

(23 Feb, 2009)

The Civil Society & Private Sector Initiative on Gaza's Reconstruction and Development

The duty to protect the reconstruction effort and to ensure its success is a national, professional and moral responsibility that this initiative reflects, and deems necessary to communicate to the Palestinian National Authority, the deposed government in Gaza, Arab states and the international community, particularly the US and EU, United Nations and all donor countries and concerned organizations.

We, the undersigned, are a group of leaders and major contributors in Palestinian civil society, private sector and academia who are deeply concerned with the aftermath of Israel's war on Gaza and the necessity to ensure the success and sustainability of Gaza's reconstruction and development. The war has come after a continued suffocating siege beginning in mid June of 2007 and has, regrettably, taken advantage of Palestinian division and a mostly inactive and, decidedly weakened, Arab and international community. Not only do we believe that the economic, social and developmental state of the Gaza Strip is alarming in the war's aftermath, but we also suspect that the Israeli government's policy continues to aim at isolating the Gaza Strip and seems headed to utilize the reconstruction effort to cement Gaza's separation. This would only hamper reconstruction and would politically undermine the establishment of a contiguous Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

On the eve of the Gaza Donor Conference planned on March 2 in Egypt, we urge the institution and endorsement of a reconstruction effort based on national and comprehensive development. Considering its scale and greatly varied, yet intertwined, priorities, Gaza's reconstruction must motivate renewed resolve for Palestinian unity and seize the opportunity to create partnerships between civil and political leaderships for the benefit of all. Reconstruction must consider the pressing, as well as the longer term, needs of society and be utilized to propel Gaza's human and economic development potentials which were severely compromised by the siege and recent war. The faith of all Palestinians in the integrity of their political system, their social resilience - in spite of the damage brought on by internecine fighting and prolonged political division -, the necessity to avert the practical separation between the West Bank and Gaza, and the great moral virtues of the Palestinian cause, must be restored.

We hereby call upon all Palestinian factions, particularly Fatah and Hamas, to engage in an immediate and genuine reconciliation process that bypasses differences and factional interests. Political stability and social coherence constitute the minimum expected for any reconstruction effort to be comprehensive enough, successful and sustainable, and this could only be delivered through reconciliation. Otherwise, reconstruction would end up a failure, great resources and funding would be wasted and the suffering of the people of the Gaza Strip, especially those most affected by the war, would be unnecessarily and dangerously prolonged.

Moreover, we strongly caution divided Palestinians against missing what they owe their people in, at least, achieving a clear basis for unity before the commencement of the Gaza Donor Conference in March. For Palestinians to participate in the conference while still divided would only risk an

ineffective relationship with donors and the international community at large. Equally troubling would be the continuation of the unhealthy debate on the party, or group, which would undertake and oversee reconstruction. This would ease - what would then become inevitable - the involvement of outsiders in Palestinian internal matters whether directly or indirectly while the international community loses sight of the political role Palestinians expect from it in pressuring Israel's government to not obstruct their reconstruction and development efforts.

Based on the aforementioned, the group announces the formation of a preparatory committee, with membership that is well accomplished in various fields, to monitor and lobby reconstruction steering efforts in a complementary fashion in order to achieve the following goals,

- Help steer reconstruction efforts in a direction that meets the urgent and longer term needs of Palestinians and especially those most severely affected.
- Help reconstruction efforts to achieve the ultimate benefit of sustainable development of human resources, the economy and all other severely compromised fundamentals.
- Advocate uncompromising clarity, transparency and accountability in all reconstruction efforts.
- Provide professional and technical contributions, where sought, needed and applicable in all stages of reconstruction.

The preparatory committee considers its main role as consultative and critically observant in nature and not as technical or executive. The group's membership is open, and encouraged, to all relevant parties and individuals who are able to contribute and share its stated goals. The group undertaking this initiative does not place itself in competition with, or as an alternative to, any other party or institution. It strives to support the ability of the Palestinian people, particularly in Gaza at this time, to develop effectively given the great challenges they live through; challenges which must be faced with unity and a very focused and self critical strategy.

Preparatory Committee

Eyad Al Sarraj	Omar Shaban	Fawaz Abu Sitta
Gaza Community Mental Program Health	PalThink For Strategic Studies	Al-Azhar University
Abed Al-Aziz Abo Alqaraya	Abed Al Karim Ashour	Mohamed Al-Alami
PNGOs	Agricultural relief	information systems Corporate
Sami Abdel-Shafi		
Management Consultant		

Undersigned

No.	Name	Job
	Tayssir Mehasin	PNGOs
	Khaled Abdel-Shafi	Independent
	Sami Abdel-Shafi	Management Consultant
	Mustafa Masoud	Businessman
	Atef Shehda Aowda	Agricultural Work Committees
	Amjad Al Shawa	PNGOs
	Mohamed Al Bakry	PNGOs
	Fawaz Abu Sitta	Al-Azhar University
	Mahmoud Saleh Khalil	The producers of flowers
	Mounir Yousif Abo Eyda	Abo Eyda Company
	Dr. Yahya Al Sarraj	University College of Applied Sciences
	Omar Shaban	PalThink For Strategic Studies
	Abed Al Karim Ashour	Agricultural relief
	Eyad Al Sarraj	Gaza Community Mental Program Health
	Naeem Al Galban	Al-Wedad Association
	Rafeeq Hasouna	Businessman
	Mohamed Zeyada	Contractors Federation
	Ahmed Alfaraa	PALINVEST
	Ghassan Qasem	Agricultural Society
	Ali Al-Hayek	Federation of Industries
	Mohamed Al-Almi	information systems Corporate
	Jawdat Al-Khoudary	Businessman
	Mohamed Al-Sosy	Islamic Relief
	Mohamed Naja	Dar El Khibra

	Naseir Al-Helo	Businessman
	Amro Hamad	Federation of Industries
	Mohamed Rozzi	PalThink For Strategic Studies
	Ahmed Al-Shfey	Cooperative Gaza Association