

## **Palestine International Institute**

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

### **The Palestinian Community In France**

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## Foreword

The Palestine International Institute (PII) pioneers in producing studies by researchers in the Diaspora, in coordination with the Institute, under the broad category, 'Palestinians in the 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 France'. This study falls under the category of 'Horizontal Studies' series which examines the emergence and evolution of communities and tackles issues related to the origins, structure, makeup, size problems and challenges 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 Nema 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 the activists of the Palestinian communities in the Diaspora.

Before scrutinizing the data, statistics and information, we wish to indicate that this study presents academic insight based on scientific and objective research. This is one of the goals for which PII was 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 a virgin territory, where documents and sources of information on these subjects, in both Arab and foreign libraries, are virtually nonexistent, including centers that specialize in Palestinian issues, and the Internet.
- 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 countries that have hosted Palestinians. Despite all said, we do acknowledge the fact 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 make sure 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 the research is being conducted are difficult.

The time to pickup the fruits of our efforts is near. 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 some facts and data that were previously unknown to those who have no access to such information.

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

As'ad Abdul-Rahman,  
Executive Director

### **Acknowledgement**

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Thanks are due to all PII staff, including researchers and technical support, for their hard work and dedication, which is the reason why this study has been produced with useful content and in proper form. Without their efforts this study would not have been possible.

### **The French Political System: A Synopsis**

France is a democratic republic whose political system is based on a written constitution which was approved by referendum in 1958. According to the constitution, the president of the republic is chosen by direct elections every five years. The president presides over a cabinet, commands the armed forces, signs treaties, and directs foreign policy. He is also empowered to dissolve the national assembly and, in certain emergency situations, may assume full power. The president appoints the prime minister, but because France's political system is a hybrid of presidential and parliamentary elements, the majority in the national assembly traditionally determines the party or political coalition from which the president must choose a prime minister. This has occasionally resulted in the head of state (the president) and the head of government (the prime minister) coming from opposing parties, an arrangement known as 'co-habitation'. After center-right President Jacques Chirac was reelected to the presidency in May 2002, and a new

center-right party – the UMP – won control of the national assembly the following month, the previous five-year co-habitation came to an end.

The constitution provides for a bicameral parliament consisting of a national assembly and a senate. National assembly deputies are elected by universal suffrage for five-year terms. Under current rules, senators are indirectly elected for a nine-year term, with one-third of the senate being renewed every three years.

The French political spectrum includes numerous political parties. Key parties from right to left, include: the extreme-right National Front (FN); the center-right Union for a Popular Movement (UMP); the centrist Union for French Democracy (UDF); the center-left Socialist Party (PS); the Greens (Verts) and the French Communist Party (PCF). French political parties have undergone considerable changes recently with the formation, beginning in late 2002, of a single larger party – the UMP – a fusion of the new-Gaullist Rally for the Republic, the economic-reform party Liberal Democracy and some members from the centrist UDF. Both the Communists and the Greens lost significant support in the 2002 parliamentary elections.

This brief insight into the French political system is both instrumental and relevant before we proceed further in our study of Arab – and especially Palestinian – communities in France.

## **Chapter One**

### **Salient Milestones in the Community**

Palestinians, representing one of the smallest Arab gatherings<sup>1</sup> in France hail mainly from refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan or the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Most members of the Palestinian community are either students, graduates, laborers or white-collar employees. Their economic background in general is relatively good. Despite this, their remittances channeled to the West Bank are relatively meager. This is due to the political uncertainty that still engulfs the Palestinian territories and the mindset of individual entrepreneurship they have been brought up to respect and embrace in France.

The Sabra and Shatilla refugee camp massacres in Lebanon in 1982 resulted in advocacy committees affiliated with the Palestinian left attracting various sectors of French of Arab descent supported by groups of Maoists and the General Union of Palestinian Students in France (GUPS). As a result, the Solidarity movement was established.

The Palestinian community in France has gone to lengthy measures to unite in gatherings and enjoys a high degree of coordination among its various activities. The community has spared no efforts to establish an effective network to help build and organize a competent and active Palestinian and Arab community. A temporary-member committee was set up to prepare the way for a convention which would be entrusted with establishing policy and a unified plan of action to encompass all Palestinian activities. The convention

set up a coordinative-confederate committee of representatives of all organizations with each member being assigned specific responsibilities.

## **Most Important Palestinian Migrations Into France**

- ▶ The first wave occurred in 1948 when a limited number of Palestinian families emigrated to France. Most of them soon left France.
- ▶ The second wave took place during the 1970s and comprised mainly politicized Palestinian students.
- ▶ The third wave occurred during the 1980s especially on the heels of Lebanon's civil war and the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla. The majority came from Syria and Lebanon, while few came from Palestine.
- ▶ The fourth wave arrived in France in the middle and late 1980s on the heels of the first Palestinian *Intifada* and continued well into the early 1990s. The immigrants came as tourists and settled in the country in contravention of French laws. They took advantage of the then-lax French asylum and immigration rules, especially the law of birth place-country.
- ▶ The fifth wave came on the heels of the second Palestinian *Intifada* in 2000. The presence of relatives in France facilitated their immigration. The same happened with the Palestinian communities in Germany and England where waves of immigration to these two countries occurred much earlier.

France is not a favorable destination for Palestinians due to cultural reasons as the French are Gallic in nature and also due to stringent immigration and residence measures.

Three consecutive generations of Palestinians in France are bound together by the common denominator of national identity which ought to be strengthened by teaching history, geography, Arabic language, heritage and the Palestinian national struggle for the restitution of just rights. Emphasis on national education is not feasible due to mixed marriages and the lack of Arabic schools.

This places a greater responsibility on Palestinian societies and their abilities to influence these generations within the context of national upbringing. Lack of required funds exacerbates this disparity as work in such societies is voluntary and restricted to a few unqualified—albeit enthusiastic—individuals.

## **The Distribution of the Palestinian Community and its Composition**

The actual number of Palestinians in France and other European countries cannot be estimated with any degree of certainty. This is due to the fact that all newcomers are registered according to their country of origin like Jordan or Lebanon. This also applies to Palestinians hailing from Israel. Figures of the number of Palestinians in France differ considerably according to the source. In a certain study, their numbers were estimated at 5,000, while in another based on figures released by the French ministry of the interior, their numbers are 1,000-1,200 distributed throughout various French cities.

According to figures received from the General Union of Palestinian Students in a survey conducted in 2000, student numbers range between 300-400, one-third of whom were females hailing from wealthy families.

Some Palestinian students, especially those arriving from the West Bank and Gaza, are awarded limited annual scholarships – 20 scholarships at most – for post-graduate programs, mainly in law and business administration. The Palestinian student body in France is unlikely to establish a social network.

### **The Beginning of Palestinian Activity in France**

Prior to 1967, Palestinian activity in France was negligible. It was after the Sabra and Shatilla massacres in 1982 that activity among the Palestinians started to increase. A group of six Palestinian factions with leftist leanings began to set up solidarity committees to attract French individuals, and Arabs of French descent, to the Palestinian cause.

The Palestinian presence in France began its actual activity after the battle of Al-Karama in the Jordan valley in 1968. This battle is considered a milestone in the history of Palestinian resistance, which began to gain momentum at Arab and European levels especially among leftist circles. France began to witness a gradual surge in pro-Palestinian media activity. It was after Al-Karama that Fateh, the leader of Palestinian resistance, made its debut in the international arena. Mohammed Abu Maizer was chosen to be Fateh's representative in Europe. France was chosen to be the starting point for such activity. Algiers, with its vast presence in France financed Palestinian activity and gave it the political cover it needed. The Algerian community in France is the Arabs' largest and most influential community and is overseen by a team of officials who work independently of the embassy. President Boumediene anointed Mohammed Yazid, who is known for his numerous relations in France, to acquaint Abu Maizer with French political circles, especially during the initial stage of this activity.

According to Abu Maizer, the Palestinian presence in France began in 1968 with only 52 Palestinians distributed throughout the various regions; most of them were students. Around the same time, the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS) began its activity in Europe. The union was headed by Dahoud Talhami, a member of Fateh who later broke ranks and joined the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP). Among other activists in the union were Patrick Lama and Ibrahim Al-Sous, Munir Al-Malki and his brothers who were later identified as businessmen.

In those days, France was home to various activities of Arab political parties. The Palestinian political presence was mainly restricted to Fateh. The presence of other factions was not noticeable, except for some Arab nationalists like Fayed Malas. The Egyptian presence in France was affected by, and consisted mainly of, Communists like Anwar Abdul Malek, Lutfalla Sulaiman Auni Korik, Eric Rolo and others. Palestinian activity in Germany preceded that in France because the community in Germany, mainly students and workers, was much larger and more deeply rooted.

The first Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) office in Paris was established in 1969 and presided over by the late Ezziddin Qalaf. The Arab League appointed 14 of the PLO representatives including the late Qalaf whose offices were inside the Arab League head office in Paris. Similarly Dahood Barakat was appointed as its representative in Geneva, Said Hamam in London, Abdulla Ifranji in Bonn and Sa'dat Hasan in New York. All enjoyed official and semi-official representative status at that time.

On the political level, in 1968, the late Mahmoud Al-Hamshari assumed responsibility for student activity, while all non-student activity was left to Abu Maizer. Support for Palestinian student activity came mainly from North African Arabs. The Arab Action for Palestine committee comprised Arabs of all political factions and it was through this committee that support for the Palestinians was channeled. The National Workers Union, headed at that time by the late Mahdi bin Baraka and Mohammed Al-Basri, was especially active in this field. Arab intellectuals in Paris went out of their way to support the Palestinian presence from its early beginnings. Special credit goes to Farouk Mardam Bey and Mohammed Malas from Syria, Faqih Al-Basri from Morocco, Masoud Al-Shabi from Tunisia and Anwar Abdul Malek and Lutfalla Sulaiman from Egypt. Palestinian officials were able to forge strong relations with the French left, especially the Communists, who considered the Palestinian resistance a national liberation movement fighting imperialism. Delegations from Fateh and other factions participated in some French partisan congresses.

## **Salient Features of the Palestinian Community**

Despite the fact Palestinian migration to France is relatively recent and limited in number, it represents a unique prototype when compared to other Palestinian communities in other European countries. It is, considered an integrated, if not fully assimilated, community. This is mainly due to inherent structural weaknesses. The French Jacobin system<sup>2</sup> neglected the community in the beginning, where programs for assimilation were totally absent. This was contrary to official discourse which was much hyped only during public and local elections.

The Palestinian community in France was both limited in number and weak in activity, except for some students, graduates and white-collar workers.<sup>3</sup> France was not a final destination for most Palestinians but rather a transit point for other European destinations such as Germany, England and

Scandinavia. Except for limited French and Islamic support, solidarity with the community was confined and elitist in nature and came mainly from Arab opposition groups who were active in France. The social composition of the Palestinian community plays a significant role in the process of social interaction. The community consists of two main groups, 'avec papiers' and 'sans papiers' – those possessing legal documents and those who don't.

This had a great effect on naturalization and the types of residence. Three categories can be easily discerned: fully naturalized French citizens; legal residents – whether permanent or student; and illegal residents in the country.

During the 1990s, a number of domestic factors led to a reduction in French advocacy for the Palestinian cause. Foremost among these is the conversion of French student unions from political unions into student cooperative societies. This conversion changed the nature and activity of the unions from political to for-profit utilitarian societies.

The small Palestinian community in France, as in Switzerland, Belgium and Sweden, experienced a number of obstacles and various economic, political and social repercussions which were barely felt due to the relative ease of its assimilation into French society, unlike the large Moroccan community. The new generation of Palestinians in France was completely assimilated in, and absorbed by, French society unlike their forefathers who still harbored nostalgic feelings towards their old customs and mother tongue.

The indulgence in the French culture of consumption facilitated the process of assimilation and made it less painful. Easy assimilation into French society had no adverse effect on youth involvement in political activity. Israeli atrocities in the occupied territories led to an increase in their national involvement and collective memory.

In a different vein, half the children under 12 do not read Arabic and two-thirds do not write it. This is mainly due to the fact that Arabic is not taught in French public schools. As a result, inter-communal relations became less tenacious. Those who had lived in France for over 25 years had become totally assimilated into French society.

Of all Palestinians in France, 20% are categorized as businessmen. The remaining percentage is employed by the public and private sectors. Few of them found work through Palestinian or Arab communities.

### **Relations Between the Community and the PLO Office**

On various occasions, differences between Palestinian communities and PLO offices began to emerge. The tensions which arose between the communities and PLO representative offices were mainly due to changes introduced in the political program of the PLO. To some, these changes were considered a serious renunciation of Palestinian inalienable rights, especially the right of

return. Lack of discernable progress on the ground and failure to stop the expansion of Israeli settlements only helped deepen the divide.

## **Historical Legacy of Palestinians in France and its Reflections on Generations**

The following points are highlighted in this context:

- ▶ The Palestinian Diaspora helped form a national identity which could be best described as 'suffering'.
- ▶ Palestinians immigrated to France mainly seeking education or employment, and some out of hopelessness.
- ▶ The three generations of immigrants living in France bear one common denominator as demonstrated by minimal Palestinian national allegiance. Feelings of belonging can be augmented by teaching history, geography, Arabic and culture to new generations.
- ▶ Older generations view themselves as 'returnees' and not as permanent refugees in France.
- ▶ Palestinians in their Diaspora are intimately intertwined with their history and geography as demonstrated by their political discourse. Palestinians harbor a deep sense of nostalgia and pain for injustices that have befallen them. The long overdue implementation of the right of return exists as a constant daily reminder. They preserve and tenaciously cling to their culture and identity.
- ▶ The second and third generations of Palestinians did not experience the life of refugees in the camps. Language and identity are insufficient to return them to the Palestinian mainstream.
- ▶ Palestinian fragmentation, individual allegiances and divergence of interests have had a negative impact on the community. However, these factors still allow a great degree of social connection and feelings of belonging.
- ▶ National feelings, marches and confrontations have had an effect on French politicians to follow a more balanced policy between Jewish and Palestinian demands.
- ▶ Members of the Palestinian community share mutual interests such as a feeling of national belonging, history, culture, traditions and a common language.
- ▶ A considerable number of Palestinians view themselves and the Diaspora within a framework of a strategy of resistance and as a

defense mechanism to preserve identity and resist attempts of alienation and estrangement.

- ▶ Some do not view themselves as an integral part of the host country and distance themselves from assimilation programs. They continue living in the host country without completely assimilating into it, a situation that causes them a degree of psychological trauma.
- ▶ Palestinians in the Diaspora lack feelings of security and stability.

## **Political Organizations and Societies within the Palestinian Community**

The community maintains close relations with Arab, French and Islamic organizations.

### ▶ Political Organizations

1. Fateh is the largest of all Palestinian organizations in France. The first PLO liaison office was established in 1969.
2. The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) maintain good relations with French left-wing factions.
3. Other Palestinian organizations include the Arab Liberation Front which is an outgrowth of, and financed by the Ba'ath Party in Iraq. Its influence was greatly weakened following the removal of Ba'ath Party rule in Iraq.
4. The branch of the General Union of Palestinian Students reflects national unity among the different Palestinian factions and maintains good relations with other student organizations.
5. In this context, the central committee of the French Communist Party, trade unions and the French left have all played an important role in finding partners for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. To the French, the Palestinian problem is a by-product of the June 1967 war.

### ▶ Journal of Palestinian Studies

The journal encourages Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. Its editor in chief is Elias Sunber; other prominent figures include Kameel Mansour and Ellan Ha Levy (an Israeli Jew).

### ▶ Official Offices

These include the PLO's office and its delegation to UNESCO. These two bodies were more active in official, rather than in public activities.

### ► The General Union of Palestinian Students

- This is the most important Palestinian student body operating in France and on other international scenes. Through it, the first Palestinian representative offices in France were established.
- The union lost much of its influence in the post-Oslo Accords era, but reemerged in 1999. The union faces many difficulties in organization.
- Activities are overseen by Ahmed Dari, a member of the union's administrative committee. The union assisted in establishing the Solidarity movement.

### ► Societies that Cater to the Community

These include the following:

#### 1. Franco-Palestinian Societies for Peace

Headed by Ashraf Sha'th

#### 2. Forum Palestine

Established and run by Naji-Al-Khatib

#### 3. Franco-Palestinian Cultural Exchange Society

Established and run by Sulaiman Abu Odeh

#### 4. University Graduates Movement

Among its objectives is the boycott of some French universities of their Israeli counterparts.

#### 5. Migrants in Suburbs Movement (MIB)

This movement is a strong supporter of solidarity with the Palestinians and strives to achieve social justice for impoverished inhabitants in French suburbs.

#### 6. Franco-Palestinian Medical Aid Society

This society played an important role in establishing the Solidarity movement with the Palestinians and other similar societies such as the Arab Workers Movement and the Forward Movement.

#### 7. Sons of Palestine Society

Co-founded by Akram Tahboub, the society is only active in Paris.

#### 8. Justice for Palestine Movement

This group was established as an initiative of Waleed Attallah. It includes activists and founders of various labor unions, political gatherings and other societies. It established five branches in one year: Marseilles, Paris, Montpellier, Nier and Bayonne. The Palestinian Community Society is still devising the appropriate means and ways on how to coordinate and unite their mutual efforts officially.

The name of this city is :[1j]Comment incorrect. Nice? Lyon?

#### 9. Jafra Society

Headed by Basil Abu Hamid

#### 10. The Palestinian Community Society in Northern France

Dr. Issam Shahrour and Dr. Nabil Hajjar established the society in 1981. Attempts are under way to invigorate it especially among the second and third generations. The society aims to facilitate assimilation of its members into French society and promote friendship between the French and Palestinians.

#### 11. The Palestinian Community Society in France 4

The society was established in 1997 through an initiative of a brotherhood in Montpellier, with branches in Paris, Toulouse, Bordeaux, Lyon and Grenoble. Among its founders are Dr. Sam Nassar, Elie Shehada, Safwat Ibraighith, Izziddin Tayeh and others. Its activities in the occupied Palestinian territories had a positive impact. In addition, this society helped in establishing various advocacy societies in Nantes, Bayonne and Montpellier.

In what way? :[2j]Comment

The society is subject to the First of July Law in its capacity as a sectarian non-aligned society. It aims to confront Israeli policies in the occupied territories and to reconstitute immutable Palestinian rights. The society aspires to form a federation of all Palestinian societies and French Solidarity movements. It aims to extend legal, social and cultural assistance to Palestinians in France and to acquaint the French public with the Palestinian cause and champion solidarity with the Palestinians.

Members in the society must be born to Palestinian parents over 18 years of age, and legally residing in France for a minimum period of 3 months, and/or spouses of Palestinians. Supporting non-working members include everyone who supports Palestinians morally and financially. The society is

managed by a 5-member administrative board elected for one year. Elections take place annually through the ordinary federal general assembly by secret ballot. Election procedures have been put down in a special protocol issued by the administrative board in accordance with the society's articles of association and its by-laws. Elected members can be re-elected for an additional term. (*For the society's address, see Appendix 2*)

The eighth annual convention of the society's general assembly was held in Paris on December 4-5, 2004. The convention was attended by representatives of the following five branches: Paris, Toulouse, Montpellier, Bordeaux and Grenoble. Other activists and representatives from more than 15 different regions were also present. The convention was characterized by discussions and suggestions. A new administrative body was elected for the year 2004.<sup>5</sup> The new committee was set up in the following manner: President: Dr. Kamal Mahmoud (a retired economist residing in Montpellier); Chief Coordinator and Vice President: Safwat Ibraghith (legal advisor to the Palestinian mission at UNESCO and residing in Paris; he was later replaced by Safwan Qasem, an engineer residing in Nice); Treasurer: Enas Ismail (she runs a Palestinian restaurant in Paris); Secretary: Sandrine Mansour (a researcher from Nantes); Waleed Shehada (a media officer living in Toulouse).

It should be noted here that Fateh directly maneuvered to change the election results for its own benefit in a bid to reorganize its foreign domain in preparation for the general congress held in August 2005. Fateh officials in France were considered untrustworthy and lacked the popularity needed to win the rank and file who still preferred to remain independent. One important resolution taken by the society was to underline the development of the society's structural federalism by emphasizing constructive relations between the various activities and other Palestinian societies on one hand, and to mend fences with the Palestinian embassy on the other.

Of equal importance was the need to breathe new life into its dormant societies, website and monthly newsletter. Other important resolutions included active participation in other Palestinian communities in Europe and to join forces with Palestinian societies active in Germany.

The Palestinian community's (Paris branch) extraordinary convention was held on March 1, 2004.<sup>6</sup> Work within the society was distributed among various committees. (*refer to Appendix 3*) In the subsidiary elections that followed, the following won as a result of direct Fateh backing: Dalal Abu Saod, Naila Hanna, Nicola Damoni, Mohammed Al-Jallad and Ala Sugayyer. The community's annual convention was held

in Paris on February 26, 2006. Said Keewan, Waleed Atallah and Lubna Nassar were elected heads of branches. Their elected deputies: for Paris — Abdulwalid Mansour; Tolouse – Adib Mahmoud; and Kamal Mahmoud won by default for Montpellier.

## 12. The Right of Return Committee – France's Branch

In September 2004, the following nine Palestinian societies coalesced into one broad right of return committee:

- ▶ The General Union of Palestinian Students-France (GUPS)
- ▶ Palestinian Relief-Paris
- ▶ Friends of Palestinian Archeology-Paris
- ▶ Safar for Palestinian Heritage and Alternative Tourism Paris
- ▶ Franco-Palestinian Cultural Exchange- Paris
- ▶ Sons of Palestine-Paris
- ▶ The Franco-Palestinian Gathering for Peace and Friendship- Mersaïts,
- ▶ Palestinian Club-Nantes
- ▶ Palestinian Community's Society.

Moreover, other active personalities in the French Solidarity movement also joined this activity. Among them: Nabil Hajjar, Osama Wehbeh, Basim Dawood, Baseel Safadi, Safwan A Qasim, Ahmed Dari from Fateh and Basim Dawood S.Juma from central France, Basil Safadi from Orleans, Safwan Qassin from Nice and others.

This committee hosted a convention of the right of return committees of the European confederation. The convention was held in Paris on September 23-25, 2005. The committee is currently headed by Waleed Atallah with Claude Hamshari as honorary chairman.

This committee was the outgrowth of intensive efforts by the Palestinian community's society and its chief coordinator Abdulla Ibraghith. These efforts started in a public gathering at the Arab World Institute on June 1, 2003. The community's convention, sanctioned the committee and immediately started

preparations to mark Land Day and the memory of *Al-Nakba*. After intensive consultation and meetings, the committee became more inclusive of Palestinian bodies and societies in order to augment its representative powers. The committee lent support to the Palestinian confederation for the right of return in Europe and became a permanent member during the latter's meeting in Ghent in October 2004.

## **Overriding of Political Interests in France**

Palestinian interests dominate in France on two levels: Palestinian and Arab. Differences are discernible in the following

- ▶ The PLO attempted to garner support for its moderate negotiating approach from within the community.
- ▶ Inter-factional Palestinian rifts existed between the PLO on one hand, and the Islamic factions on the other. These differences have taken their toll on the strength and cohesion of the Solidarity movement.
- ▶ Conflicts and civil commotions which befell some Arab countries have recently had a negative impact on Arab communities in France as well as other European countries. This is most evident in the large Lebanese community which nearly disintegrated due to the deep confessional differences at home. The Lebanese civil war engendered feelings of disaffection towards the Palestinians.
- ▶ Persistent dissent exists among Moroccan communities along narrow ethnic lines such as the Amazighen movement and others.
- ▶ There is a lack of mutual Arab participation in community activities. This is partly due to weakness in inter-communal communications or the migratory nature of Arab gatherings. Most gatherings are composed of working laborers lacking national awareness.

## **Implications of Political Assassinations**

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the number of Palestinians in France was negligible and consisted mainly of students. In the early 1970s, however, Palestinian student unions at French universities began to form. Political parties from the left began to lend their support to the cause and some French cities witnessed the establishment of Palestinian advocacy committees. These committees worked with others which were set up to protest the Vietnam war. In 1972, one of the community's most active members, Mahmoud Al-Hamshari, was assassinated. Several years later, Ezzedin Al-Qalaq, another active member of the community, was silenced in the same manner. The loss of these two uncompromising figures dealt a serious blow to the efforts of the community and weakened the Palestinian presence in France. Shortly after these assassinations, the Solidarity movement worked

independently of the PLO representative office, which was by then presided over by Ibrahim Al-Sous. Laila Shaheed who succeeded Al-Sous carved out a prominent political and informational role for herself. She was able to win the respect of the French public, especially at the beginning of the peace process. Her role in France was predominantly informational where she succeeded in making her job a useful media outlet and in forging official political relations with the French government.

### **Developments in the Role of Palestine's Representative Office (The Embassy)**

The PLO office in Paris succeeded in steering the Solidarity movement towards the new political program of the PLO which began to take shape during the Madrid Peace Conference and the later Oslo negotiations. This change in direction began to take shape in the late seventies and caused aspersion and reflect badly on the Palestinian political position. A crisis developed between the different Palestinian organizations, mainly Fateh, PFLP, and DFLP. Differences among the PLO office, Palestinian students and the French Solidarity movement began to surface as the new PLO political program caused a rift in the community. Each side began to reach out to the Solidarity movement in an attempt to attract it to its side. Diverging political programs took their toll on inter-Palestinian relations in France in particular and in Europe in general.

The following conclusions can be drawn:

- ▶ In view of the widening differences, it became all the more important to devise a new conciliatory political discourse to stand out against the Zionist media campaign.
- ▶ Palestinians must increase their coordination and forget their differences to be better positioned to face their common enemy.
- ▶ All Palestinian parties must be given some leeway to carve their own independent positions and seek relations of mutual respect.
- ▶ Some members of the PLO in France played a negative role in the establishment of the Palestinian community.
- ▶ It has become increasingly evident that there exists a widening rift between the community and the embassy due to the negligible role of the embassy towards community members and the disagreement in political views.

### **Initiative for the Unification of Palestinian Organizations in France**

The most significant efforts directed at unification of the Palestinian organizations are as follows:

► Serious attempts to unite the various factions and promote coordination are picking up.

► The French and European theatres are being activated through information and media campaigns.

► Unfolding effects in Palestine and Al-Aqsa *Intifada* came into play and helped increase national activities among community members.

► Serious attempts are under way to bring together the various Palestinian factions under one umbrella. Having more or less identical objectives, this process should not be difficult to accomplish. The Palestinian community in Paris aspires to unite its gatherings and to increase the level of coordination in its various activities. In this context, the community in France is in the process of establishing an effective network to help forge one strong Arab and Palestinian community. A temporary committee was set up with the aim of organizing a convention to create a unified plan for all factions to follow.

► In some aspects, the Oslo Accords have had a positive effect in that they helped reorganize all factions and societies that have common grounds regarding the right of return in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 194. All parties vowed to ignore their differences and agree on a common denominator of national demands.

► In view of the importance of coordination among the various Palestinian societies in France, a general convention of the community held October 25-26, 2003, empowered the chief coordinator to forge a coalescence of all Palestinian societies. Efforts in this direction were to be initiated in Paris and then spread to other French cities. Numerous bilateral meetings between the chief coordinator and representatives of the most active societies paid off and tensions were gradually reduced. Meetings began to take a more collective nature as all were focused on the need to formulate a unified Palestinian position inside the French Solidarity movement.

► A joint communiqué was framed and adopted by seven of the most active societies in France. The communiqué stressed inalienable Palestinian rights and gave an overall analysis of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict including an in-depth analysis of Zionism and its relations with the West. After prolonged brainstorming, the communiqué was adopted unanimously and considered the foundation for more conciliatory positions regarding future activities.

► Objectives of this coalition still need to be set and its structure and means have yet to be identified. The coalition in its initial form, was joined by each of the General Union of Palestinian Students headed by Tareq Arar, Palestinian Relief, headed by Raed Abu Badawieh, Friends

of Palestinian Archeology, headed by Noha Rashmawi, Safar for Palestinian Heritage and Alternative Tourism, headed by Waleed Atallah, Franco-Palestinian Cultural Exchange, headed by Sulaiman Abu Odeh, Sons of Palestine headed by Charles Billiard, and the Palestinian Community's Society in France headed by Ibrahim Khadi (head of the society for 2003 and 2004). These efforts were managed and overseen by Dr. Safwat Ibragaith. It is worth noting here that the coalition suffers from stagnation due to the constant changes in position, a fact which necessitates intervention.

► In a different vein, the coalition, via its chief coordinator, decided to reach out to members of the community everywhere in France in order to bring them to join the coalition. Field visits to Nantes, Lille and Grenoble in the first phase, and to Ferzonne, Orliote and Angie in the second, will commence soon. Detailed reports on each of these visits will be submitted to the coalition.

## **Can We Really Talk about a Community?**

The Arab community in France suffers from inherent shortcomings. Unfolding events in both Iraq and Palestine have helped increase national sensitivities with youths from the second and third generations becoming more directly involved in community-related matters and in debunking Israeli actions in the occupied territories through various media outlets.

### **► Most Serious Problems Facing the Community**

The community faces serious problems which can be summarized as follows:

1. Lack of communication and interactions between various Palestinian organizations and the public and the erosion of their credibility
2. The absence of Palestinian political organizations from the French theater
3. The Palestinian discourse restricted solely to the PLO office
4. A drawdown in advocacy for the PLO and a surge of popularity for Islamic organizations

### **► Repercussions due to Lack of Agreement and Coordination and Increased Demands**

1. The importance of promoting awareness for the cause among members of the Arab community
2. Distancing from sectarianism

3. The urgent need to adopt a clear position vis-à-vis the Zionist expansion and racism

4. The need for the use of electoral clout as a means to pressure decision makers

► The Plurality of Discourse

1. Differences in political views and not on a unilateral official discourse must be focused on. Many factions and political currents are opposed to the Oslo Accords and must be given the chance to speak freely.

2. Political discourse is limited and mechanisms needed to support activities in France are weak.

► The Problem of Representation

1. Some embassies view the community as a potential enemy and treat it as such.

2. The embassy does not encourage the emergence of strong communities and maintains uneasy relations with some.

3. Mutual attempts to undermine and blackmail legitimacy exist.

Chapter Two

## **The French Solidarity Movement and the Palestinian Cause**

### **Salient Milestones of the Community**

This movement was established in the mid-1970s and gained momentum after the Sabra and Shatilla massacres in 1982. French popular attention began to focus on the Palestinian cause after the first *Intifada*. French activists began to visit Palestine in increasing numbers. This was soon followed by formation of the movement's core from active members. The Jerusalem Tunnel events in 1996 and the second *Intifada* gave further steam to the Solidarity movement. The movement's strength came mainly from the French left and youths of Arab descent.

The onset of the peace process and the Oslo Accords soon afterwards caused a rift within the movement between pro- and anti-peace factions. The prevalence of proponents of the peace process, especially the support it drew from French Communists and the PLO, negatively impacted the movement.

The migratory organizations supporting the Solidarity movement are:

1. Arab Laborer's Movement (MTA)
2. Moroccan Laborer's Movement (MTI)
3. Forward Movement (an Arab political movement in exile)

Many Arab and Moslem organizations began to join the movement. Hundreds of local committees were set up in France to acquaint the French with facts about Palestine. The French-Palestine Society — a pro-negotiations organization — established a new solidarity movement, the AFPS, by merging the Palestinian-French Medical Relief Society with the France-Palestine Society. French parties from the left were generally weak and publicly ineffective.

In addition to the above, many French political parties, syndicates and societies were actively involved in Palestinian activities, including:

1. The Socialist Party (which controls the Teachers' Syndicate and the SOS Racisme Nationale organization)
2. The Foundation Leo Lagrange
3. The Human Rights League
4. The Communist Party (which controls the labor unions, the peace movement and the anti-racism movement)
5. Les Verts Party
6. The Solidarity movement
7. The Forward Movement

All the above organizations are active in political gatherings and popular demonstrations.

### **Development of French Solidarity Movement with the Palestinian People**

Since 1948 — the year Israel was established — and up to 1967, the Palestinian cause was totally absent in France. Israel was viewed by the French as the quintessence of Western socialism and democracy.

It was in 1963 that the first pro-Arab lobby emerged in France when the French-Algerian Society was established by Edmond Michlet. Pro-Arab initiatives began to emerge gradually and the Arab-French Solidarity Society was established by Louis Turnoire. This society played an important role in assisting Palestinians who were often portrayed as terrorists. This society

with Maoist and Trotskyites from the Revolutionary Communist League, and Arab intellectuals, lent their support to Mahmoud Al-Hamshari, the first PLC representative in France. Recognition of Israel was not contemplated at the time and armed resistance was stressed as the only means for the restitution of Palestinian rights. Proponents of the Palestinian cause – the sons of the first generation of immigrants — established the Arab Labor Movement in 1971. Prominent figures were Sami Abu Ojala from Tunis and Fareed Ashiaq from Algiers. These figures and others were more partial to the principles and thoughts of PFLP and DFLP rather than Fateh.

The Munich operation against the Israeli Olympic team resulted in the assassinations of several Palestinian public figures. Both Al-Hamshari and later Ezziddin Al-Qalaq were murdered.

In 1978, Andre Azolai (advisor to King Hasan of Morocco since 1991) arranged an international conference for Moroccan Jews in Paris. This conference was attended by Morocco's and Israel's ambassadors to France. Later, Azolai, seizing on his vast network of connections and friendships, held a series of meetings that brought Arabs and Jews together.

The first meetings brought together an officer from Fateh (whose name was not disclosed) and Charles Pitton, the undisputed leader of the Black Panther Movement in Israel, and later a member of Knesset. Other meetings brought together Al-Sartawi with Israeli officials such as General Lipid (a close associate of General Rabin). Ibrahim Al-Sous<sup>7</sup>(PLO representative in Paris between 1979-1993) and Ms. Laila Shahid were enthusiastic about holding dialogue with Israeli Jewish politicians. Their main concern was to brief Israelis on the cause rather than to reorganize the Palestinian or Arab community or the Solidarity movement. Arab differences permeated the Arab French Solidarity movement and had a negative impact on it.

As a result, its credibility was partly eroded. Conflict over the Western Sahara, the civil war in Lebanon, the Iraqi-Iranian war and Egypt's exclusion from the Arab League after the Camp David accords had an untoward effect on its activities. Although Israel's popularity in France was at its peak, support for the Palestinian cause was also gaining ground.

Following the massacres in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps in Lebanon, Israel's integrity began to be questioned. Sympathy with the Palestinians grew considerably and advocacy groups and committees began to emerge in France and other parts of Europe. The PLO representative office played a leadership role for these groups and guided them towards its new political program. Palestinians, with their penchant for negotiations, were often encouraged through official and semi-official French channels. Members of the central committee of the French Communist Party and labor unions oversaw part of these negotiations. The grip of the Solidarity movement over the French-Palestinian Medical Relief Society began to loosen as the latter was known for its hard-line policies. A French-Palestinian political current favoring a negotiated settlement of the conflict, began to emerge, headed by Isabelle Avran and others.

A substantial number of French and Palestinian figures calling for increased dialogue with the Israelis began to gain ground. Its main advocates were Elias Sunbar, editor-in-chief of the Journal of Palestine Studies; Kamil Mansour, a noted academician and university professor, and Ellen Halivy, a representative of Palestine and Fateh in Socialist International.

The outbreak of the *Intifada* in 1987, with its images of Israeli human rights violations, gave a considerable boost to the cause and the number of French sympathizers increased considerably. Advocacy committees emerged in various parts of France. The visit of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat to the Elysée Palace gave much credence to the cause. However, the signing of the Oslo Accords resulted in serious rifts among Palestinians and reflected negatively on internal relations in the Solidarity movement. The France Palestine Society's input into major issues began to be more evident. This was mainly due to the unwavering support it received from the Communist Party and the PLO's representative office in Paris. Other consequences of the Oslo Accords led to the Solidarity movement becoming more and more flexible and its spread among the French increased.

During this time, members of the first generation of Palestinians began to leave the political scene, gradually giving way to new involvement by the second generation. During the second *Intifada* this new, younger image began to emerge.

#### **Main Landmarks:**

Subsequent developments with clear effects on the Solidarity movement have surfaced. Of these are the following:

1. The first Intifada had a positive impact on Western media and public opinion.
2. The first Gulf war in 1991 tipped the balance in favor of Iraq. Feelings of empathy towards the beleaguered Iraqi people began to grow.
3. Arab satellite stations were able to transmit unfolding events to every corner of the world. Latest developments in media transmission allowed Arabs in the Diaspora stay abreast of ongoing developments.
4. The victory of Hizbollah in south Lebanon forced Israel's retreat which produced a surge in Palestinian spirits. Images of the second *Intifada*, especially of Mohammed Al-Durra cowering behind his father, the Jenin camp battles and the siege of Arafat in his Ramallah compound drew world-wide empathy for the Palestinians and their situation.

5. A public anti-war campaign preceded the invasion of Iraq and wide Arab participation lent further support to the Arab cause.

Moreover, official and popular French views regarding the Palestinian cause began to emerge and reflect positively via the French media. These new developments created a conducive atmosphere for French public opinion. Pro-Palestinian demonstrations became more frequent and larger in number.

Most important, Arabs living on the fringes of French society began to become more involved, and their national and religious awareness grew and intensified as they began to increasingly identify themselves with their nation's issues. As their involvement drew various attacks from Zionist organizations like Bitar and the Jewish Defense League, clashes ensued and the French police was on alert on various occasions. GUPS played an important role in enhancing the national awareness of those who represented a militant Islamic environment whose religious discourse alienated many French and Jews.

In a similar vein, Arabs from the second and third generations became more politically active, and their solidarity with the cause took various forms:

1. The International Civil Protections Campaign sent many groups to Palestine (youths of Arab descent included). Their findings were posted on the Internet and met with world wide sympathy.

2. Youths of Arab descent remained alert towards the activities of Zionist organizations and posted their counter-arguments on the Internet and in schools and universities. They created their own data banks for the exchange of news about the homeland. They were successful in forging close relations with French student groups. Their activities did not remain confined to France but spilled across borders into neighboring countries. Groups of Arab and French students often traveled to neighboring countries to participate in various activities and demonstrations.

3. These activities were not restricted to Palestinians as some Jews also joined in pro-Palestinian activities. An organization known by its acronym, CAPJPO, was established by Olivia Zemor<sup>8</sup> and among its members were Arab and French Moslems and Christians. Many of its members were doctors, lawyers, artists and university professors. These organizations worked as an umbrella for other organizations such as the French-Jewish Federation for Peace, Women in Black, Lawyers for Peace, Doctors for Peace and Scientists for Peace etc. Aside from participation in demonstrations, this organization held many seminars in various universities. Some functions drew wide audiences. Moreover, a campaign to boycott Israeli goods was steadily gaining ground. French universities were urged to discontinue their cooperation with their Israeli counterparts as a result of Israel's closure of Palestinian academic institutions. Being a Jewish organization, it was easier for it to criticize Israel and its atrocities without accusations of anti-Semitism. This predominantly Jewish organization

maintained close relations with similar Arab organizations active in France. Favorable circumstances which began to engulf the global political scene spurred Arab organizations into action. Until recently the Solidarity movement continued to experience serious rifts and conflicting points of views.

## **Popular French Reactions to Current Events in Palestine**

The following examples are listed:

1. 5,000 election cards bore pro-Palestinian slogans in the French legislative elections of April 2002.
2. The Communist Party, the Greens, the Solidarity movement, labor unions, the peace movement, the anti-racism movement and other political groups organized pro-Palestinian demonstrations and marches.
3. A substantial part of the above-mentioned parties and movements donated a portion of their funds and activities to advance the Palestinian cause.
4. A data base among Arab and French youths was established to exchange views and monitor events relevant to the Palestinian cause.
5. The development and promotion of means of communication between individuals and other organizations grew via the Internet.
6. The proposal of initiatives came from European countries, namely France, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, England and Denmark. Efforts extended to make them successful included putting aside differences and coming together around core issues such as the inalienable Palestinian right of return and self-determination.

## **French Activities and Initiatives in Support of the Palestinian Cause**

The merging of the France Palestine Society and Palestinian French Medical Relief in 2001 greatly enhanced the Solidarity movement. The emerging society, called the Franco-Palestinian Solidarity Society, included more than 2,000 members in various French cities. The society, encouraged by the PLC representative office, promoted Palestinian activities in France. Many societies declined to merge with the new society and maintained their independence. Of these was the organization Palestine 33/Courite Vaucluse AMTP – Pas de Calais and others.

In June 2001, hundreds of academicians and unionists visited the occupied Palestinian territories in civil campaigns as a result of spontaneous initiatives

Among them was unionist Joseph Buffet, the head of the Peasants Confederation in France, who is an arch opponent of globalization. Also among them was Egyptian producer Sameer Abdulla who produced the 'Record of Siege' about the siege around the late Yasser Arafat's Ramallah compound. These activities are currently declining with only small coordinating groups remaining. Other societies that support the Palestinian cause is a society active in the Twin Towns Project between French cities and refugee camps. Other societies are mainly concerned with promoting dialogue among the three monotheistic religions. One of such societies is called Memory for Peace headed by Father Elias Shofani from Nazareth. Other societies that extend their support to Palestinians in the occupied territories including the Friends of Theater group which cooperates with the Duhaisheh refugee camp theater along with various other cultural exchange and relief societies. In the field of heritage, Safar for Oriental Souvenirs and Alternative Tourism, Friends of Palestinian Archeology, the Palestinians of Nantes Club, and the Franco-Palestinian Gathering for Peace and Friendship remain active.

► Twin Towns Project

These include the following:

1. The French Twin Towns Society (headed by a French Jew) joins Palestinians refugee camps and 50 French cities.
2. Twin Towns agreements and cooperative societies with Palestinian universities were conducted (Lille 1 and Lille 3 universities with Al Najah University and Montpellier University with Birzeit University).
3. Cultural exchange societies with Hebron were founded and headed by Anwar Abu Aisheh.
4. Ajjal Society is active in youth rehabilitation projects in refugee camps and is headed by Ms. Rasha Salah.
5. The Friends of Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Society is headed by a French activist.

► The Euro Palestine List

In a press conference held in May 2004, a new political list was promulgated the Euro-Palestine List. This list was formed by 26 French personalities of different ethnic origins and religions and was headed by Professor Christof Oberlaine, who conducted more than 15 humanitarian missions to Gaza. When in Gaza, Dr. Oberlaine performed numerous surgeries for the sick and handicapped. Furthermore, he has personally overseen to more than 1,000 cases of victims of the second *Intifada* since December 2001. Of these, 250 underwent complex surgeries. The participants included prominent university professors, historians, comedians and unionists. The list was created by an initiative of CAPJPO which also organized a festival in memory of the *Intifada*.

The festival was attended by more than 15,000 persons and was considered a successful achievement by the pro-Palestine lobby in France.

Organizers of this function were met with stiff opposition from major traditional societies within the French Solidarity movement. This opposition was explained by some as a result of resentment of the traditional Solidarity movement over the increased influence of this recent group.

Differences between the PLO representative office and other societies which followed its political program became more public and discernable. The newly formed Euro-Palestine List began to attract more attention and increased advocacy due to its uncompromising policies regarding the inalienable rights of the Palestinians. To give it more popularity, the list demanded that the European Union impose economic and political sanctions on Israel and to sever all economic, scientific and military ties with it. It even demanded the dispatch of a military expeditionary force to the occupied territories to defend Palestinian civilians.

In spite of its non-partisan nature, the list achieved a numerical average of 1.83 per cent or more than 50,000 voters in the June 2004 elections for the European Parliament. Outside Paris, the results were even more encouraging and surpassed those of the more entrenched Communist Party, the Greens and the Communist League.

These results and the increased popularity of the list drew anger from the Jewish lobby in France. Its increased popularity was seen by some Zionist groups as a testament to a rising wave of anti-Semitism notwithstanding the fact that many of its leaders were Jews. Moreover, the centerpiece of its platform ran on achieving justice for all in the Middle East and contains no trace of animosity against, Israel. (*See Appendix 1*)

### **The Position of the French Government and Political Parties vis-à-vis the Palestinian Cause**

- ▶ Right-wing parties followed a more or less balanced policy towards the Palestinian cause in particular, and other Arab issues in general.
- ▶ Some political parties appeared with a more balanced policy towards Palestine.
- ▶ The French government began to implement stringent anti-immigration policies on Arabs. Its balanced policy regarding major Arab issues helped defuse mounting tension in predominantly Arab neighborhoods.
- ▶ The Socialist Party is rife with Zionist activity. Many of its influential leaders are Zionists.
- ▶ Both the Socialists and Communists viewed Israel as a paradigm of Western socialism and democracy close to Western standards. Both parties extended official backing to Israel.

- ▶ These two parties lost a substantial number of followers because of their pro-Israel foreign policies. A sudden flash of conscience befell the French as the crux of the Palestinian problem began to be known to them. So disgruntled were Palestinians with the Socialist Middle East policy, that the prime minister – at the time - Leonelle Jospin was met by jeers and boos at Birzeit University.
- ▶ The Communist League Party still harbors some sympathy for Israel unlike the Greens, whose position is more balanced and positive.
- ▶ Parties of the right followed a more balanced policy towards Arab issues unlike its policy towards Arab and Moslem inhabitants of impoverished neighborhoods. Zionist influence was more evident in parties of the left rather than the right.
- ▶ The effect of these two parties on the Solidarity movement is consequential as both wield considerable influence on unions. Traditionally, the Socialist Party controls the teachers' union (FSU), the anti-racism organization (SOS Racisme Nationale), the Foundation Leclerc Lagrange, the Human Rights League (LDH). Communists traditionally control the workers union (CGT), the Movement for Peace (MP) and MRAP. These societies and organizations form the nucleus of the Solidarity movement and its various activities.
- ▶ With the outbreak of Al-Aqsa *Intifada*, many organizations allocated part of their budgets to promote awareness and solidarity with the Palestinians. In 1993, a confederation of civil societies and organizations for Palestine was announced. This grouping encompassed more than 33 societies such as (La CIMADE), Amnesty which is a Protestant organization that caters for "sans papiers" and asylum seekers, (CCFD)-a Catholic committee against hunger and development and Medecins du Monde. The common denominator of all these organizations is the extension of humanitarian aid to Palestinians and of seeking peace on the basis of a two-state solution.

This needs to be identified because it has not been mentioned before

### Chapter Three

## The Arab and Islamic Communities in France (The Mother Community)

There are over four million immigrants in France of Arab descent, many of whom are fully naturalized. North African Arab communities (Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian) are the largest and oldest in France. Some Arab communities in France have been in the country for three consecutive generations. Those holding French citizenship are completely assimilated into French society and culture. Many are married to French women and have

Contradicts the statement below about the Lebanese

settled permanently. Most Moroccan communities in France consist of uneducated productive workers.

Contradicts the above statement that the North African communities are the oldest

The Lebanese community is the oldest and most active followed by the Syrian community. Both are smaller in number but much more active than other Arab communities. Most communities harbor feelings of national and religious empathy toward the Palestinian cause but are partly paralyzed due to lack of organizational framework. The war against Iraq in 1991 changed the mood from one of animosity to feelings of empathy.

## Arab Communities in General

Until recently, (before the outbreak of the *Intifada* and the invasion of Iraq) Arab communities in France were plagued with inherent weaknesses, with an aversion for, and no interest in, politics. At that time, the Moroccan Arab community was disinterested in, and distanced itself from the politics of the Arab Levant. Subsequent events, however, changed this. Unfolding incidents in Palestine and Iraq brought the community towards more direct involvement and gave them the needed impetus to put aside their long-standing differences. Feelings of aversion, which some members of the Lebanese community once harbored against the Palestinians, started to abate after the outbreak of the second *Intifada*. Increasing Israeli atrocities in the occupied territories helped cement solidarity in France with the Palestinian cause.

Arab activity in France can be best described as seasonal and lacking coherence and continuity. It is characterized by reactions that fall short of the required and consistent level of importance required of it. Recently, however Arab communities began to formulate a plan of action consistent with requirements of the present.

During the last few years, new developments began to appear. Among the most important were the outbreak of the first and Al-Aqsa *Intifadas*, the invasion of Iraq and the inherent weakness of Arab communities and their aversion of politics. These adverse developments have had their negative impact on the Palestinian cause.

Arab communities in France consist mainly of North African Arab immigrants the largest groups being the Algerians, followed by the Moroccans and Tunisians. The Lebanese community was the most active followed by the Syrian which distinguishes itself in the medical sector.

Moroccan communities, except some of their elite intellectuals, were weak and apolitical despite their strong national feelings. Lack of any organizational framework and their preoccupations with their livelihoods limited their activities to a great extent. Arab solidarity with the Palestinian cause was limited and elitist in nature and in most cases, subject to the whims and political positions of their regimes as was often the case with Syrian opposition groups.

## The Arab and Islamic Communities and

## French Society: Integration or Collision?

- ▶ Arab immigration started in the early 1960s and is considered to be the last migration wave in the twentieth century. The first wave of immigrants consisted predominantly of laborers. This generation shunned French society and the language and was predominately poverty stricken.
- ▶ The first generation, until the emergence of the second, with their large number (either immigrants or born in France to immigrants) remained poor and isolated. They lived in impoverished ghettos in the suburbs of the larger French cities. They harbored feelings of discrimination, exclusion and abandonment.
- ▶ The first generation of immigrants interacted considerably well. The second generation, mainly Moroccans, remained isolated and confined to their impoverished ghettos. Their continued marginalization bred feelings of hatred, lack of identity, insubordination and a growing tendency to resort to violence.
- ▶ This generation, cut off from its original country and lacking a sense of belonging in its new environment, suffered great feelings of social alienation. Absence of government-sponsored assimilation programs only helped increase their grievances.
- ▶ The French government said much but did little to cope with the increased number of Moslems who were flooding into the country. Islam was rapidly becoming the second largest religion but the government did nothing to incorporate the new religion and its adherents into the main stream in an orderly manner.
- ▶ Moslems in France gravitated towards the main Islamic mosque in Paris, whose imam was appointed by the Algerian government. As such, the imam was considered to be the main referential authority for all Moslems in France.
- ▶ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the French government realized the significance of this rise of Islam due to the following factors:
  1. Islam became the second largest religion in France.
  2. The French government had failed to assimilate Arab Moslem communities unlike the Italian, Jewish and Polish communities who were smoothly integrated. As a result, some anti-Arab and anti-Moslem elements in the French government arrived at the conclusion that Islam was an obstruction to orderly assimilation. Marginalization of Arabs and Moslems in France continued and there were increasing signs of an impending collision between both sides. Tension clouded relations and outbreaks of violence were the natural outcome.

3. Increased religious and political unity among descendents of the third generation increased considerably as Individualism was replaced by a more collective identity and their attachment to and pride in their religion and identity grew.

4. There was an Increase in organized Islamic trends among French Moslem societies and the Islamic political movement which was composed of teachers with French citizenship.

Marginalization of Arabs and Moslems in France led to the collision between the French secular republic and the majority of Moslems in France. Islam, and not the national dimension, was what brought Arabs closer together.

### **Arab Presence in French Political Society**

Moslem and Arab influence in France is not proportional to their numbers (more than four million). In general, Arab presence in France is restricted to a few individuals who have taken advantage of several political parties. In fact a full-fledged, genuine Arab political presence in France is still lacking. The French political scene, with all its variations and different sectors, does not yet support the presence of a corresponding Arab-French coalition.

Events in Palestine led to increased sectarian tension within France. Talk about a re-emergence of anti-Semitism was intended to confuse the pro Palestinian sentiment the French people had begun to exhibit. There exists in France an underlying current of anti-Semitism especially among the neo Fascists who also hold in contempt all non-French elements — not only Jews the same is true among some extreme Islamic outfits. In the same vein, Israel has made it a habit to accuse all who oppose its policies of anti-Semitism. The Arab presence began to take a more concrete form clearly at odds with Israel and its racism.

### **Points of Weakness and Strength in the Mother Community**

The mother community suffers from the following weak spots:

1. Lack of sufficient funds
2. The reflection of sectarian divisions and conflicts on the community
3. Prevalence of self-interest. Most community members are self centered and refrain from financial contributions
4. France not regarded as a final destination
5. Lack of intercommunication between the new generations and their country of origin

Moroccan and Tunisian community involvement in solidarity activities is generally weak. This is mainly due to:

1. The disintegration that has befallen them
2. Their marginalization in French public life and their political underrepresentation
3. Their relative isolation and increasing population as the secular French political parties failed to engage properly with them
4. Their preoccupation with their daily livelihoods.

Alternatively, the main aspects of strength are evident in the following:

- a. French popular, political and media positions vis-à-vis the Palestinian cause had witnessed positive developments.
- b. French cooperation with the General Union of Palestinian Students elevated religious and national awareness and intensified Arab family involvement in demonstrations.
- c. There was an emergence of increased awareness and responsiveness among Arab youth of French origin.

### **The Political and Media Organization of the Mother Community in France**

The political and media organizations of the community are characterized by the following:

- ▶ Weakness in organization and interaction and intermittent activity of Arab organizations
- ▶ Discord among Arab groups regarding Palestinian demands, resistance and the right of return
- ▶ Weakness of the Arab political discourse and lack of effort to win French public opinion
- ▶ Substantial hostility by segments of the Lebanese community towards the Palestinians and the boycott of their activities

Arab communities in France are still relatively weak and suffer from serious shortcomings. Unfolding events in both Palestine and Iraq have helped increase national and cultural awareness. Descendants of the second and third generations became engrossed in highlighting Israeli atrocities through different media conduits to French and foreign sympathizers.

## The Higher Board of Islam

In the late 1980s, the French government sought to establish an Islamic French organization to represent all Moslems in France. It was only in 2003 that it finally succeeded in bringing Moslems under the umbrella of the Higher Board of Islam. Elections for the board brought elements of the Moslem Brotherhood to the forefront. This included the Islamic Action Front, Algerian Islamic armed groups and members of Al-Nahda Party in Tunis. Some members of the Islamic community considered this board illegitimate.

Some of the groups represented by the board were allied with their own countries and hence Arab-Arab differences were brought to bear within the board itself. One of these groups is the Welfare Committee for the Support of Palestine, which is a member of the Islamic Welfare Coalition, headed by Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi.

## Successes of the Arab Media in France

Examples of these successes are listed below:

- ▶ French and Arab youths cooperated in establishing one of the largest data banks in the Arab world. This network is constantly updated and kept abreast of the latest development in the Arab-Israeli struggle and fights against Israel's policies through different media outlets.
- ▶ The campaign to boycott Israeli goods met with considerable success in some French cities. However, this campaign faced a stiff Jewish counter-campaign and was designated as being anti-Semitic.
- ▶ Increased activities among Arab communities reflected positively on French public opinion. French participation in Arab activities increased considerably. Increasingly more French began to view the Palestinian cause more favorably.
- ▶ The third generation of immigrants was more educated and hence in a better position to confront Zionist racism and the French ultra-right.
- ▶ The French parliament was petitioned to reconsider the Economic Cooperation Agreement which the European Union signed with Israel.
- ▶ Pro-Palestinian articles written by sympathetic Jews caused a positive backlash.
- ▶ Strong relations ties were forged between Jewish/French/Arab forces and Arab youth sympathizers.
- ▶ Arab communities participated actively in a vast, international campaign to denounce plans for the war on Iraq.

- ▶ Many attempts to closely involve the French media towards its community activities are currently being employed.
- ▶ A wide campaign to halt scientific cooperation with Israeli universities is under way.

### **Broadcasting Stations**

- 1 Radio Orient (Al-Sharq)  
Sponsored by the late Rafik Al-Hariri. It covers Palestinian events in a neutral and objective way.
- 2 Middle East Radio  
Offers pro-Palestinian media coverage
- 3 Radio (BEUR FM)  
Offers pro-Palestinian media coverage
- 4 Radio (France International)  
A pro-Palestinian station

### **Arab Satellite Stations**

1. Arab satellite stations have a profound and positive impact on Arab immigrants. Satellite brought them instant on-the-spot unbiased coverage of events as they unfolded in both Palestine and Iraq. They brought about a positive change of attitude towards major Arab issues.
2. Arab satellites enhanced national awareness among Arab immigrants. Various pro-Palestinian demonstrations, in collaboration with French activists, took to the streets on various occasions. The influence of Arab satellite stations in these activities can be easily discerned.

### **Arab World Institute**

1. The Arab World Institute is a cultural and official institute managed by the French government which also appoints its manager. It is funded by the French government and Arab embassies in France.
2. One of its main weaknesses is its Paris-centered activities.
3. The institute holds some pro-Palestinian activities but these are insufficient.
4. It has facilities, such as meeting rooms, which are suitable for Solidarity movement activities, but they are not easily accessible.

5. The institute holds annual pro-Palestinian festivals in collaboration with various universities. Such festivals are accompanied by promotional materials.

6 The institute can do more to acquaint the French public with the culture and history of Palestine.

## **The Role of the Mother Community in Fostering the Palestinian Cause**

### ► Relief Funding Committees

The Palestinian Welfare and Relief Committee is an example. It was established in 1990 to cater to Palestinian children and is a member of the Islamic coalition sponsored by Sheikh Yousef Qaradawi. It is active in various development programs in Gaza such as land reclamation and potable water purification projects. This committee is considered the largest philanthropic society in Europe to support Palestinians, with a total value of implemented projects in 2002 totaling €3,656,071.

### ► Growing Political Role

This is best exemplified through a growing awareness among community members in using election votes to influence decision makers and to support the Euro-Palestine List.

### ► The Role of the Youth in Supporting the French Solidarity movement

This role is summarized by the following activities:

1. Palestinians hailing from refugee camps in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon joined to stress the right of return especially after the signing of the Oslo Accords.
- 2 Participation in demonstrations denounced the Zionist occupation of Palestine and the American invasion of Iraq.
3. The second and third generations of Arab immigrants became more deeply involved in pro-Palestinian activities.

The following are some examples:

1. The International Civil Campaign to protect the Palestinian people sent more than 50 groups to Palestine. Their findings were transmitted worldwide via e-mail messages and posted on the Internet.

2. Similar French and European youth organizations forged relations with other groups sharing the same anti-American and anti-globalization activities.

3. Activities went beyond the France to include other European countries and French Arab delegates participated in demonstrations across Europe.

4. Organizations kept a vigilant eye on Zionist activities and stood up to discredit Zionist propaganda.

Palestine is at the center of attention in all Moroccan societies. The common origin of all Arab communities, in addition to religion and language which bring them even closer together, are fundamental reasons for shared aspirations and activities. To them, Palestine mirrors the colonial past in which they suffered greatly.

Limited attempts to unite and organize the Arab community started in earnest a few years ago. A Tunisian lawyer, Tawfiq Matlothy (a Tunisian who owns Mediterranean Radio and Mecca Cola Co., which earmarked 10% of its sales volume to support Palestinian children) founded the pro-Chirac Republican Group. In addition, the Moslem Party in France was founded by Mohammed Latrache in 1997. This party makes no secret of its anti-Zionist policies.<sup>9</sup>

Generally speaking, Arabs in France began to realize the importance of their electoral power to wrest certain concessions from politicians. Some members of the Jewish community seized on some acts of violence in Jewish cemeteries and synagogues to push for a new law in parliament to equate anti-Zionist activity with anti-Semitism.

## Synopsis and Comments

Judging by the above, Arab communities in France can be divided into three categories:

### 1. The Palestinian Community

It is the smallest in number. Its activities are limited and subject to the state of relations with members of other Arab communities. Certain milestones in Palestinian history have had an impact on the overall performance of the community. The first and second *Intifadas*, the Madrid negotiations and the Oslo Accords all led communities to relinquish their inter-communal differences and to unite into one effective community. The same events also had a positive effect on the French public who became more involved in pro-Palestinian activities. Arab pro-Palestinian positions are still limited and elitist in nature.

### 2. Communities of the Levant (Syria and Lebanon)

Until recently, the majority of the Lebanese community was not on friendly terms with the Palestinian community due to the alleged role of the Palestinians in the Lebanese civil war. The war on Iraq has helped increase national awareness among community members. Gone were the days when communities sided with Iran in its long war with Iraq. Similarly, Israeli atrocities against Palestinian civilians helped change their views and drew sentiment towards the Palestinian cause. On the economic level, the community is better off than the Moroccan community. Many of its members are highly educated and occupy prominent positions in society.

### 3 The Moroccan community (Algerian, Moroccan and Tunisian)

These are the largest Arab communities in France in the order listed above. Few of its members were involved politically, and the majority were apolitical. Events in the Middle East were not on their agenda, but gradually this aloofness began to change after the first Gulf war, the second *Intifada* and the invasion of Iraq. Participation in activities of other Arab communities began to be noticed.

Generally speaking, activities of Arab communities in France began to witness some resurgence in the late 1990s after a series of events rocked the world. Of these are the following:

1. The first and second *Intifadas*
2. The first Iran-Iraq war and the war against Iraq in 1991
3. The emergence of Hizbollah and the Palestinian/Lebanese resistance movement in south Lebanon and the impact it had on the Lebanese. Anti-Palestinian feelings heightened by the civil war subsided considerably.
4. The events of September 11 in the United States and ensuing global repercussion
5. An increase in the activity of militant Islamic groups as well as an increase in terrorist acts around the world
6. Globalization
7. The emergence of Arab satellite networks and their impact on Arab communities in the Diaspora
8. Positive change in French official positions especially towards both the Palestinians and Iraqis. These events imbued Arab communities with feelings of unity and solidarity. The current political stage, and events that engendered them cannot alone counterbalance the influence of the Zionist lobby and bring about a major reshuffle in French foreign policy.

## **Recommendations for Community Action Development**

- ▶ Unite the media, political discourse, vision and activities of all communities and organizations
- ▶ Lay down an all-embracing Arab/Palestinian strategy capable of exacting societal and organizational change among the various Arab communities in France
- ▶ Adopt certain policies to involve all members of the community
- ▶ Enhance current activities which lack necessary operational components
- ▶ Adopt a consolidated Palestinian political discourse to confront the effective Zionist media campaign and, at the same time, downplay the negative fundamental Islamic discourse which have had a detrimental effect on the image of the community
- ▶ Enhance relations between the PLO and its representatives embassies, factions, parties and Palestinian organizations which must be built on the basis of mutual respect
- ▶ Maintain a high level of coordination must among the various French Solidarity movements
- ▶ Palestinian/Palestinian organizations must coordinate their activities and relinquish their differences.

These questions need to be asked:

1. What is the appropriate methodology to be followed to exact a change in French public opinion?
2. How can a change in French and European foreign policies be brought about?

To provide answers to these two questions, we propose the following:

1. The establishment of an Arab lobby
2. Strengthening of the Arab media
3. Active participation in French political life with a plan to permeate and influence French media (especially television)

## **Circumstances Hampering Community Efforts**

Community efforts are hindered due to the following:

- ▶ Feelings of helplessness towards the cause and its relative absence from French public opinion
- ▶ The presence of utilitarian leadership, lack of funds and absence of societal work
- ▶ The absence of a major media and political organization
- ▶ Lack of funds needed to cover costly political campaigns which often require funds beyond the reach of the community
- ▶ The absence of open-minded leaders accepted by others and working towards coordination of activities

### **Founding of Palestinian Communities in Europe<sup>10</sup>**

Since the signing of the Oslo Accords, Palestinians felt an urgent need to reorganize themselves. To them, the major issue of concern is the right of return which they believed was overlooked in the accords. To them, the right of return is a matter of life or death as most of them hail from refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

Many different initiatives were launched in France, Germany, Denmark and England. For these initiatives to be productive, it was imperative for the community to put aside their differences and agree on a set of basic strategies aimed at preserving their intrinsic goals.

Two things must be noticed here:

- ▶ There is an absence of Palestinian political organizations capable of enforcing such initiatives due to the lack of an actual framework and the unimpressive role of the Palestinian representative office and its role as a mouthpiece of the new revised political program of the PLO. These initiatives were well received by a community fed up with entrenched political differences.
- ▶ Uneasy relations often characterized relations between both sides, with each side accusing the other of illegitimacy and blackmail.

Arab communities in Europe on various occasions were ably positioned to step in and fill the gaps created by the representative offices' languid approach and shortcomings.

The absence of coordination between both parties increased the ensuing rift as both held irreconcilable political views. Unlike the embassy, the community was not bound or restricted by diplomatic niceties.

Judging by the above mentioned information, the surging popularity of Islamic groups at the expense of PLO's representative offices can easily be understood. While top Fateh officials were involved in rampant corruption, the rank and file of Hamas and other Islamic groups were busy planning and carrying out the most damaging and painful operations against Israel.

A wave of fear and apprehension gripped the Palestinian communities in Europe after the sudden death of Yasser Arafat. The fate of Palestinians and especially those in the Diaspora was uncertain. Voices began being heard calling for the Palestinians in the Diaspora to play a more decisive role in the new era and be given a say in restructuring and activating PLO's activities in its capacity as the sole representative of the Palestinians.<sup>11</sup>

In this context, the first preparatory congress of Palestinians in Diaspora was held January 3-4, 2005. The congress was attended by the head of the political department in the PLO and other PLO officials.

## Summary

There are over four million immigrants in France of Arab descent, many of whom are fully naturalized citizens. North African Arab communities (Algerian Moroccan and Tunisian) are the largest and oldest in France. Some Arab communities in France have been in the country for almost three consecutive generations. Those holding French citizenship have completely assimilated into the French social fabric and culture. Many are married to French women and have permanently settled. Most Moroccan communities in France consist of uneducated productive workers.

Contradicts with the **:[^j]Comment** statement below about Lebanese community being the oldest

The Lebanese community is the oldest and most active followed by the Syrian community. Both are smaller in number but more active than other Arab communities. Most communities harbor feelings of national and religious empathy toward the Palestinian cause but are partly paralyzed due to a lack of any organizational framework. The war against Iraq in 1991 changed attitudes from animosity to empathy.

Contradicts with the **:[Vj]Comment** statement above about North African communities being the oldest

Palestinians who represent one of the smallest Arab groups in France hail mainly from refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan or the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Most members of the Palestinian community are either students, graduates, laborers or white-collar workers. Their economic background in general is relatively good. In spite of this, their investments channeled to the West Bank are relatively small due to the political uncertainty that still engulfs the Palestinian territories and the mindset of individual entrepreneurship they have been brought up to observe and practice in France.

The history of immigration of Palestinians to France may be summarized by the following waves:

- ▶ The first wave began in 1948 when a limited number of Palestinian families migrated to France. Most of them, however, soon left France for other countries.
- ▶ The second wave took place during the 1970s and consisted mainly of politicized Palestinian students.
- ▶ The third wave occurred during the 1980s following Lebanon's civil war and the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla. The majority came from Syria and Lebanon, while few actually came from Palestine.
- ▶ The fourth wave arrived in France during the mid- and late-1980s on the heels of the first Palestinian *Intifada* and continued well into the early 1990s. Immigrants came as tourists and settled in the country in contravention of French laws. They took advantage of the then-lax French asylum and immigration rules, especially the law of the birth place–country.
- ▶ The fifth wave evolved after the second Palestinian *Intifada* in the year 2000. The presence of relatives in France facilitated their immigration. The same happened with the Palestinian communities in Germany and England where waves of immigration to these two countries began earlier.

The actual number of Palestinians in France, or other European countries cannot be estimated with a high degree of certainty. This is mainly due to the fact that all newcomers are registered according to the nationality of the country of origin – like Jordan or Lebanon. This also applied to Palestinians hailing from Israel. Figures of the total number of Palestinians in France differ considerably according to the source. In one study, their numbers were estimated at 5,000 individuals while another study, based on figures released by the French ministry of interior, put their numbers at 1,000-1,200 individuals distributed throughout France. According to figures obtained from the General Union of Palestinian Students, student numbers range between 300-400, one third of whom were females hailing from wealthy families (the survey was conducted in the year 2000).

Despite the fact that Palestinian migration to France is relatively recent and limited in number, it represents a unique prototype when compared to other Palestinian communities in the rest of Europe. It is, by and large, considered an integrated, if not assimilated, community. This is mainly due to inherent structural weaknesses. The French Jacobinic system neglected the community in the beginning, where programs for assimilation were totally lacking. This was contrary to official French discourse which was much hyped only during public and local elections.

The Munich attacks on the Israeli Olympic team resulted in a spate of assassinations against Palestinian public figures. Both Al-Hamshari and late Ezziddin Al-Qalaq were murdered.

The outbreak of the *Intifada* in 1987, with its images of Israeli atrocities, gave a considerable boost to the cause and the number of French sympathizers increased considerably. Advocacy committees emerged in various parts of France. The visit to the Elysée Palace of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat gave much legitimacy to the cause. The signing of the Oslo Accords resulted in serious rifts among Palestinians and reflected negatively on internal relations of the Solidarity movement. France Palestine Society's say in major issues began to be more evident mainly due to the support it received from the Communist Party and the PLO's representative office in Paris. Following the Oslo Accords, the Solidarity movement became increasingly flexible and its spread among the French increased.

Most important of all, Arabs living on the fringe of French society began to become more involved in activities and their national and religious awareness intensified as they began to identify themselves with their nation's issues. Their involvement drew various attacks from Zionist organizations like Bita and the Jewish Defense League, with ensuing clashes requiring police intervention on occasions. GUPS played an important role in increasing national awareness of militant Islamic factors whose religious discourse alienated many French and Jews. In a similar vein, Arabs from the second and third generations became more politically active and their solidarity with the cause took various forms.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### The Euro-Palestinian Statement

The statement addresses the following principles:

- ▶ Peace in Europe rides on justice in the Middle East.
- ▶ At a time when Israel turns its back to peace, flouts international law and ignores the basic rights of Palestinians, it simultaneously follows a policy of pillage and closures with impunity and even with the blessing of the US and other European countries.
- ▶ Concurrently, the Americans continue their illegal occupation of Iraq against the will of international society, which potentiates enormous risks for the whole world and the European Union in particular. The events that rocked Madrid are a clear testament to that.
- ▶ European citizens from all origins and sectors, have decided to run for the European parliament to make their voices of justice and deference of international law are heard. They reject all divisions along ethnic and racial lines bequeathed from the Middle Ages.

- ▶ The 'axis of evil' should not be associated with any specific religion or civilization. It is a by-product of American and Israeli aggressive wars and the bombardment of civilians for the acquisition of illegal material gains under the guise of the much-maligned democracy.
- ▶ The Europeans cannot be easily outsmarted. In a recent poll, 59% of Europeans believe that Israel is the number one, primary danger to international peace.
- ▶ What measures have been taken to end the cycle of violence and bloodletting?
- ▶ Europe is the strongest economic bloc in the world. Why is it often described as helpless?
- ▶ There will be no future for the peoples of the European Union nor will there be any peaceful coexistence among its various multi-cultural groups, unless justice and the rights of others are upheld and preserved, beginning with the Middle East.
- ▶ The Palestinian/Israeli conflict has caused great damage to European diplomats. Discourses calling for security and the fight against terrorism are alarmingly directed against the helpless segments in society especially those of Arab and African descent.
- ▶ All those calling for a just peace in the Middle East are being attacked with charges against them which only helps to heighten fanaticism and intolerance. This needs to end.
- ▶ Europe must shoulder its responsibilities and honor its obligations to the Geneva Accords and relevant UN resolutions. The European Parliament must be empowered to implement its own resolutions. On April 10, 2002, the European parliament voted to suspend the Economic Israeli-European Partnership Agreement due to Israeli non-compliance with the provisions of Article 2 which calls for respect of human rights. The resolution was shelved and never put into force.

Accordingly, the Euro-Palestinian Statement demands:

- ▶ Full Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied since June 1967
- ▶ Imposition of sanctions on Israel as long as its flagrant violations of basic Palestinian rights continues, especially building the Apartheid Wall, confiscating territories and incarcerating activists from both sides
- ▶ A European military contingent to protect Palestinian civilians and a just solution to the conflict in accordance with relevant UN Resolutions

- ▶ Non-participation of Europe in America's wars waged under the pretense of 'democracy', 'peace' or 'liberation', even if waged under UN cover

In view of the polemics this list has elicited, the following should be observed:

- ▶ The campaign against the organizers of the festival which was held on September 27, 2003 has been resumed against the organizers of the second Solidarity Festival which was held on November 6, 2004 under the auspices of the Euro List-Palestine.
- ▶ Hostility to this list brings together Zionist elements with friendly French elements. The Zionists on their part accuse the list as being anti Semitic and some of its members have been threatened while other elements of the Solidarity movement have promoted unsubstantiated rumors claiming that the list is funded by the Mossad or by elements of the French ultra-right.

## Appendix 2

Address of the Palestinian Community's Society in France

The main headquarters of the community are at the following address:

Maisondes Tiers Mondes – 27, Bd Louis Blanc – 34000  
Montpellier

The Secretariat in Paris can be reached at the following address;  
Rue del l'Abbe' Groult 75015, Paris, 105  
apf\_paris@yahoo.fr

Addresses of local branches are also available.

## Appendix 3

Committees of the Palestinian Community's Society in France

- ▶ Social and Legal Guidance Committee headed by Sufian Ramahi.
- ▶ Cultural and Media Committee headed by Abdul Salam Klaish.
- ▶ Right of Return Committee headed by Waleed Atallah.

## Endnotes

1. This is a more accurate term to describe the 'Palestinian community'.
2. The idea behind the Jacobinic system evolved during the French Revolution of 1789. They exhibited a jingoistic revolutionary spirit and were

antithetical with the ruling aristocracy. Today, Jacobinism reflects a more central and comprehensive view of the Republic. They advocate granting absolute power to the national government at the expense of local governments.

3. 20% of all Palestinians in France work as businessmen. The rest work as employees in the public and private sectors. Among the professional employees very few have found work through the Palestinian or Arab communities.

4. For the full address of the society refer to Appendix 2.

5. The committee was formed in the following manner: President— Dr. Kama Mahmoud - (a retired economist living in Montpellier); General coordinator and Vice President—Safwat Ibraghith (legal advisor with the Palestinian Mission to UNESCO living in Paris); Treasurer— Enas Ismail (owner of a Palestinian restaurant in Paris); Secretary— Sandrine Mansour (a researcher in Nantes); Media Officer— Walid Shehada (communication engineer living in Toulouse).

6. Unanimously, the following members were fielded and responsibilities distributed among them in the following manner: Head of Branch — Enas Ismail; Secretary— Nayla Hanna; Treasurer — Mousa Sawan; Foreign Relations — Noha Rashmawi; Internal Affairs — Ala Sagir.

7. Ibrahim Al-Sous graduated from the Protestant School in Beirut. Among his works is 'A Message to a Jewish Friend' published in 1988. In an interview with a magazine for the Jewish sector, Al-Sous lashed out at proponents of the Palestinian cause on the left. He said: "Good-willed people are better for us than some in the extreme left."

Which volume, edition and page number? **:[AS]Comment**

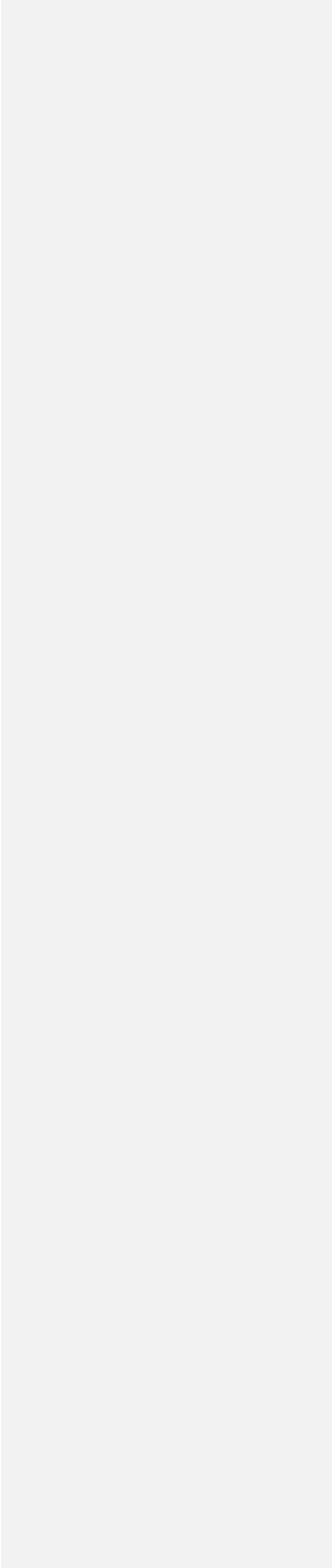
8. Refer to Le Monde on the subject of this rift.

9. Refer to Le Monde, January 18-19, 2004; page 10.

10. Palestinian Return Center in London, Palestinian Community League in London; Palestine League and Palestinian Communities' Society in Austria; Association of Palestinian Societies in Sweden; Palestinian Community Society in France; Roots' Society in Switzerland; Palestinian Community League in Norway; Palestinian Community League in Holland; Al-Karma League and Palestinian Community Society in Berlin; The Society for the Support of the Palestinian Community in Italy; Palestinian Community in Denmark; Al-Aqsa Cultural Center; Catalonian-Palestinian Cultural Cooperation Society; Palestinian Community in Catalonia; and Paliars in Spain.

This needs to be more **:[AS]Comment** specific

11. Refer to the appendices of the statement sent by the Palestinian Active Groups in Switzerland asking the communities to participate in the Palestinian national decision making process in a bid to restructure the PLO in a more democratic way.



16,260 words/original