authority over the government. Achievement of these reforms was in agreement with the general social and economic developments that prevailed throughout the country.

There are three types of political bodies in Sweden, namely:

1. Municipalities

Sweden is divided into 289 municipalities. Each municipality has its own activities independent of the government. It has the authority to levy taxes on its inhabitants and determine their amounts. In return, the municipality is responsible for the availability of schools and social services for its citizens, like postal service, banks, employment offices, supervision of healthcare and medical services, cultural activities and public libraries. Each municipality has a legislative council elected by the citizens, called the municipal council, which appoints the administrative council of the municipality. In addition, the municipality has committees for various social activities, composed of a group of politicians who bear the responsibility for schools and the different municipal activities. The municipalities have independent treasuries that are funded by proceeds from taxes and from funds allotted by the central government. Taxes levied on all employees and laborers amount to 30 per cent of their annual income.

2. Regional parliamentary governorates

The municipalities are part of 24 regional parliamentary governorates which are vested with certain responsibilities that the municipalities cannot handle due to their small size. Among the greatest responsibilities that the regional parliamentary organizations bear are healthcare, medical services and public transport. The regional parliamentary organization is composed of a group of people, elected by the citizens, to pass resolutions through the formation of an executive local government, together with action committees, which study the various subjects of interest. Each region has its own treasury which is funded by taxes.

Foreign residents in Sweden have the right to vote in municipal councils and regional parliamentary organizations only (but not parliament), provided that the resident is over 18 and has had at least three years of legal residency in the country. He can also be nominated for membership of the municipal council and the local regional parliament.

3. Parliament

Parliament, consisting of 349 members representing all regions of the country, is the highest legislative authority in Sweden. The duty of parliament is to enact laws and pass resolutions concerning taxes and treasury, as well as oversee the performance of the government and other official authorities. Elections to such political institutions are held once every four years. All Swedes and naturalized persons over 18 are eligible to vote. Any person meeting the requirements to vote is also eligible for nomination for the elections.

The Central Government

Led by the prime minister, who is elected by parliament, the central government is the institution that leads Sweden. The prime minister appoints the ministers. Each ministry, within its scope, prepares government issues and suggests laws. As the ministries are considered relatively few, there are, in addition, a great number of government authorities who execute political resolutions and bear the responsibility for current activities. Government policy is based on international law and the world declaration of the principles of human rights. Sweden is politically neutral and shuns military alliances. For example, Sweden opposed the occupation of Iraq and supports international resolutions regarding the occupation of Palestine. It strongly objects to the building of the Apartheid Wall and Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Chapter Two The Islamic Community in Sweden

General Overview of the Community and its Interconnection with Swedish Society

Muslims in Sweden are still tarnished by the traditional image of 'the other', especially when politicians and journalists try to isolate them for being different. Within this framework, as it used to be in the 1980s, many public arguments are now focused on Muslims, especially when new Islamic schools or mosques are built. The argument often includes persons opposed to Islam who are rarely objective in presenting their ideas regarding the denial of community activities and refusal of demands, as raised by some of its members. These extremists often try to link Muslims to violence and terrorism in order to foster their stance and polarize public opinion.²

This trend is clearly evident in the Free Churches of Sweden. As a result of the efforts exerted by this group in arousing anti-Muslim feelings, Muslims enjoy the least popularity among foreign communities, as indicated by public opinion polls.

The following is a description of the most prominent political party which makes no secret of its enmity towards Islam.

The New Democracy Party (*Ny Demokrati*)

This right-wing party was formed in 1991 and its members believe that Muslim immigrants are a destabilizing factor of the economic and moral structure of Swedish society. This party bears no influence on Swedish policy, but its ideas are still alive in the extreme right-wing parties and often affect male youths who live on the margins of society.

In spite of this, some analysts believe that the Swedish public is characterized by harboring moderate and tolerant feelings towards minorities. The prevailing character of Swedish society remains liberal, as the majority believe in freedom of expression for all, irrespective of gender, religion, or politics. Swedish society strongly rejects all forms of fanaticism and any freedom of expression within this context is prohibited.

Muslim law, Sharia, holds no legal status in Sweden. However, imams, in certain mosques have the right to conduct marriages on the condition that a registration form is first filed with the pertaining official bureau. Short of this, the marriage contract will be considered null and void.

Some Muslim lawyers have tried to merge Swedish law with Sharia, by drawing up marriage contracts, wills and other legal documents that follow both Sharia and the laws of the country. These documents are found in various Islamic societies.

Generally speaking, Muslims in Sweden do not engage in politics. Some of them, however, are members of the Social Democratic Party and occupy some seats in parliament. One of these is a Kurdish woman who sometimes represents the Muslim communities, not as an independent group, but as refugees. There are also two active Muslim members in the Christian Democratic Party. The reason for having Muslim members in Swedish parties is, sometimes, to show tolerance and moderation towards minorities and immigrant communities, or to facilitate assimilation and avoid clashes with these communities.

Recently, Muslim communities have founded a common base and established links with the Swedish Church and the mosaic communities, as well as with some followers of the Free Churches. Therefore, a means of meeting and having discussions with these groups became possible. Panel discussions are prominent in the three largest Swedish cities. One can also find a degree of communication between Muslims and Christians in some medium-sized cities. The most prominent forum that brings together such meetings is called The Dialogue Group (*Dialoggruppen*), in Stockholm.

In addition, mosques implement a policy of inviting non-Muslims to visit and acquaint themselves with the principles of Islam and Sharia and to inquire about

Islam and Muslim communities in general. This initiative has been successful in attracting many groups in Swedish society, like retired individuals, school and college students and others.

Islamic and Swedish public schools cooperate in certain fields, like teaching languages. There has also been cooperation in the political field, as was seen in the mid-1990s, when a lobbyist group, made up of representatives of all religions, tried to incorporate religious values in the academic curricula.

There is also increasing interaction between some Christian gatherings that belong to local parties and some Islamic organizations. The leaders of the Christian Democratic Social Party have established means of cooperation with the Swedish Islamic Council.

Education

The educational system in Sweden consists of private and public (free) schools, whereby the latter are financed by the government.³ Public schools must follow the official syllabus, whereby addition of new topics is allowed, but deletion of existing topics is not.

All Arab and Islamic schools are public, but get less financing than other government schools. So far, no discussions with the government have been held regarding the possibility of teaching Islam in these schools.

The first Islamic school in Sweden was opened in the autumn of 1993, and by the year 1998, there were 20 schools of Islamic or Arabic character. Islamic–Arabic schools, like Islamic buildings and mosques, are located in remote and inconspicuous places.

The Media

The Islamic community has two newspapers, *Salam* and the *Minaret*, and one broadcasting station, Radio Islam, the owners of which were jailed for accusations of racial provocation and promotion of anti-Semitism.

No other printed material is available for the Islamic community, and most, if any, are translations of books or foreign magazines.

Size and Distribution of the Community

Immigration Waves to Sweden

1. Immigration of Muslim laborers to Sweden started in the 1960s. By the end of the decade, these laborers had brought their families, and in 1973 and 1974 the process of family reunions accelerated, and is still going unabated to this day.

2. Muslim refugees started to arrive in Sweden in 1974. During the period between 1984 and 1993, about 48 per cent of immigrants arrived as refugees, 46 per cent of Muslims came as refugee families and 6 per cent entered the country under other classifications.

3. By the year 1980, there was a tangible Muslim community, whereas before that, it was relatively unknown and obscure.

In July 2002, the census in Sweden estimated the population to be 9,001,774, ⁴ although specific statistics on religious and racial identity are still unavailable. However, if a tally of the number of immigrants coming from Muslim countries, or countries having a high ratio of Muslims, is conducted, the following results are obtained:

1. There are between 300,000 and 350,000 Muslims⁵ in Sweden (including children born in the country).
2. Active Muslims in Islamic groups amount to 90,000.
3. Around 3 per cent of the Swedish population are Muslims.
4. One-third of the Muslims in Sweden are under 20.

Muslims in Sweden hail from many countries, which are listed below with the estimated number of immigrants in each case (according to statistics in 2000):⁶

- Turks: constitute less than 10 per cent of the overall number of Muslims in Sweden.
- Arabs: represent immigrants to Sweden from 20 Arab states, distributed as follows:
 1. Iraqis: constitute the largest number of Arab Muslim immigrants and are estimated to be around 52,000.
 2. Lebanese: 21,000.
 3. Moroccans, Syrians, Tunisians and Palestinians: 90,000.
- Iranians constitute around one-sixth of Muslims in Sweden and are estimated to be 52,000.
- Northeast Africa
 1. Somalis: 16,000.

2. Ethiopians: 12,000.

3. Immigrants from Eritrea, Ghana, Gambia, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan and East Africa: 5,000.

- Pakistanis: constitute around 1 per cent of the total number of Muslims, estimated to be around 3,000.

- The Balkan Countries

1. Former Yugoslavia: 10,000 according to 1988 statistics.

2. Bosnia and Herzegovina: 40,000 immigrants who were granted political asylum in 1998.

- Other Countries: 10,000 – 15,000.

Swedish laws stipulate that nationality must be granted to those immigrants who are above 18 and have resided legally in Sweden for at least five years.

Demographic Distribution of Muslims in Sweden

The Muslim community is concentrated in large cities like Stockholm (south, west and north), Göteborg (north, east and south) and Malmö (middle, south and east). No tangible gatherings of Muslims exist in the countryside.

Islamic Institutions and Their Relationship with the State

The State Commission for Grants to Religious Communities donates financial aid to Islamic communities, often for the purpose of covering rents for their centers. These communities get additional financing when they perform social activities, like when imams visit the sick and the imprisoned, or when Muslim women's groups undertake certain activities. The commission also covers the cost of higher education.

The commission supports some organizations which sponsor Islamic community activities, like IKUS, a Sunni organization, which will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs. Organizations which receive no governmental support include a Bosnian community organization and a youth organization that belongs to the Shi'ite sect.

Most Islamic communities cooperate and organize shared activities such as having panel discussions, setting up committees for higher education, issuing marriage permits, supervising funerals and visiting the sick and imprisoned.

Most community activities are confined to the following organizations:

1. Union of Islamic Communities in Sweden (*Förenade Islamiska Församlingar I Sverige-FIFS*)

This union was established in 1974, for the purpose of acquiring governmental support for the community. It organized and unified all sects of the Islamic community within the framework of the union, with the exception of the Ahmadi sect, which remained independent and its followers established their own organization.

2. Union of Swedish Muslim Communities (*Sveriges Förenade Muslimska Församlingar - SMuF*)

In 1982, because of financial disputes, some FIFS members broke away from the union and established SMuF, which is mostly an Arab Sunni union, with a small number of Shi'ites.

3. Union of Islamic Cultural Centers (*Islamiska Kulturcenterunionen – IKUS*)

Another breakaway from SMuF occurred at the end of 1990 when some dissidents established the Union of Islamic Cultural Centers. All members of this union are Sunnis with a Suleimani tendency, greatly cooperating with the Somali community. These people oppose some common habits within the Islamic communities like female circumcision, and try to take action against such practices.

4. Islamic Political Union (*Politisk Islamisk Samling – PIS*)

As the only political gathering for the Islamic community, this union was established in 1999 with purely political objectives. Being relatively newly established, its continuity remains uncertain.

5. The Swedish Islamic Council (*Sveriges Muslimska Rad – SMR*)

This council was established in 1990 by FIFS in cooperation with SMuF, to act as their active public relations branch in Sweden. The mission statement of the council is summarized as follows:

- Building Islamic mosques and schools
- Producing information material on Islam for distribution among non-Muslims;

- Taking a more active role in popular debates.

It should be noted that the leaders of FIFS, SMuF and SMR are close to the Muslim Brotherhood. IKUS leaders belong to the Islamic Revival stream, most of whom are Sunni Turks. One of the IKUS imams, a man of Swedish origin, has recently broken away and established a new establishment called the Islamic Swedish Academy together with other newly converted Swedish Muslims and a Turkish activist. These people are in charge of the previously mentioned *Minaret* periodical. In southern Sweden, there are some Muslims, amongst them Palestinians and Lebanese, who follow Al-Ahbaash sect and are very close to Al-Ahbaash in Copenhagen.

The Status of the Community after September 11

Sweden, both officially and publicly, condemned any persecution of its Muslim citizens as a result of the September 11 attacks against the United States. When Muslims in Sweden became anxious and worried about acts of hostility and racism, Swedish leaders hastened to reassure them, through messages in various Swedish media outlets. Mona Salin, minister of assimilation, visited the Central Stockholm Mosque, where she met with the mosque's supervisors, and, in a speech delivered there, she asked that Swedish Muslims observe their religious rituals without fear or concern. Swedish laws, she assured them, safeguard religious freedom. Moreover, Swedish authorities continued to provide financial aid to Arab and Islamic schools and mosques.⁷

Anna Lindh, the late foreign minister, decided that the ministry would print a book to acquaint readers with Islam and have it distributed among Swedish students. She justified her decision by saying, 'Swedish students should know that many of their fellow students are Muslims, and that their religion is tolerant and civilized.' This quotation is taken from the book, of which, 300,000 copies were printed.

Even those suspected of being members of Al-Qaeda, whom the Swedish intelligence estimated to be around 15 individuals, were not arrested. Patrik Juton, of the Swedish intelligence service, said they would not be arrested because they had not violated any Swedish law. Furthermore, some Swedish parties even demanded that the Swedish ambassador to Washington be recalled because the American administration refused the Swedish government's demand to release a Swedish citizen of Algerian origin held at Guantanamo Bay, the American military base in Cuba.

At the public level, thousands of Swedes began reading about Islam, and colleges of oriental and Islamic studies became congested. Those wishing to study at these colleges had to reserve their seats one year in advance. Hundreds of Swedes converted to Islam during the year 2001.

Sources in the Islamic community in Sweden at the time said: 'During the last few months, Islamic awareness among members of the community increased sharply. Interest in the news about the Arab and Islamic worlds also increased. In addition, attendance at mosques and Arab and Islamic schools rose considerably, as well as active participation in demonstrations supporting the Palestinian cause, where thousands of Swedes took part.'

The above factors motivated Muslims in Sweden to actively participate, by nominating themselves for the legislative elections of September 15, 2002, in order to defend Arab and Islamic issues in parliament.

Muslim relationship with the media improved, which prompted some large Swedish newspapers and magazines to dedicate some of their pages to Islam and Muslims. At the same time, the political and educated elite in Sweden are increasingly pressing for dialogue among civilizations, particularly between Islam and the West.

Chapter Three

The Palestinian Community in Sweden

Overview of the Community

Arab immigration to Sweden included a large number of Palestinian immigrants who came not only from Palestine, but from other countries too. The Palestinian presence in Sweden has always been linked to political factors. The occupation of Palestine, in 1948, by European Zionist Jews displaced a great number of Palestinians and forced them to seek refuge in neighboring countries like Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Most of them had to live in makeshift tents under partial care of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). A number of Palestinians, therefore, came to Europe through the United Nations. A great number of these were artisans chosen from those who studied at UNRWA schools and vocational training centers (VTC), like the Sibleen Center.

These students came to Sweden in the early 1960s seeking education. Most of them decided to stay after the outbreak of the 1967 war, when some of the Palestinians were forced to flee to Jordan, Egypt and other countries. Therefore, it can be said that, until the early 1970s, the Palestinian presence in Sweden was not large in number. Rather, it was limited to a few students and some men who were married to Swedish women. By the end of the 1970s, more people came from the West Bank, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and other countries, when they were deprived of their passports as a result of their political activity. In Sweden, they were registered according to the countries they arrived from. Those carrying Jordanian passports, for example, were registered as Jordanians and those who came from occupied Palestine were registered as Israelis.

The large Palestinian presence in Sweden is a product of the civil war in Lebanon, which forced a great number of them to immigrate to Europe, particularly to Denmark, Germany and Norway. These immigrants mainly possessed Lebanese or Syrian travel documents. In Sweden, they were granted residency permits and registered as stateless, without reference to the country they came from. After the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, about 300,000 Palestinians went to Jordan and the neighboring countries, and a number of them went to Sweden. In 1999, a Palestinian immigration wave from Gaza occurred and, for the first time, these new immigrants carried Palestinian passports.

Size and Distribution of the Community

According to the Central Statistics Office, in 2003 the official number of Palestinians in Sweden was placed at 4,746 (2,062 females and 2,684 males), all under the category of 'stateless persons'.

On January 1, 2004, the ministry of assimilation issued the following numbers of Palestinians: 5,265 individuals, of whom 1,508 were born in Palestine, 1,387 born in Sweden to parents born in Palestine, and 2,370 born outside Palestine. However, some community members believe the number of Palestinians to be around 40,000.

Most Palestinians are concentrated in the following cities and towns: Malmö, Uppsala, Göteborg, Stockholm, Landskrone, Helsingborg, Örebro, Södertälje and Yavli.

According to Ms. Dalal Abdul-Ghani, a Palestinian scholar at Växjö University, the number, based on the 2000 statistics she received from the department of immigration and municipalities, is about 10,000 Palestinians, distributed around major cities as follows:

1. Uppsala: located in the north and considered one of the largest centers for Palestinians in Sweden, where more than 2,500 of them reside
2. Malmö: in the south, is the second largest center for Palestinians, where more than 2,000 of them reside
3. Stockholm: (the capital) and its suburbs, located in the middle of Sweden, is home to more than 2,000 Palestinians.
4. Göteborg: located in the western part of Sweden, is home to over 1,000 Palestinians.

5. Sodertalje: located to the south of Stockholm; has about 120 Palestinians.

6. Vaxjo: is home to about 100 Palestinians.

In addition, there are about 1,000 to 2,000 Palestinians distributed throughout the rest of Sweden. According to these statistics, the number of Palestinians in Sweden is around 10,000.

Social, Economic and Educational Conditions of Palestinian Families

A number of positive and negative factors affect the Palestinian family. In order to understand these factors, a simplified presentation of the conditions under which the family lives in its new society is necessary.

▪ Work

It is regrettable to note that Palestinian immigrants do not try to learn the Swedish language, which, needless to say, would facilitate their chances of finding a good job. This is why the rate of unemployment among Palestinians is around 80 per cent, and the remaining 20 per cent work either in the food sector (restaurants), or in education and journalism.

▪ Education

Through schooling, which is considered the bedrock of children's education, Swedish values permeate Palestinian homes. At school, children encounter a new and permissive culture that is very different to theirs. Moreover, schooling is not confined to children, but encompasses all members of the family, as parents also go to school to learn Swedish.

Those who study the lifestyle of Palestinian communities would recognize their keen desire for learning. This characteristic, however, does not apply to Palestinians in Sweden. Most young people who finish their schooling go to work in the consumer sector and only a small part, not more than 1 per cent, make it through college. This is in spite of all available facilities such as free education and scholarships. Swedish officials ascribe this phenomenon to their weakness in Swedish, which is their families' responsibility, although the state bears part of the blame.

Integration Challenges and Their Impact on the Palestinian Family

In order to clarify the status of the Palestinian family, we shall draw a picture of the daily life of a Palestinian family and the way it interacts and reacts to the new

culture. This picture is based on interviews which Ms. Dalal Abdul-Ghani conducted with a number of Palestinians, and the responses she got to her questionnaire, as well as through her job as teacher of the Swedish language for immigrants, including Palestinians, at the University of Vaxjo.

When a Palestinian family is granted official residency, the parents go to school to learn Swedish. If they have children of school age, they go to school too with their parents to learn the language. When the husband's knowledge of the language reaches a suitable level, he goes to the labor office, where he is registered as unemployed and waits for a job appointment. However, it has been noticed that these men often refuse the jobs offered to them, preferring to stay at home or to frequent coffee shops. The wife, who also goes to school in order to avoid going to work, spends most of her time in social visits or watching Arab satellite TV channels. Children gradually start distancing themselves from their families whose old values begin to clash with their newly acquired habits and culture. This 'generation gap' between parents and children widens due to the father's frequent absence from home, and the mother's preoccupation with Arab TV channels, an activity the children cannot share due to their ignorance of the language. The natural result is often a strong clash between children and their parents on the one hand, and between the father and the mother, on the other. This clash often results in divorce.

Divorce rate among Palestinians in Sweden is very high. Here, we must examine what is known as 'mock divorce', a phenomenon that has spread in Sweden among immigrants. Mock divorce means that the married couple would report fabricated differences they are having to the authorities in order to become eligible for divorce under Swedish laws and thus receive an allowance which the state pays to the wife and children, on behalf of the husband. Naturally, the children become involved in this charade, especially when their parents force them to play the role of victims. Surprisingly, actual divorce subsequently happens due to conflicts which arise between the couple on how to share the money. In this case, custody of the children is given to the mother, and the father will, sometimes, be prevented from seeing his children, if the mother so wishes. In this case, Swedish society plays a role in resolving conflicts between families who resort to it, instead of solving their own differences through dialogue.

This change, whether positive or negative, is not acknowledged by family members. In their conflicts, they try to apply traditional norms to the new situations they find themselves in, which often lead to clashes between their culture and the host society and its laws. Here, language plays an important role. Weak command of the language often leads to misunderstanding of the culture they live in. When a woman, for example, hears her rights at court or at the family affairs office, she interprets this according to the culture and values she acquired in her country of origin. To her disadvantage, and that of her children, this often leads to adverse results which reflect negatively on the family. In contrast, it must be mentioned that some Palestinian families easily conform to

the new laws and environment and take advantage of them to improve their status in the host country.

Children in the Family

Children are the most affected, socially and psychologically, by family problems. The fact that they live in two different cultures, a conservative one at home and a permissive one outside, often results in confusion. This dilemma is made all the more difficult when children reach their teens. In families which are weakened by instability, children become more confused than they already are. In some cases, parents lose their children due to failure in maintaining healthy relationships with them. During periods of family distress, parents become prone to behaving in assertive and restrictive ways, at a time when their children are engaging with a society which highly values individual freedom. Children at this age and under these conditions, reject the restrictions imposed on them by their parents, especially since the latter do not set a good example for them to emulate. In Palestinian communities, the situation of the female child is even more difficult than that of the male. She often suffers inner conflict as she strives to please her parents while, at the same time, contemplating the ideas she receives at school and in society at large.

Common Characteristics of Palestinian Communities in Scandinavian Countries

The assimilation and integration of Palestinians in Scandinavia are both painful and slow because of the pessimistic view of the future. Unlike Germany and other West European countries, the presence of Palestinians in Scandinavia is relatively recent, with most of them arriving in the wake of the massacres of the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps and the outbreak of war in Lebanon in the early- and mid- 1980s.

The level of activities and the relationship dynamics between the communities and their leadership differ from one city to another and from one country to another. The main organizations that link these communities together are the Right-of-Return Alliance which held its fifth congress at Ghent in 2004, and the European Confederation for the Right of Return, which held its fourth meeting in Holland in the same year.

Palestinian Institutions in Sweden

Active Palestinian factions in Sweden are the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fateh), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). The Islamic movements have their own organizations that are separate from mainstream Palestinian political organizations. In certain activities, however, these Islamic

movements cooperate with the Palestinian factions, especially in soliciting signatures for petitions.

The following are the most important and active Palestinian institutions:

1. Union of Palestinian Societies in Sweden

After years of inactivity, leaders of this union are trying to initiate action by bringing together all active Palestinian organizations under one umbrella. Some organizations broke away from the union, like the Right of Return Alliance, but otherwise all organizations stationed in Stockholm are members of this union.

The first conference of this union was held in Malmo, on September 19, 2000. This conference was considered an important initiative for Palestinian societies especially since it put a number of activities aimed at enhancing the level of interaction and participation among community members in all fields on its agenda. On the political level, the conference confirmed its adherence to a just solution for the Palestinian problem based on international resolutions, especially UN Resolution No. 194, which guarantees the right of return of Palestinian refugees. This conference was no less important than the refugees conference which was held in Upsala in May 2000. The importance of the latter is that it caused a ripple effect, which culminated in a continental conference in Europe.⁸

Once every two years, the Union of Palestinian Societies in Sweden holds credible and transparent elections. These elections, however, are not held simultaneously in all Swedish cities and towns due to financial constraints.

2. The Right of Return Coalition

The coalition is especially active in Upsala and holds occasional activities in other cities, like Göteborg and Helsingborg

3. The Palestinian People's Society in Upsala

4. The Arab Cultural Club in Upsala

5. Jerusalem Club in Upsala

6. The Palestinian-Swedish Friendship Association in Yavli

7. *Sodertalje (Sudurtalya) Nexus*

8. The Palestinian Society

This society has branches in Örebro, Göteborg, Malmö, Helsingborg, Landskrona, Norrköping and Lund.

9. The Peace Club in Göteborg.
10. The Palestinian-Swedish Nexus in Malmö.
11. The Arab Club in Helsingborg.
12. The Justice Center in Göteborg.

The Relationship Between Palestinian Institutions and the Palestinian Community

The relationship between Palestinian institutions and the community in Sweden is positive and continuously improving. In the Upsala region, for example, there are 400 families registered with the Palestinian People's Society and 107 members at the Arab Cultural Club. Moreover, members of the union, and of other Palestinian societies, enjoy good reputations in the community for their productive activities. Credit is also due to the efforts of Swedish parliamentarian, Yvonne Ruweida, of the Greens Party, who plays an active role in keeping the Palestinian activists' image positive.

In spite of the numerous attempts of some members of the community to establish contacts with PLO factions, cooperation is lacking. There is also another problem the activists in Sweden face, namely the difficulty in communications due to the long distances between cities and towns. Finding a solution for this problem is now a priority for the community.

Non-Palestinian Institutions Working for the Cause⁹

1. Swedish-Palestinian Friendship Association

This society is a sister society of the Danish-Palestinian Friendship Association.

2. International Solidarity Movement (ISM)¹⁰
3. Freds Coalition
4. The Palestine Solidarity Association in Sweden (PGS)¹¹

This is a nonprofit NGO established in 1976 by the merger of a number of local Palestinian solidarity groups. It supports the Palestinian people's

struggle for independence and the establishment of a Palestinian state. The association views this struggle as a necessary tool for the realization of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.¹²The association grants financial support to numerous projects in the Middle East; some of these are:

- Rehabilitation of the handicapped at Al-Baddawi and Nahr al-Bared refugee camps in Lebanon
- Primary healthcare and education, offered by the Health Services School, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, in coordination with the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (UPMRC)
- Mental health services, offered through the Gaza Community for Mental Health Program (GCMHP); recreation activities for children and young people through Abu Dees Youth Club
- Library and computer services at Askar refugee camp, in Nablus
- Library service and day care for children and young people at Abu Dees
- A youth center at the Shatilla refugee camp in Beirut

These projects are financed by contributions made by the following two institutions:

- Palestine Fund (*Palistinainsmlingen*).
- Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

Swedish Political Parties and the Attitudes of Some Vis-à-Vis the Palestinian Cause and the Immigration Issue

The party organization system in Sweden has been stable since the 1920s. The following seven parties are represented in parliament:

- Social Democratic Labor Party (*Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet*)

This is a secular social party, considered to be the largest people's party which has governed Sweden for the last 100 years. It is very popular among immigrants and has a moderate foreign policy. Anna Lindh, the late foreign minister, who was supportive of the Palestinian cause, was one of its prominent leaders. She was expected to become the prime minister of Sweden in the forthcoming elections, had she not been

assassinated by an unknown assailant, on September 11, 2003. (For further information about her supportive stand regarding the Palestinian people's cause, refer to Appendix No. 1).

- The Conservative Party (*Moderaterna*)

This is the second largest party. Inclined to the right, it has some stances that are considered unfriendly to immigrants.

- The Liberal People's Party (*Folkpartiet*)

This is the third largest party. It has some hostile attitudes towards immigrants under the pretext that they cast their votes in favor of left-wing parties. It also has supportive stands towards Israel.

- The Left Party (*Nsterpartiet*)

This is the fourth largest party, with a Communist ideology and a Socialist policy. It supports the right of freedom for oppressed people, including the Palestinians.

- The Christian Democratic Party (*Krisdemokrater*)

Considered the fifth largest party, this is a religious right-wing party that supports Israel.

- The Greens (*Milji Partiet*)

The sixth largest party is a combination of the right- and left-wings. It supports the rights of people of the world to freedom and independence, opposes globalization and has supportive positions towards the Palestinian cause.

- The Center Party (*Centerpartiet*)

This is the farmers' party and is the least popular. It is always in the middle between the right and left regarding its attitudes vis-à-vis immigrants and foreign policy.

The Swedish Policy Towards Political Asylum Seekers from the Palestinian Occupied Territories

The Swedish Integration Council

Located in Norrköping with 100 employees, this council is chaired by its secretary general, Andreas Carlgren. The function of the council is to ensure the necessary

conditions to facilitate assimilation and integration of immigrants into Swedish society. The community's role in this respect is to rally activists to exert their influence on community members and take part in facilitating assimilation.

- Functions of the Integration Council

1. Taking responsibility for assuring support to new immigrants and facilitating their assimilation into Swedish society
2. Safeguarding the rights, duties and equal opportunities for all regardless of cultural or sectarian backgrounds
3. Fighting racial discrimination and xenophobia
4. Following up on the process of development with respect to racial and cultural diversity in society

Sweden today is renowned for its racial and cultural diversity which gives it a driving force that facilitates the process of development. Assimilation necessitates the unchaining of this force and utilizing it, by bringing about opportunities for all inhabitants to participate in social development. In order for this to be feasible, an effective administration is vital for long-term change. The Integration Council, therefore, (by its own description) forms a general authority, which overlooks development and makes use of new data, with the cooperation of strategic participants.

- Duties of the Integration Council

The duties of the Integration Council are carried out by the following three departments:

1. The analysis department collects, analyzes, evaluates and organizes important data related to the immigrant's integration.
2. The development department distributes data to employees at different levels and takes part in identifying, initiating and coordinating systematic support for initiatives related to integration.
3. The administration department manages and organizes information, revises the budget, and makes strategic contacts. In addition to the above, a department for support staff is available to assist the general manager.

Palestinian Refugees

Sweden, like Denmark and Norway, adopts positive policies towards refugees in general, including the Palestinians. Today, however, this position is beginning to change in all of Scandinavia. It has become almost impossible to grant refuge to Palestinian refugees, especially those coming from Lebanon.

In February 2002, 10 Palestinians, officially categorized as 'stateless', went on a hunger strike at a church in Sweden to protest the authorities' delay in considering asylum applications submitted by hundreds of Palestinians. The Assimilation Council had objected to granting them asylum on the grounds that Palestinians belonged to a state to which they can return, a condition which makes asylum seekers ineligible for asylum. A few months later, on November 29, 2002, the council changed its position and declared that political asylum shall be granted to those coming from the West Bank and Gaza due to ongoing violence there. Prior to this, the Swedish government had no clear guidelines for granting asylum to about 600 Palestinians, who already had been admitted to the country. The following is quoted from the council's resolution:

'The present situation did not improve during the past six months. There was a state of war and violence, and a great restriction on citizens' mobility, together with bad health conditions. This situation does not seem to be temporary' (referring to Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip).¹³

The Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH)

On January 19, 2006, the Swedish government decided to extend its participation in the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) for an additional six-month period. Swedish participation in this mission began in 1997, alongside delegations from Norway, Italy, Denmark, Turkey and Switzerland, with the aim of reducing tension between the feuding parties.¹⁴

The Nexus of Palestinian Communities in Scandinavian Countries

The founding committee for the Nexus of Palestinian Communities in Scandinavian Countries convened meetings in Göteborg November 19-21, 2006. A spirit of brotherhood, mutual trust and serious intent to establish a nexus of Palestinian communities in Scandinavian countries prevailed during these meetings. The nexus would serve as a gateway through which Palestinians could express their political, cultural and social aspirations.

The participants agreed to issue a draft of the principal statute of the consultative council (parliament) for the nexus. Sabri Hajeer, from Sweden, was elected as general coordinator to the Nexus of Palestinian Communities in Scandinavian Countries; Nedal Hamad, the Palestinian journalist, and president of the

Palestinian community in Norway, was elected as spokesman of the nexus. The representative of the Palestinian community in Denmark was unable to attend.

Summary

Muslims in Sweden have been tarnished with the traditional image of the 'other', especially when politicians and journalists try to isolate them for being 'different'. Within this framework, as it used to be in the 1980s, many public arguments are now focused on Muslims, as indicated by the controversy which arises when the construction of new Islamic schools or mosques is proposed. Some extremists often try to link Muslims to violence and terrorism in order to foster their stance and polarize public opinion.

Generally speaking, Muslims in Sweden do not engage in politics. Some of them, however, are members of the Social Democratic Party and occupy some seats in parliament. The reason behind having Muslim members in Swedish parties is, sometimes, to show tolerance and moderation towards minorities and immigrant communities, or to facilitate assimilation and avoid clashes with these communities.

A short time ago, Muslim communities founded a common base and established links with the Church of Sweden and the mosaic communities, as well as with some followers of the Free Churches of Sweden. Therefore, a means of meeting and having discussions with these groups became possible. Sweden, both officially and publicly, denounced any persecution of its Muslim citizens as a result of the September 11 attacks against the United States. When Muslims in Sweden became anxious and worried about acts of hostility and racism, Swedish leaders hastened to reassure them through messages in the various Swedish media outlets. Moreover, the Swedish authorities continued to provide financial aid to Arab and Islamic schools and mosques.

Swedish Foreign Minister Anna Lindh made a decision that the ministry would print a book to acquaint readers with Islam and to have it distributed among Swedish students. She justified her decision by saying, 'Swedish students should know that many of their fellow students are Muslims, and that their religion is tolerant and civilized.'

Palestinians came to Sweden in the early 1960s seeking education. Most of them decided to stay there after the outbreak of the 1967 war when some Palestinians were forced to flee to Jordan, Egypt and other countries. Therefore, it can be said that, until the early 1970s, the Palestinian presence in Sweden was not large in number. Rather, it was limited to a few students and some men who were married to Swedish women.

The large subsequent Palestinian presence in Sweden was a product of the civil war in Lebanon which forced a great number of them to immigrate to Europe, particularly to Denmark, Germany and Norway. These immigrants mainly possessed Lebanese or Syrian travel documents. In Sweden, they were granted residency permits and registered as stateless, without reference to the country they came from. After the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, about 300,000 Palestinians went to Jordan and neighboring countries, and a number of them went to Sweden. In 1999, an influx of Palestinian immigrants from Gaza was seen, and for the first time, these new immigrants carried Palestinian passports.

In Sweden, when an immigrant is granted a permit of residence, he/she automatically becomes entitled to all rights enjoyed by Swedish citizens except the right to participate in parliamentary elections and military service. These rights are afforded only after naturalization, which, in turn, is acquired after the immigrant has resided in the country for at least three to four years.

Palestinians in Sweden encounter many social and economic problems which render assimilation into the host society very difficult and riddled with obstacles. Because of the fact that Arab and Islamic traditions urge children and women to be obedient to their fathers or husbands, some clashes between these values and those of the Swedish society occasionally surface.

On January 1, 2004, the ministry of assimilation totaled the number of Palestinians at 5,265 individuals, of whom 1,508 were born in Palestine, 1,387 were born in Sweden (to parents born in Palestine), and 2,370 were born outside Palestine. However, some community members believe the number of Palestinians to be around 40,000.

Most Palestinians are concentrated in the cities and towns of Upsala, Malmo, Götterborg, Stockholm, Landskrone, Helsinborg, Omio, Sodertalje (Sudurtalya) and Yavli.

According to a Palestinian scholar at the University of Vaxjo, Ms. Dalal Abdul-Ghani, the number, based on the 2000 statistics she received from the department of immigration and municipalities, is about 10,000 Palestinians.

A study of the lifestyle of Palestinian communities would recognize their keen desire for learning. This characteristic, however, does not apply to Palestinians in Sweden.

Most young people who finish their schooling go to work in the consumer sector and only a small part, not more than 1 per cent, make it through college. This is in spite of all available facilities, like free education and scholarships. Swedish officials ascribe this phenomenon to their weakness in the Swedish language, which is the responsibility of the family to begin with, although the state bears part of the blame.

It must be noted that the lack of command of the Swedish language hampers the individual's chances of finding a good job. This is why the rate of unemployment among Palestinians is around 80 per cent, with the remaining 20 per cent working either in the food sector (restaurants), or in some jobs in education and journalism.

There are a number of active Palestinian institutions in Sweden. These include: the Union of Palestinian Societies in Sweden, the Right of Return Coalition, the Palestinian People's Society, the Arab Cultural Club and the Jerusalem Club, which are all located in Upsala; the Palestinian-Swedish Friendship Association in Yavli, the Palestinian-Swedish Nexus in Malmo, and the Palestinian Society, which has many branches. Palestinian societies enjoy good reputations in the community for their productive activities. There is, however, a problem that the activists in Sweden face, namely the difficulty in communicating with peers due to the long distances between cities and towns. Finding a solution to this problem is now a high priority of the community.

Appendices

Appendix No. 1

An overview of Anna Lindh's support of the Palestinian people's struggle and criticism of Israeli occupation policies.

This are summarized in the following points:

- On April 3, 2003, Anna Lindh demanded that the European Union sever all relations with Israel in protest of Israel's oppressive measures against the Palestinian people.
- She asked President George W. Bush to stop his unconditional support for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, in order to prevent inflammation of the status quo in the Middle East.
- She repeatedly asserted that the only solution to the Middle East crisis lies in putting an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, or else all parties will be held hostage by the ongoing conflict.
- She played a critical role in having the European Union adopt a policy toward the late Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, different from that of the USA.
- She repeatedly emphasized the importance of Arafat as a partner in the peace process, refusing American claims that he abets 'terrorism'.

- She strongly objected to the war against Iraq and warned against the dangers of changing the regime without international support.
- She demanded that the Middle East, including Israel, be a region free of weapons of mass destruction.
- She demanded that all UN resolutions on Palestine be enforced.
- She supported Palestinian and Kurdish demands for independence.
- She openly criticized Sharon's suppressive policies towards Palestinians under occupation and in an interview in October 2001 she declared, 'Our stance is firm and clear: Israeli settlements must be dismantled and an independent Palestinian State must be established. Israel must withdraw from the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza, and must end its policy of extrajudicial assassinations. All this must be done immediately.' When asked if Sweden was expected to hold discussions with Sharon's government despite his unprecedented war crimes record, she answered: 'I agree with this opinion (on Sharon). It is not plausible that we have discussions with Sharon's government. There will not be any discussions on our part'.
- In June 2002, the youth faction of the Social Democratic Party filed a legal suit against Sharon for committing war crimes and actions that violate international law. At that time, Lindh declared that she understood there was 'a feeling of bitterness and anger because the Israeli government is guilty of violating international law. Sometimes I feel very angry because of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, to the extent that I am drawn to kick the dustbin in my office or throw things around'. She also called Sharon a 'maniac', and announced on Swedish TV that she would boycott Israeli goods .
- In May 2002, she said that one of her ultimate objectives is to 'mobilize Israeli citizens against Sharon's military policies; for the Israeli government has chosen a path that will lead the state into isolation'. She also criticized the American president's neglect of Arafat, considering this policy a reward for Sharon's aggression. She told an American broadcasting station that she was 'extremely worried about the American stand', and believes that 'designating Arafat as a terrorist is both wrong and improper'. This is likely to 'completely thwart the peace process and lead to a savage war in the Middle East', she stated .
- In a meeting of the EU ministers in Italy, a day before her assassination, Lindh blamed the USA and Israel for the collapse of the Road Map and the resignation of Mahmood Abbas as Prime Minister.
- The writer thinks that the assassination of Anna Lindh falls within the cycle of crimes against Swedish leaders supporting the Palestinian struggle since 1948. In 1948, the year of *Al-Nakba* (Palestinian catastrophe), Count Bernadotte, the

Swedish UN Mediator, was assassinated near Jerusalem by the Zionist Stern gang, which was then led by Yitzhak Shamir. Similarly in 1986, Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, who was pushing for recognition of the PLO and putting an end to the 1967 Israeli occupation of Arab territories, was assassinated.

Appendix No. 2

Quotations from an article by Minister of Foreign Affairs Leila Freivalds , published in *Svenska Dagbladet* on November 8, 2003.

'Since I became foreign minister a few weeks ago, one question has dominated my thoughts more than anything else. What can we do, as Swedes, and in cooperation with other members of the international community, to help Israelis and Palestinians conclude a peaceful solution that is just and lasting?'

'I believe that there is unanimity on the final goal, namely two democratic states – an Israeli and a Palestinian – living side by side in peace, in accordance with Security Council Resolution No. 242. The two sides must cooperate to find means of developing their societies without recourse to violence or confrontations.'

'What is difficult for the two sides to agree on are the necessary steps needed to achieve this, in addition to following through with the Road Map and other plans they receive from third parties. My position is clear and well known: We must take advantage of all opportunities in order to put an end to the state of violence and mistrust. No effort must be spared.'

'Anna Lindh made clear the Swedish government's stance on the Middle East conflict. My aspiration is to emphasize that viewpoint with similar clarity, and to take part in launching new initiatives whenever we have the opportunity to do so. The important points in my view are:

- We should continue to condemn violations of international law, committed by the two sides, or by persons who claim to represent either side.
- Acquisition of territories by force is not acceptable and Israeli occupation must come to an end. The policy of settlement and building of the so-called 'security wall' in occupied territories violate international law and do not bring peace to Israel.
- The right of self-determination, peaceful solution of conflicts, and respect for human rights must apply to all.

- We must clearly condemn acts of violence committed against civilians, whether Palestinians or Israelis. If Palestinian suicidal operations and other terrorist actions against innocent Israelis continue, the people of Israel will not be able to live in peace and harmony with their Palestinian neighbors. The persons responsible for such acts greatly harm the Palestinian cause.

- We must demand that both Israelis and Palestinians exert great efforts to break the vicious circle of violence. These efforts must include a mutual and unconditional truce, together with security cooperation and solid measures to prevent terrorist attacks and put an end to extra-judicial assassinations.

- Israel is the stronger part in this conflict. Therefore, it bears the responsibility of preventing the deterioration of the status quo. It should exercise self-restraint and take measures that may facilitate daily life for Palestinians and stop exposing them to insulting measures. Israel must commit itself to the duties agreed upon in order to foster hope among the Palestinians that a peaceful solution is coming and occupation will be terminated.

- The Palestinian Authority, in return, must bear its responsibilities and use all available legal measures to end terrorism and create a feeling of trust and hope. The Palestinian President, Yasser Arafat, should facilitate the formation of a strong and independent government, within the Palestinian Authority.

- Both Arafat and Sharon should allow Palestinian political leaders to initiate blanket reforms and undertake measures to keep the peace process.

- We should implement the stick-and-carrot approach in our efforts to influence the course of events. The European Union is studying the possibility of finding additional means to exert pressure on both sides, because they both enjoy good and strong relationships with the Union. The EU suggestions will be given to the Israelis directly during our meeting with them December 17 and 18, 2003, as per the cooperation agreement signed between the Union and Israel.

- There are also ongoing negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and the EU. We should always be open to new initiatives, like the recent initiative Geneva Accords adopted by Yasser Abd-Rabbo and Yossi Beilin, both NGO activists, and both known in Sweden for their great efforts in the peace process.

- The Geneva Accords is a detailed document for a final possible agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. It shows that both parties are ready to tackle complicated issues, and accept necessary mutual concessions. Although this initiative does not dispense of official diplomatic negotiations, Sweden should support all positive efforts that work on finding a peaceful and just solution.
- Abd-Rabbo and Beilin were invited by the Olof Palme International Center to visit Sweden, and I am looking forward to meeting them and discussing possible means of granting them our support. In addition, we must support the efforts of the international community in assisting both parties to realize the existence of a real partner for peace on either side. The responsibility of starting such discussions lies on both parties.
- Here comes the strong and unified role of the European Union that the members adopted when the Road Map was presented and supported by the Quartet Committee, composed of the UN, the USA, Russia and the EU. We need to urge the USA to play a stronger role, because it is responsible for implementing the two-state solution, an issue confirmed by President Bush in June 2002.
- Moreover, there are other opportunities that we, in Sweden, should make use of. During King Abdullah of Jordan's last visit to Sweden, we agreed on exploring effective means for Jordan and Sweden to work together. Although each of us has his own historical and geographical motives to participate in finding a solution to this intractable conflict, both governments are united in their efforts to put into action a joint plan to bring peace to the region.
- I expect to maintain direct contact with the Jordanian Foreign Minister in the near future to discuss means of cooperation, aiming at coming up with suggestions for reviving peace negotiations. At the end of the day, the issue affects the lives of individuals and whole nations, the right of children and young people of Israel and Palestine to live in societies free of violence, terrorism and threat to their peace and freedom, and to be able to communicate with each other in an atmosphere of security and stability. We bear a duty to strive to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East for the sake of future generations.

Appendix No. 3

Statistics on the Number of Refugees in Sweden and Their Nationalities

The statistics included in this study give a general idea of the number of refugees in Sweden from various countries in the world. Two points must be kept in mind when examining these statistics:

1. Most of the refugees arriving from Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and Israel, in addition to those categorized as 'stateless' or 'other', are actually Palestinians.

2. Some refugees arriving from Arab countries dispose of their official papers upon arrival and claim to be Palestinians. This is due to the facilities that European countries grant to the Palestinian refugees.

Endnotes

1 Dalal Abdul-Ghani: *Caught Between Two Worlds: Palestinian Refugees in Sweden*, Vaxjo University, Sweden. In agreement with the author of this article, PII has quoted whole paragraphs from this study to avoid losing important and relevant information.

2 This chapter is a paraphrasing of the study 'Sweden' by Jonas Otterbeck, from the website: www.euro-islam.info.

3 Public schools currently receive 85 per cent of the total government funding.

4 This number is taken from the CIA World Factbook website:
www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sw.html

5 From a study titled: 'Muslims in Sweden' from the Swedish Immigration Center website: www.emz-berlin.de/projekte/pdf/Muslims_in_Schweden.pdf

6 Ibid.

7 This section is a direct translation of an article by Yehya Abu Zakaria, entitled: 'Swedish Muslims are better off after the September attacks', found on the website: www.islamonline.net.

8 This section is a direct translation of some paragraphs from the study: 'Palestinian Refugees in the Heart of Mass Movements', by Ramzi Rabah, from the website of Ar-Ru'yah Magazine.

9 These organizations do not have Palestinian members.

10 The movement's website is: www.ism-sweden.org

11 The association's website is: www.palestinagrupperna.se/english.htm

12 This section is taken from an article by Mahmood Ad-Dibi'ee, entitled 'Foreign residents have the right to vote in municipality, parliamentary, and regional elections, from the website of Sabeel Newspaper, on 29/3/2005.

13 From an AFP article called 'Stateless Palestinians Launch Hunger Strike' written on 11/4/2002, and found on the website: www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/6229/a/56543

14 From an editorial report published by the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on 19/1/2006, and found on the website: www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/6229/a/56543

15 From an article by Christopher Bollyn, entitled 'The Strange Death of Anna Lindh – Did the Mossad Assassinate Anna Lindh?', American Free Press, 26/9/2003.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.