



Civil Peace and the Rule of Law Conference

Conference: “Civil Peace and the Rule of Law”

Recommendations to Preserve Civil Peace and the Development of an Integrated Information System to Support it

Ramallah – The “Civil Peace and the Rule of Law” conference, which was organized by the Palestinian Association for Empowerment and Local Development- REFORM, [The Palestinian Initiative for Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy- MIFTAH](#), the [Women Center for Legal Aid and Counseling \(WCLAC\)](#), the [Human Rights and Democracy Media Center \(SHAMS\)](#), and ACT- Alternative Dispute Resolution and Studies was held last week in Ramallah under the auspices of President Mahmoud Abbas. Presidential Advisor of Legal Affairs, Hassan Arouri, spoke on the President’s behalf while the Justice Minister, Ali Abu Diak, spoke on behalf of Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah. Tribal committees, law enforcement services, representatives from the district attorney’s office, and a large number of civil society and youth organizations, academics and legal experts from the various districts also attended.

Within five sessions, the participants discussed the pitfalls of the proliferation of weapons and crime in Palestinian society and the role of the judiciary, law enforcement agencies, the prosecutor general, the police, the media and NGOs. They also discussed the concept of participation and active citizenship in prompting civic peace. The participants pointed to the challenges facing the Palestinians and their various communities, some of which law enforcement services cannot actively access. However, they said the concern was not so much about organized crime in Palestine as much as the development of vigilante groups that could take root in areas outside the jurisdiction of the PA and its security services. The participants

stressed on the need for a motivational framework to promote civic peace that will set the stage for cooperation with official institutions in facing these challenges. They also called for uniting popular efforts to continue the battle for national freedom and for ending the occupation.

The conference was aimed at reaffirming the participation of civil society institutions in promoting civic peace alongside the state's official agencies, strengthening their role in promoting the values of citizenship and active participation in civic peace and reaffirming their role in preserving the values that protect social cohesion. It also stressed on their role in safeguarding the cultural heritage of the Palestinian people and promoting respect for the law.

The conference convened under the banner: "Towards a Palestinian State where Law and Social Justice Prevail," in light of events created by the political division, which in turn has damaged the Palestinians' social fabric. Most prominently were the shooting deaths in 2016 and the outlawed weapons in the hands of civilians, in addition to the spread of drugs in various areas, all of which threaten civic peace and the rule of law.

The opening session of the conference hosted Presidential Advisor, Hassan Arouri, and Justice Minister, Ali Abu Diyak, both of whom confirmed the support of the president and government for the conference and for working towards achieving the rule of law and civic peace.

The participants concluded with the following recommendations:

One: Safeguarding civic peace and preventing crime

Reaffirming the legitimacy of the security establishment in fighting crime in its various forms; the need to develop tools and methods for the Palestinian police and security forces in fighting crime and lawbreaking; expanding the geographic scope for Palestinian jurisdiction whereby judicial institutions can set up headquarters in new areas of jurisdiction; enforcing Palestinian law over the widest possible area.

Two: Media and awareness

-Spreading the concepts of civic peace and the rule of law; safeguarding educational curriculum by training the Ministry of Education team on introducing the concepts of civil peace and rule of law into the educational process so as to bring up generations that believe in honoring the law and promoting concepts of civic peace such as tolerance, justice, accountability and equality; formulating a complete and integral media system to support and promote civic peace and to monitor rhetoric espousing hate and incitement.

-Developing a citizenry media that counters polarization and promotes the culture of dialogue, acceptance of the other, tolerance and differences, renounces violence and respects others' opinions, far removed from discrediting the other, slander and claiming single truths.

Three: Bridging the Palestinian mandate

-Supporting alternative judicial means in resolving internal Palestinian conflicts, such as mediation and arbitration, without prejudice to the regular judiciary and its authority, in order to halt any dealings with Israeli courts on the one hand, and to open up opportunities to impose the rule of law in all areas of the Palestinian state within its borders, according to international terms of reference, on the other.

-Forming neighborhood committees in the various elected Jerusalem neighborhoods, which would allow for a special mechanism for elections (with the aim of gaining popular legitimacy firstly, and having the ability to enforce the rule of law in these neighborhoods, secondly).

-Formulating a uniting framework for institutions that operate in Jerusalem through a higher advisory council (in coordination with the Jerusalem governor and the Jerusalem affairs unit in the president's office). The council will be based on the centralization of information and decentralization in execution in the context of integral roles and specializations. That is, Palestinian institutions operating in Jerusalem will maintain their independence but will coordinate amongst themselves and offer help, expertise and services in the interest of Jerusalem residents. Hence, everyone can access information so there is no overlapping in their work; promoting more active efforts among Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem, especially in offering services and assistance between the public, NGO and private sectors. This can be achieved through partnerships between sectors such as education, health, law, housing, etc.

-A call to build and develop the capabilities of Local Government Units towards crossing the Palestinian mandate over into Area C.

Four: Responding to the needs of less fortunate areas

-Boosting the confidence of refugees in the camps in the state's institutions through improving the services offered to them and strengthening the response of public policies to their needs.

-Working towards involving the Palestinian public, especially youth, in formulating PA public policies.

- Developing local authority bodies to boost their response to the needs of the public and to raise the level of awareness among Palestinians in areas not under PA rule; working to institutionalize the involvement of women and youth in this framework.

-Reviving coordination and integration between official Palestinian state, non-governmental and private sector institutions in the process of social development and in combatting polarization.

Five: Promoting the partnership of women in forming public policies

Promoting women's participation in decision-making frameworks and improving their representation in local and national leadership frameworks, especially in difficult-access areas, in Jerusalem, refugee camps and Area C.

-Providing protection for Palestinian women from all forms of violence and marginalization; facilitating their access to the Palestinian justice system and increasing women's participation in public life, including social and cultural activities.

-Holding an annual conference on civic peace; hence, the organizers will form a follow-up committee to implement the aforementioned recommendations.

-Announcement of a civil coalition to promote civic peace and the rule of law; the organizers will work on developing a reference framework for this coalition and hold grassroots meetings in the various districts to hold dialogues on social issues.