



State Information Service
Information Sector

Egypt

and the Palestinian Issue

Dr.

Ahmed Abul Hassan Zard

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Introduction

The Arab-Israeli struggle's history, in general, and the military one in particular acknowledges that the Egyptian army had made big sacrifices to support the Palestinian issue.

Throughout seven decades, Egypt has been supporting the Palestinian people in negotiations with the Israeli side and making relentless efforts to achieve the Palestinian national reconciliation.

Throughout approximately seven decades, the Palestinian issue has been remained one of the main Egyptian foreign policy's files. Egypt didn't pay due attention to the desperate attempts, which seek distortion of its regional role in the area. Egypt, in its all movements, highlights the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, on top of which its right to establish an independent state with the Eastern Jerusalem (Al-Quds) as its capital.

Egypt had succeeded to halt the Israeli aggression on Gaza in 2008, 2012 and 2014. It appealed to all parties to positively act with the Arab peace initiative, out of its belief that what could be achieved today is better than what could be repaired in the morrow.

The situation of the Palestinian issue has not been affected by the area's developments and events. In spite of its internal affairs and the regional developments, Egypt faces nowadays, it didn't slack to stop bloodshed of the Palestinians, however it succeeded to stop the Israeli aggression on Gaza in

September 2014 and organized the successful Gaza Reconstruction Conference, so that some \$ 5.4 billions were provided to reconstruct Gaza.

In all its contacts with the world leaders, Egypt reiterates necessity of giving the Palestinians hope to establish their state, living in peace with the Israeli people. Egypt said it is ready to offer the guarantees that could achieve peace for the all without any form of treat to the Israelis nor the Palestinians.

Chairman of State Information Service

Ambassador Salaheldin Abdel Sadek

Chapter One

Egypt's Stance on the Palestinian Cause Before July Revolution

1- Supporting the Palestinian Participation in the First Arab Summit:

Since the 40s of the twentieth century, Egypt is keen on developing a collective Arab Stance towards the situation in Palestine. On October 7, 1944, Egypt, in accordance with the Arab governments at the conclusion of the Preparatory Committee of the Public Conference on Arab League Foundation, issued a decision emphasizing the necessity of Palestine's independence. Hence, the representatives of the Arab signatory States on the Arab League Charter, issued a decree on March 22, 1945, calling for the selection of a participating delegate in the agenda of the Arab League Council. When Egypt hosted the first Arab Conference in May 1946, it was keen on emphasizing that the Palestinian Cause is the issue of all Arabs and that we should defend the rights of the Palestinian People.

2- The Egyptian Army Intervention to prevent the Israeli Massacres:

Following the end of the British mandate over Palestine in May 1948, the Egyptian Army intervened in an attempt to prevent the escalation of massacres committed by Israel against the Palestinian people in the Village of Deir Yassin. The Egyptian Army bears the brunt of the war against the Israeli forces where thousands of Egyptian soldiers and officers were

martyred and injured. The military history testifies that the Egyptian Army has honorably carried out its tasks.

3- Supporting the All-Palestine Government:

On September 22, 1948, Egypt insisted that Palestine should be represented in the Arab League and international forums. The All-Palestine Government was announced and headquartered in Gaza when it was administered by Egypt. Though being under the Egyptian administration following the Armistice Agreement, Egypt has kept the Palestinian identity of the Gaza Strip.

Chapter Two

Palestine as a Central Issue for the Leaders of July Revolution

It is known that the 1948 War, which had led to thousands of Egyptian martyrs, was one of the main reasons for the outbreak of the July Revolution in 1952, where the Palestinian issue has become a central issue in the thought and work of the leaders of the Revolution.

As a result of Egypt's stance that supports the Palestinian cause, Egypt was subjected to the Tripartite Aggression in 1956 in which Israel participated with Britain and France. Then, Egypt was subjected to the 1967 attack as a result of its clear political stance in supporting the Palestinian issue; and facing the Israeli ambitions in the Arab water and land; as well as rejecting Israel's threats to the Arab States.

Thanks to Egypt's support, the Palestinian struggle entered a stronger and more effective stage and the Palestinian cause had a tangible presence in international forums. In the African Summit Conference in Casablanca in January 1961, the Palestinian issue became African for the first time.

The Arab Summit Conference held in Cairo from 13 to 17 January, 1964, gave a great impetus for the Palestinian struggle, as the Summit had issued a number of resolutions supporting the Palestinian right to defend themselves and their national soil.

Encouraging the Establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization

Egypt has encouraged the establishment of a Palestinian entity that reflects the will of the Palestinian people. During the first Arab Summit in January 13th, 1964, and in response to the invitation of President Gamal Abdel Nasser, a resolution was issued to establish a body to represent the Palestinian people that aim at enabling them to present their issue in international forums. That Authority was known by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Cairo was headquarters for many of the meetings of the Palestinian National Council, the highest institution in the Organization. Egypt did not leave any opportunity to present the Organization to the international community, starting by the former Soviet Union, the non-aligned countries, and reaching to the United Nations.

Egypt participated in September 1964 in the second Arab summit, which welcomed the establishment of the PLO in support of the Palestinian entity. Moreover, it adopted the Organization's resolution to establish the Palestinian Liberation Army and to identify the obligations of Member States to help them in exercising their missions. Furthermore, the Summit of Non-Aligned Countries was held in Cairo in October, which decided at the end of its activities, its support to the right of the Palestinians to regain their homeland, to self-determination, and to its struggle for liberation.

Because of Egypt's support for the Palestinian cause, and standing in the face of the Israeli threats to the Arab countries, especially Syria, Egypt was the target of the Israeli

aggression on the fifth of June, 1967. This aggression had led to the change in conditions in the Middle East; and Israel occupied the entire land of Palestine as well as large parts of Egypt and Syria.

In July 1970, Egypt had accepted Rogers Initiative as it contained some positive points; and she hoped to stop the Israeli occupation of Arab lands. The initiative included the necessity to bring peace to the region; conducting negotiations under the auspices of the UN envoy to reach a final agreement; and how to implement Resolution 242, including the withdrawal of Israel from the lands which were occupied in 1967; as well as finding a just settlement to the refugees problem; along with identifying the status of Jerusalem and the arrangements related to it.

The General Assembly issued an Egyptian Initiative in 1970. Its first resolution stipulates on the right of Palestinian people to self-determination. Egypt had also raised the problem of refugees and human rights in the occupied territories. Moreover, she succeeded in reaching the implementation of her proposal to form committees to investigate the conditions in the occupied territories, which contributed in the formation of an international public opinion that supports the Arab view and runs counter to Israel's practices in the occupied territories.

In September 28th, 1972, President Sadat was the first to propose the idea of establishing a temporary Palestinian government in response to the allegations of Golda Meir, Israel's Prime Minister at that time, that there are no Palestinian people.

Chapter Three

October Victory and the Return of World Momentum to the Palestinian Cause

One of the main results of the October 1973 War was restoring the balance between the Arabs and Israel, and moving the stalemate situation in the Middle East, in addition to restoring the momentum to the Palestinian issue. In October 16th, 1973, after the war had achieved its objectives, Egypt demanded the necessity to hold an international peace conference to settle the conflict in the Middle East, and the necessity of the participation of the PLO in the proposed conference as being a key player in the Middle East problem.

On an Egyptian proposal, the General Assembly of the UN issued in October 1975, Resolution No. 3375 (session 30), that the PLO shall be invited to participate in all efforts, discussions and conferences on the Middle East held under the UN auspices, on an equal footing with other interested parties.

Under exerted efforts to reconvene the Geneva Peace Conference, Egypt, in January 1976, had made a formal request to the foreign ministers of the United States and the Soviet Union as chairmen of the International Peace Conference to invite the PLO to participate in the Conference at the resumption of its activity.

In September 1976, it has been approved unanimously on a proposal by Egypt to grant the PLO full membership in the League of Arab States. Therefore, the PLO had the right to participate in the discussions and in decision-making

concerning the Arab nation after its role had been limited to participate in the discussions on the Palestinian issue only.

In September 1977, Egypt asked the General Assembly to study an urgent item on the Israeli illegal actions in the occupied territories which aim at changing the legal and demographic status of these lands in violation of international conventions and resolutions of the UN.

On November 26th, 1977, and in light of President Sadat's initiative, Egypt directed formal invitations to all parties to the conflict, including the PLO to hold a preliminary conference in Cairo to prepare for the resumption of the Geneva International peace conference. And this was the first time that the PLO is officially called to participate in a peace conference on an equal footing with other interested parties.

Despite the non-participation of the PLO in the Preliminary Conference, which was held in Cairo on December 22nd, 1977, the Palestinian flag has been raised during the opening session. And the Palestinian cause took control on the discussions at the conference, where the Egyptian delegation explained the dimensions of the issue, and stressed on the need to restore the Palestinian people all their rights.

Chapter Four

Egypt and Supporting Establishment of an Independent Palestinian State

1- Encouraging Establishment of Palestine's Autonomy:

During the talks of "Leeds" Castle which was held on 18 July, 1978 to revive peace negotiations conferences, Egypt presented a plan for autonomy for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that called for a full withdrawal of Israel from these territories, including East Jerusalem, provided that a transitional period of five years should be set, in which Jordan and Egypt will run the Palestinian areas in cooperation with representatives of the Palestinian people for establishment of an autonomy for the Palestinians.

Israel rejected the Egyptian proposals and a dispute over the Palestinian issue emerged without any agreement about the settlement including the withdrawal from the Egyptian territories.

After arduous negotiations between Egypt and Israel, the Camp David accords have been reached in September 1978. They had two documents: "the first" is a framework on the arrangements and bases on a plan for autonomy for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a transitional period, not exceeding five years in order to reach a full autonomy. The "second" document included a framework for a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

2- Supporting Upgrading Palestinian Representation in the United Nations:

Egypt participated on December 9, 1997 in the initiative put forward by the Arab Group to the United Nations, which envisaged raising Palestinian representation from just an observer status in UN to a semi- state member one. Then. this initiative was put forward again on 24/6/1998 in order to grant (PLO) some powers that allow its delegation to work in complete freedom without filtering functions advantages and benefits.

3- Promotion the Presence of (PLO) on the International Level:

Egypt played a principal role in 1983 for the preparation of the international conference of Palestine issue, that was held in Geneva with the participation of 137 countries, including (PLO) as a representative of the Palestinian people.

The conference decided to call for an international conference in the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations and on the bases of the two resolutions of the Security Council 242 and 338. As a result of the direct efforts of president Mubarak with the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on November 7, 1985, Arafat announced " Cairo Declaration" which was a real taking-off point to open the way for dealing with the organization, because this Declaration showed that this organization condemns all the outside military operations and all forms of terrorism and punishes whoever violates it.

Egypt made in December 1988 intensive efforts that resulted in the issuance of the first American decision to open a dialogue with the PLO and start a new phase of peace efforts.

Securing the Exit of Palestinian Forces from Lebanon:–

Egypt strongly condemned the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 and called on June 28 in the same year, the United States officially to start immediately a dialogue with the Palestinian side after Yasser Arafat said he had accepted the UN resolutions.

Egypt, on September 20, has recalled its ambassador to Israel because of the escalating military operation in Lebanon and protest to the massacres of Sabra and Shatila.

The Egyptian diplomacy has made strenuous efforts on 22 September, 1982, to provide the due military protection to secure the Palestinian forces when they left Lebanon until arrival in the destination ports.

Chapter Five

Encouraging the Palestinian-Israeli Negotiations

Egypt presented on June 6, 1989, its ten-point peace plan as a base to launch an integrated negotiations process that leads to comprehensive peace. These points include the necessity of solving the Palestinian issue according to the Security Council resolutions no.(242) and (338); the principle of land for peace; as well as adopting the political rights for the Palestinians; along with ceasing all the Israeli settlement activities.

Moreover, Egypt declared its support for all the initiatives that aim at achieving the desires of the Palestinian people and enabling them of their legitimate rights, on top of which is establishing an independent State. From this prospective, Egypt had supported all the agreements and initiatives since Oslo Accord in 1993.

1. Egypt and Oslo Accord in 1993:

Egypt exerted great efforts during the period from 1990 to 2000 where it supported the Initiative of George Bush the father to end the Arab- Israeli conflict according to the principle of "Land for Peace" on March 6, 1991. Moreover, it participated in Madrid Conference for Peace on October 31, 1991.

Egypt also had a distinctive presence in signing Oslo Accord on September 13, 1993 that was reached by the Palestinian and Israeli parties. Egypt approved of the principles mentioned in it, especially that they are the same

mentioned in the Camp David Summit in the Middle East in 1978, where the Accord mentioned that" The aim of Israeli–Palestinian negotiations was to establish an elected Palestinian Interim Authority, for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on the UN Security Council resolutions".

2. Signing the Declaration of Principles in 1994 in Cairo:

On May 4, 1994, the executive agreement to declare the principles was signed in Cairo after intensive negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli parties inside and outside Egypt.

3. Cairo Protocol in 1995:

In August 1995, Egypt played a prominent role in narrowing the gap between Israel and the Palestinian Authority until they signed the Cairo Protocol that includes transferring a number of powers to the Palestinian Authority.

On September 24, 1995, in Taba, they signed an interim agreement to widen the Palestinian self-rule. Then, the Agreement was finally signed in Washington, on September 28, 1995, with the presence of President Mubarak. According to Taba Agreement, the Israeli withdrawal from the big cities in the West Bank, which are: Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus, Bethlehem (Beit Lahm), Qalqilyia and Ramallah took place.

4. Peace Makers' Conference in Sharm El- Sheikh:

Egypt made an initiative on March 13, 1996 to call for an international conference for peacemakers in Sharm El- Sheikh to enhance the peace process in the Middle East, preserve it

and to guarantee its continuity to face its challenges. On May 5, 1996 negotiations concerned with the final situation were opened in a procedural meeting in Taba.

On January 11, 1997, Egypt presented a suggestion to complete the stages of the Israeli redeployment in the rest of the areas of the West Bank during 12 months where its first phase begins on February 28, 1997 and its third phase ends at a time that does not exceed the mid of 1998.

On January 15, 1997, Hebron (Al Khalil) Agreement was signed as a result of the Egyptian efforts. It was about the general framework for the security arrangements in Hebron and the following phases of the redeployment.

6. Supporting the Negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians:

On May 27, 1997, an Egyptian- Israeli Summit was held in Sharm El- Sheikh at the aim of motivating peace process and removing obstacles that hindered the continuity of the Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations.

Egypt supported the Palestinian side on October 23, 1998 in its demand to conform to the "Wye Plantation" Agreement that they reached with Israel as an application to Oslo Accord that gave an impression that there is a move on the path to peace.

7. Signing a Memorandum of Understanding to Implement the "Wye River" Agreement:

Egypt hosted the conference held in Sharm El- Sheikh on September 5, 1999, that aimed at signing the memorandum

concerning the mechanisms of implementing the "Wye River" Agreement in a historical celebration that the Egyptian efforts had contributed intensively. It also helped in setting the final features for the agreement. In general, it included the redeployment in 11% of the West Bank lands and delivers it to the Palestinians on two phases, which allow them to have control on 40% of the West Bank lands.

Chapter Six

Egypt's Role to Calm the Situation between Palestinians and Israelis

The period since 2000 has witnessed the most difficult and complicated stages of the Palestinian issue especially after Sharon's visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the subsequent serious field, political and international developments. Egypt bore the heaviest burden in dealing with them, and in reducing its impact on the Palestinian issue as possible, and defending what was achieved of Palestinian gains to establish an independent Palestinian State.

On September 28, 2000, Egypt has intensified its efforts and communications to contain the deteriorating situation in the Palestinian territories and to resume the peace negotiations in order to maintain the positive steps that have been reached on the Palestinian track during the previous stages of negotiations; among these efforts are:

1. Sharm El-Sheikh Summit (October 16, 2000):

Egypt took the initiative to hold a summit in Sharm El-Sheikh on October 16, 2000 where the US President Bill Clinton and the Secretary-General of the United Nations participated to discuss the possibility of a withdrawal of Israeli forces to their headquarters before the outbreak of the Intifada and to end the Israeli siege imposed on the Palestinian territories.

2. Continuous Efforts to Push the Palestinian-Israeli Negotiations:

Egypt participated on October 18, 2002 in the efforts that led to the approval of the road map adopted by the Quartet that includes a comprehensive vision to solve the Palestinian issue.⁽¹⁾

The Egyptian efforts contributed in holding Sharm El-Sheikh Conference on June 3, 2003 with the participation of some Arab countries' leaders and the presence of the US President Bush to discuss ways of calming the tense situation in the Palestinian territories for the resumption of negotiations to implement the internationally and regionally supported road map.

On June 23, 2004, Egypt presented an initiative to carry out a direct role in paving the road to implement the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip.

3. Hosting the Meeting of the International Quartet:

As a result of the Egyptian efforts to make the major international powers participate in the settlement efforts; and the practical move to put the plan of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip in the framework of the road map, the

(1) The Quartet consists of: the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations. It is established in Madrid in 2002 by the Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar as a result of the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East. The Current envoy of the Commission is Tony Blair.

Quartet held a meeting on July 24, 2004, in the Egyptian Taba, with the presence of representatives of the United States, Russia, European Union and the United Nations to discuss the Egyptian initiative, as well as discussing the reconstruction plan to secure the economic and humanitarian Palestinian needs.

Egypt has also hosted many other meetings of the Quartet in Sharm El-Sheikh on November 23, 2004, and on November 9, 2008 to discuss ways of settling the Palestinian issue.

4. Egypt's Efforts to Calm the Situation between the Palestinians and Israelis

Within the framework of Egypt's intensive efforts to defuse the crisis between Israel and the Palestinians and restore calm once again, Egypt has sent representatives to Israel on September 30, 2005, where the Egyptian delegation informed the Israeli side that the Palestinian factions' are committed to calmness, and in return, Israel must stop taking provocative actions that push the Palestinians to respond.

Egypt also holds talks on October 26, 2005 with the Israeli side in the framework of Egypt's efforts and communications to strengthen peace efforts and overcome obstacles that hinder its adoption especially with regard to the issue of opening the crossings, the airport and the port of Gaza after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip.

The visit of the Minister Omar Soliman on December 22, 2005 to Israel and Ramallah, targeted to contain the escalation between the Israeli and Palestinian sides, pave the

way to extend the truce, and continue the implementation of Sharm El- Sheikh Understandings, and maintain the momentum from Israel's withdrawal from Gaza.

Egypt also worked to secure the cease-fire on November 26, 2006, that extended to include the West Bank. It also worked to reach a deal whereby Palestinian prisoners shall be released in exchange with the Israeli soldier captured in the Gaza Strip.

Chapter Seven

Egypt... and Achieving Palestinian Reconciliation

Egypt had exerted - and is still- strenuous efforts for the unity of the Palestinian factions. It hosted in Cairo, since November 11, 2002, all Palestinian parties in repeated rounds in order to help the Palestinian factions to achieve reconciliation in order to achieve a package of objectives which are:

- The necessity to set a unified political program among all factions, its fundamental base is to authorize the Palestinian Authority to hold negotiations with Israel on crucial issues, including cease-fire.
- Any faction or the Palestinian Authority should not violate the unified political program or take decisions unilaterally.
- Support the Palestinian Authority and rebuild the PLO institutions.

The works of the Palestinian National Dialogue Conference began in Cairo on March 15, 2005, in the framework of the Egyptian efforts to support the Palestinian issue, with the participation of 13 delegations from the factions and political parties. In the forefront came: Fatah, Hamas and Jihad Organizations, The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), The Central Committee of the Palestinian Liberation Front and the Palestinian People's Party (PPP).

The Minister Omar Soliman has confirmed in the conference opening speech that the factions meeting is a crucial meeting to discuss the vital issues to agree on common denominators that work can be done through in the coming phase.

The Egyptian-Palestinian meetings continued without interruption in 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008 years. Furthermore, Egyptian security delegations had visited Gaza and Ramallah in an effort to heal and arrange the Palestinian internal house.

It is worth mentioning that Egypt directed an urgent appeal on January 6, 2007⁽²⁾ to all the Palestinian people, and to the leaders and cadres of all Palestinian organizations and factions, inviting them to respect the sanctity of the Palestinian blood, and to stop fighting among themselves. Egypt also calls upon them to put the Palestinian supreme interests above any other consideration or personal interest, and to work together to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people to achieve their legitimate aspirations to establish their independent state.

**** Resumption of the Palestinian-Palestinian Dialogue Sessions**

On August 30, 2008, Egypt began a new phase of dialogue among the Palestinian factions; starting from September 2 to October 2008, Egypt intensified its communications with all factions to achieve the Palestinian

(2) Declaration to the Middle East News Agency on January 6, 2007

national reconciliation, in terms of tackling any erosion in the gains of the Palestinian struggle against the Israeli occupation. Moreover, not to give any excuse for a party that argues that the slow progress on the peaceful way is a result of the internal Palestinian situations.

On October 22, 2008, Egypt presented a paper for comprehensive dialogue among the Palestinian organizations on the issue of the formation of a Palestinian government of national consensus. The paper includes ideas concerning the (PLO), its structure, membership and participation of all in it as it is the legitimate and sole representative of the Palestinian people.

Chapter Eight

Egyptian Stance on the Aggression on Gaza

Egypt, which opened the door for peace in the Middle East, has never abandoned her historic commitments to supporting the Palestinian cause. Thus, Egypt continued her efforts and communications with world leaders since the Israeli aggression on Gaza in 2008 and the subsequent attacks in November, 2012 ,and in July 2014 in order to stop the Palestinian bloodshed. The Egyptian initiatives declared since January 6, 2009 to put all the parties and the international community face their responsibilities.

First :Egypt and stopping the aggression on Gaza in 2008

1- The Egyptian initiative to control the situation in Gaza:

This initiative was presented at the press conference held by President Mubarak and the French President Sarkozy, on 6/1/2009, in Cairo to control the deteriorating situation in Gaza. The initiative was based on the following basis:

First: Israel and the Palestinian factions immediately accept cease fire for a specific period, in a way that allows opening safe crossings for aid assistance to the people of the strip and allows Egypt to continue her efforts to reach a final and comprehensive cease-fire.

Second: Egypt called both Israel and the Palestinian side to an urgent meeting to reach arrangements and guarantees to ensure that the current escalation will not be repeated, and to address its causes, including securing the borders and to ensure the Re-opening of the

crossings and lifting the siege. Egypt has been willing to participate in discussing this issue with the two sides, the Palestinian and the Israeli ,as well as with the European Union and the rest of the international Quartet parties.

Third: Egypt renews its call on the National Authority and all Palestinian factions to respond to the Egyptian efforts to achieve the Palestinian reconciliation as being the main requirement to overcome the challenges facing their people and their cause in the current dangerous situation and in the future.

2- Diplomatic efforts to stop the Israeli aggression:

Egypt, through all diplomatic means, seeks to stop the Israeli attacks on Gaza, and exerts continuous efforts with all parties concerned to cease fire, to stop the Palestinian bloodshed, and to put an end to the killing of innocent children for no reason.

At that time, Egypt held meetings with world leaders, examples of which are the Egyptian-Turkish summit (1/1/200) in Sharm El-Sheikh, the Egyptian-French Summit(January 2009) the Palestinian-Egyptian summit (January, 10, 2009). There are other meetings such as the meeting with the delegation of the European Troika (5/1/2009.) furthermore, telephone calls were conducted with the Israeli President Shimon Peres (8/1/2009) and the Spanish King Juan Carlos (9/1/2009).

Cairo also witnessed a number of meetings with many active international parties, including the meeting of the

foreign ministers of Egypt and Germany (10/1/2009) and the German Foreign Minister. Egypt also received Palestinian delegates, and conducted dialogues with the foreign ministers of the permanent member-states of the Security Council in an effort to stop the fights.

3- Humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people during the aggression on Gaza, 2008:

(a) Egyptian aid before the Israeli aggression

Understanding the difficult humanitarian situation in Gaza, and in the framework of its responsibilities towards the Palestinian people and the interaction with the suffering of the residents of the strip under occupation and the troubled internal conditions, Egypt, during the period from March to December 2008, allowed the passage of more than 20 thousand Palestinians in and out of the strip in different occasions and for various humanitarian reasons.

Egypt also showed full cooperation to facilitate the passage of Gaza pilgrims, as it exceptionally opened Rafah crossing for several days. Moreover, Egypt, through the Egyptian Red Crescent, provided, throughout the second half of 2007 to the first quarter of 2008, foodstuffs and medicines worth L.E. 25 million. In addition to that, Egypt received thousands of Palestinian patients and provided treatment at her own expense.

Egypt supplied the strip with about 10% of its needs of electricity free of charge, while the cost reaches about 30 million pounds per year. In addition to that, Egypt did not hesitate to make intensive communication with the Israeli side

to open the crossings linking Israel with the strip and to allow the passage of aid from (Kerem Shalom) port to Gaza Strip. Such efforts are not announced in most cases because Egypt does not seek to show off, but Egypt fulfills her duties, convinced by the nobility of the goal.

during the period from the end of November until December 26, 2008 Egypt provided total aid amounted to about 190 tons of humanitarian aid, including food and medical aid, of which about 22 tones were provided after the beginning of the Israeli aggression on Gaza.

(b) Egyptian aid since the Israeli aggression

Since the outbreak of the Israeli aggression in December, 27, 2008, Egypt has made intensive efforts regarding the delivery of the humanitarian aid, as follows :

- The number of wounded Palestinians who came to Egypt, and were received by the Egyptian hospitals reached more than 300 injured, accompanied by the same number of their relatives. Number of injured in Egyptian hospitals reaches 143 injured.
- The number of relief and ambulance aircrafts that arrived in El-Arish airport, since the start of the Israeli attack on Gaza in December, 27, 2008, to January, 10 ,2009, amounts to 90 plane.
- Total medical aid, which was entered by Egyptian Red Crescent reached 717 tons, of which 286 tons Egyptian aid and the rest are from Saudi Arabia, Libya, Turkey, Algeria, Sudan, Tunisia, Russia, Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan.

- A number of 19 ambulance, provided by Libya, Kuwait, Jordan and the Arab Doctors Union, crossed to the strip.
- The number of wheelchairs, which crossed into the Gaza Strip reached 170, in addition to 100 ones from Algeria.
- food aid, which hit more than 1650 tons from Arab and other countries, was provided to Gaza Strip through the Awja port since the beginning of the events to 10/1/2009.
- medicines, medical supplies and emergency needs, enough for a month, were sent to Arish. The needs of 1000 infected were fulfilled, in addition to providing more than 100 units of emergency medicines, each unit consisting of 79 medicines and medical supplies. Moreover, more than 2010 bags of blood and plasma were provided.
- Similarly, more than a thousand tons of medical supplies, medicines and food were also provided and entered through Rafah crossing to the Palestinian brothers, provided by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, Sudan, Algeria, Bahrain, Turkey and Russia. Besides, 10 ambulances, from Libya, were provided to the health sector in Gaza and 9 generators to support relief efforts were provided through Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings.
- Egypt also has mobilized 120 ambulance equipped with the latest medical equipment and trained teams. In addition to that more than 175 doctors in all specialties were provided, and a state of emergency was declared in more than 22 public, central, university, and military hospitals and specialized medical centers. This comes in addition to the allocation of more than 2,000 beds in the Egyptian hospitals. Egypt also opened Rafah crossing and allowed the entrance of more than 600 Palestinians

stranded at the Egyptian side. Besides, the Ministry of Health provided about 1,100 additional beds to receive the injured of the Israeli military operations.

- During 9-10 of January 2009, a number of 41 volunteer doctors, from the Arab Doctors Union, crossed Rafah crossing to participate in the treatment of the wounded Palestinians in Gaza Strip hospitals. The volunteer doctors comprise 31 Egyptians ,6 Jordanians and a doctor from Syria, Yemen, Morocco and Belgium.

It is worth mentioning that Rafah crossing, during those days, continued around the clock to enter medical assistance and receive the wounded.

Second: the Israeli aggression on Gaza (14 to 22 November 2012):

Since the start of the Israeli aggression on Gaza in November 14, 2012, Egypt called on the United States to intervene immediately to stop the Israeli aggression on Gaza and warned of the consequences of the escalation of the Israeli military operation⁽³⁾. Besides, Egypt's ambassador in Washington conveyed the same meaning to the US National Security Advisor, at the behest of the Egyptian Foreign Minister⁽⁴⁾.

(3) A phone call between Foreign Minister Mohamed Amr with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Wednesday evening, November14.

(4) Ministry of Foreign Affairs official website.

1- Egypt has not allowed and will not allow the relations with Israel to restrict its support to the Palestinian people:

Foreign Minister held, on Thursday, November 15, 2012, consultations with the Foreign ministers of Tunisia, Jordan and Britain about the developments of the situation in Gaza and the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip. During those consultations, Egypt confirmed the condemnation of the continuous Israeli aggression against innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza Strip, and stressed that Egypt will work with the international parties to stop the Israeli aggression in order to preserve the Palestinian blood, warning that it will not allow the Egyptian-Israeli relations to be a restriction on the support of the Palestinian people.

2- Extensive international communication to stop the aggression on Gaza:

Egyptian efforts to stop the Israeli aggression on Gaza did not stop. On the third day (Friday, November 16, 2012), Minister of Foreign Affairs conducted extensive communications with the foreign ministers of the United States, Jordan, Brazil, and Italy.

Foreign Minister and his American counterpart have agreed, in the second call within two days, on the importance of the cooperation of the two countries to stop military confrontations. This was culminated in the phone call that took place between the Egyptian and American presidents on Nov. 19, in which Egypt has warned of the consequences of the expansion of military operations ⁽⁵⁾

(5) The same source.

3- Solidarity Visits to Gaza Strip:

The Egyptian Foreign Minister accompanied the Arab ministerial delegation in a visit to Gaza on November 20, 2012 expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people. Also, on November 19, 2012 Egypt received Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary General, and stressed Israel's responsibility for the deteriorated situations in the region through ongoing settlements on Palestinian lands leading the peace process to a dead end and thus turning it into a process without peace where negotiation has become an end in itself. In the framework of its efforts to cease aggression, Egypt demanded, in two phone calls, from each of Laurent Fabius, French Foreign Minister and his British counterpart William Hague a sound clear European position to cease aggression. Also, the Egyptian Foreign Minister received his German counterpart Guido Westerwelle Welle in Cairo Airport on November 20, 2012 as the Egyptian minister has just returned from Gaza.

Egypt crowned these positions by the Egyptian prime minister visit to Gaza during the Israeli aggression, and by organizing a visit to the Gaza Strip for the Turkish Foreign Minister and the Secretary General of the Arab League with ten of Arab foreign ministers, and also by facilitating the sending of medical and relief aid. The days of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip (14-22 November 2012) witnessed a public solidarity and sympathy with Gaza.

4- Truce Understandings Under the Auspices of Egypt

The war was over in consequence of the truce Understandings under the auspices Egypt announced in a joint press conference including the Egyptian Foreign Minister and

US Secretary of State in Cairo, on the evening of 22/11/2012, stipulated the following:

1. Israel shall cease all Hostile acts with respect to land, sea and air against the Gaza Strip, including invasions and operations targeting individuals.
2. The Palestinian factions shall cease all hostile acts from Gaza towards Israel, including rocket fire and attacks on the border line.
3. Opening the crossings and facilitating the movement of people, goods, and not to restrict the movement of people or target people. These procedures shall be implemented 24 hours after the agreement enters into force.
4. The other issues are addressed if it is requested.

In this respect, the two parties agreed on a due time for these truce understandings to come into force, and Egypt obtained guarantees from each and every party to abide by what has been agreed upon by virtue thereof no party shall undertake any action which violating such understandings, and Egypt sponsoring these understandings shall in case of any notes be referred to for following up.

Third: Gaza Ceasefire

Egypt played a main role in the efforts of reaching an agreement between the Palestinian and Israeli parties in order to ceasefire during the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, which began in July 2014 and lasted for 51 days. Also, Egypt embraced the indirect negotiations between the two sides after reaching the agreement.

1- The Egyptian Ceasefire Initiative (July 14, 2014):

Egypt launched an initiative on July 14, 2014, calling upon an immediate cease-fire. In this respect Egypt communicated with the Israeli side as well as the Palestinian leadership and all other Palestinian factions in order to cease all hostiles on land, sea and air, and to put an end to the drain of Palestinian blood and to relieve the suffering of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The following is the text of the Egyptian Ceasefire Initiative with respect to the Israeli aggression on the Palestinian People.

First, in accordance to its historical responsibility, and its belief in the importance of maintaining peace in the region, and its keenness to cease bloodshed and keep the lives of innocents safe and sound, Egypt called upon Israel and the Palestinian factions to an immediate ceasefire because the escalation of violence and counter-violence shall end with victims and a situation not in the benefit of any of the two parties.

And thus the two parties shall during the cease-fire period of abide by the following:

- A- Israel shall cease all hostilities on the Gaza Strip whether on land, sea and/or air, and shall not undertake any land invasions against the Gaza Strip targeting civilians.
- B- All Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip shall cease all hostilities directed from the Gaza Strip towards Israel by air, sea and/or land, and shall not fire rockets of various kinds attacking the borders and/or targeting civilians.

- C- Opening the crossings and facilitating the movement of people and goods in the light of the the stability of the security situation.
- D- The rest of the issues, including the issue of security shall be discussed with the two parties.

Second: The Initiative Process and Procedures

- A- 0600 on 1/.07/2014 (according to Universal Time) is the due day identified to implement these truce understandings between the two parties where a cease-fire shall take place within 12 hours after the announcement of the Egyptian Initiative and the agreement of the two parties without any preconditions.
- B- High-level delegations from the Israeli government as well as the Palestinian factions shall be received in Cairo during 48 hours since the beginning of implementation of the initiative in order to continue the ceasefire talks and to rebuild confidence between the two parties on condition that such discussions shall with each party be held separately (in accordance with the truce understandings conducted in Cairo 2012).
- C- The two parties shall not undertake any actions that would affect the implementation of the understandings, and Egypt shall obtain guarantees committing each and every party to abide by what has been agreed upon. Also, Egypt shall has the right to follow-up, and question any of the parties in case any actions are undertaken hindering stability thereof.

2- Hosting Gaza Reconstruction Conference (October 12, 2014):

Egypt played a leading role in hosting Gaza Reconstruction Conference on October 12, 2014, in Cairo which was attended by more than 90 countries and international organizations, including 35 ministers, as well as the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Secretary General of the Arab League in addition to a representative of the international Quartet for Peace in the Middle East, and a High Representative of the Foreign and Security Policy of the European Union, where the contributions announced at the conference reached about \$ 5.4 billion. Furthermore, the basics of the reconstruction process were set focusing mainly on the continuation of the cease-fire and the empowerment of the Palestinian government to restore all of its powers in the Gaza Strip.

3. Facilitating passage of humanitarian aid to Gaza and evacuating the wounded and humanitarian cases:

The government, in coordination with the authorities concerned , facilitated the passage of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip, as and evacuated the wounded as well as the humanitarian cases, confirming that these efforts come within the framework of Egypt's keenness to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip as a result of the Israeli blockade imposed on it, and that opening Rafah crossing is not included within lifting the siege on Gaza.

It is worth mentioning that the Egyptian authorities continued to open the crossing and to allow the passage of

individuals through it and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of the sector, in spite of the exceptional circumstances that have happened, and are still happening in Egypt on top of which are military operations combating terrorism in the northern Sinai region.

Chapter Nine

Constants of Egyptian Stance towards Gaza

Egypt proved through its positions towards the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip in the years of 2008, 2012, and 2014 that what Israel has done is unacceptable brutal aggression. This is in addition to other constants, namely:

- Israel - the occupying power - is responsible for the aggression against the Palestinian people whatever the excuses or justifications.
- The Israeli practices fuel anger and dissipate hope for peace.
- Egypt demanded the Palestinian brothers to unite ranks and to put aside their disagreements warning repeatedly against division and schism.
- Egypt warned more than once against rejecting the truce which will trigger Israel's aggression on Gaza highlighting that hindering the Egyptian effort to extend the truce is an open invitation for such Israeli aggression.
- Egypt has repeatedly stressed that the Palestinian blood is not cheap or permissible, and that it would never allow anyone to bid and/or trade with the blood of the Palestinians.

Moreover, the Egyptian vision concerning the containment of the situation in the Gaza Strip is a part of a broader vision of the Palestinian issue centered on the following points:

First: Rejecting Israel's scheme to separate between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and to repudiate of its responsibility towards Gaza overloading Egypt with the consequences.

Second: Refusing to fall into the Israeli trap concerning the separation between the West Bank and Gaza.

Third: Stating that the Gaza Strip is an occupied territory and is the headquarters of the Independent Palestinian State.

Fourth: Refusing to contribute to the separation between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank by opening the Rafah crossing in the absence of the Palestinian Authority and the EU observers.

Fifth: Stating that the right to resist occupation is constant and legitimate.

However, resistance is the responsibility of the people where it can achieve gains or bring devastation and destruction or waste the souls of martyrs.

Sixth: Demanding an end to the occupation and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in order to achieve the aspirations of the Palestinian people's legitimate.

1- Egypt's Stance on the Situation in Gaza:

Egypt regards Gaza as part and parcel of the occupied Palestinian territories and that it is still under Israeli occupation.

Egypt, also, considers such unilateral separation carried out by Israel is not a form of liberalization as it is believed or claimed since the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem are altogether one geographic unit.

2- Egypt's stance on the legal status of Rafah crossing:

Egypt's stance on the legal status of Rafah crossing was clear from the beginning where orders were issued to open the crossing for humanitarian cases, and to provide the wounded as well as the sick with the utmost attention and care.

Egypt highlighted the features of the legal status of the Gaza Strip in general, and the Rafah crossing in particular as follows:

- Gaza is an occupied territory where Israel, the occupying power, controls its exits and the movement in and out of them.
- Securing the borders of Gaza is the responsibility of Israel since it is the occupying power, and thus such responsibility shall not be put on the shoulders of Egypt, because if this happened, Israel will be given the opportunity to repudiate its obligations by virtue of Geneva Conventions of 1949.
- The crossing has two gates, one opens in Egypt and the other in

Israel, in order to open the crossing Israel must agree in coordination with Egypt.

- Egypt not only opened the crossing for humanitarian cases, but also for the sick and the injured.

Also, the crossing was opened to Palestinian students who study in Egyptian universities, and to Palestinian pilgrims.

- The gates are to be watched by Israeli cameras, and Israel is to be notified with the passage of anyone, and thus not giving any opportunity for the claims that the crossings are used to smuggle weapons, drugs and other contraband.
- Any country has the right to adjust its borders with other countries in the way that maintains its national security.
- Principles for Rafah crossing are governed and regulated by Rafah Crossing Agreement of the year 2005, which stipulates the presence of all parties concerned, especially the Palestinian Authority besides representatives of the European Union.

Egypt shall abide by its commitments with respect to the opening of the crossing for humanitarian cases, a position which was appreciated by all.

Chapter Ten

The Egyptian Constants on the Palestinian Issue

The Palestinian Issue is at the forefront attention for the Egyptian leadership, government and people. Egypt is, in all stirring-up actions and in line with national responsibility, keen on emphasizing the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. Additionally, on every occasion, Egypt reiterated that the desired peace should be just and comprehensive based on the UN Resolutions and on the International law. This guarantees the Palestinian people all their rights on the basis of the two resolutions 242 and 338, which affirm the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people and the Israeli withdraw from the Palestinian territories.

Egypt confirmed that it would always be on the side of the Palestinian dream, which is to have their own independent state. In this regard, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi says, "The Palestinian Cause will remain at the core of the Arab issues and one of the main Egyptian foreign policy files. Egypt, taking upon its shoulder the responsibility to defend the rights of the Palestinian people, upholds the interests of the Arab citizens to minor groups, and will continue to support the brotherly Palestinian people to get their legitimate rights and to achieve their and our dream; a Palestinian state on the borders of June 1967; a fully sovereign independent state with its capital in East Jerusalem⁽⁶⁾.

(6) The speech of President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi at the inauguration ceremony at Qubba Palace, June 8, 2014.

Egypt has always been keen on making the Palestinian Cause alive in the world conscience. Before the UN General Assembly, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said, “Despite the multitude of crises threatening our region, some of which I have mentioned, the Palestinian issue remains a top priority for Egypt. Palestinians still aspire to establish their independent State on the territories occupied in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the principles of the peace process that was established in the 1970s, following an Egyptian initiative. Those principles are not up for negotiation; otherwise the basis of a comprehensive peace in the region would erode and the values of justice and humanity would vanish. The continued deprivation of the Palestinian people of their rights is undoubtedly exploited by some to inflame other crises, achieve hidden goals, fragment Arab unity and impose control on Palestinians under the guise of realizing their aspirations.⁽⁷⁾”

Egypt took upon itself, by all available means, to reach a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict based on the settlement of the Palestinian Cause in all aspects in a manner that ensures the legitimate rights of each party. Based on this, Egypt supported the full force of the Palestinian negotiating team in Madrid Peace Conference held in October 1991, where it provided diplomatic and legal expertise to manage the negotiation files. Egypt has also played a constructive role in the subsequent Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. Afterwards, Cairo has hosted and sponsored many summits, meetings and conventions. On May 4, 1994, the implementation of the Oslo

(7) the speech of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi before the UN General Assembly, New York on September 24, 2014

Agreement; agreement of autonomy, redeployment and withdrawal from six Palestinian cities, took place in Cairo. Egypt is keen to provide support and assistance to the Palestinian Authority during the siege imposed on the Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, where the Egyptian Foreign Minister visited him in April 2002.

Egypt has succeeded in stopping the Israeli aggression on Gaza in the years 2008, 2012 and 2014. Additionally, it has resumed its efforts by organizing the successful Reconstruction of Gaza Conference, at an amount of U\$ 5.4 billion.

President al-Sisi stressed that Egypt proceeds on backing the Palestinian Cause, stemming from its responsibility in reducing Arab bloodshed. Moreover, Egypt believes that the Palestinian people has experienced grave injustice that should come to an end to enable them, like others, to led independent, stable, safe and reassuring life within the borders of an independent Palestinian state; the borders of the fourth June 1967 with its capital in East Jerusalem. He appealed to all parties, especially the Israeli people to interact positively with the Arab Peace Initiative. He said that what can be accomplished today is much better than what can be repaired tomorrow⁽⁸⁾.

Egypt believes that there is a need for the establishment of a viable independent Palestinian state with Israeli withdrawal to the line of June 1967 and with East Jerusalem as its capital. There is an Israeli need for recognizing and

(8) Al-Sisi in an interview with a Kuwaiti newspaper, on November 2, 2014

achieving security, consequently, the peaceful settlement of the conflict persisting for more than six decades is the inherent right of the Palestinian people and in the interest of the Israeli people. Therefore, Egypt, in the reconstruction of Gaza Conference, has been keen on calling the Israeli people to achieve peace, and urging its leaders to move forward on the path of peace⁽⁹⁾.

Egypt does not pay attention to any desperate attempts to disrupt the regional role, particularly in the Palestinian Cause, which will retain its traditional position at the forefront of the Egyptian foreign policy interests. In spite of the widespread attempts to disrupt and disable the Egyptian role, they reached in the end to the cease-fire and the adoption of the truce, as well as the achievement of Palestinian reconciliation⁽¹⁰⁾.

Status of the Palestinian Cause was not affected by regional developments and events. President al-Sisi reiterated, "The Palestinian Cause is the Arabs pivotal issue and will continue in the forefront position at the Egyptian foreign policy. Thus, the internal and regional conditions will not hinder Egypt from stopping bloodshed of Palestinian brothers⁽¹¹⁾.

Egypt has repeatedly announced that it, alongside with many Arab countries, is willing to strongly contribute to reach a just solution based on the establishment of a Palestinian

(9) Al-Sisi in an interview with Okaz, episode 2, October 28, 2014

(10) The same meaning of the interview of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi with Okaz newspaper, Part II

(11) Al-Sisi in an interview with Kuwait News Agency, al-Gomhuria, November 2, 2014

state. Furthermore, it stressed that if this Cause is resolved during the coming period, there will be a new positive atmosphere in the region.⁽¹²⁾

Egypt is keen on clarifying its stance concerning the recent developments, particularly with regard to the Rafah crossing. President al-Sisi said that these crucial events are taking place in Sinai within the Egyptian territory. He added, "We should admit that the security status in Sinai was overpowering during last months. Firstly, the safety and security of the Palestinian citizens who get into the Egyptian territory across Rafah are of our responsibility. Secondly, there are other crossings linking the Gaza Strip with Israel. Therefore we should not overlook that there is a commitment by Israel towards Gaza Strip, in the sense that we should not merely concentrate on the Rafah crossing. However, as far as possible and as the security status in Sinai is stable, we open the Rafah crossing⁽¹³⁾."

Egypt believes that an independent Palestinian state is an inherent right to the Palestinian people and that its establishment is for the interests of the people of Israel as well. President Sisi explained this sense when he said: "there is a need for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State that is viable on the borders of June 4th, 1967, and its capital is East Jerusalem, and there is an Israeli need for a sense of security as well as achieving it. Thus, I was keen in "The Conference for the Reconstruction of Gaza" to call on the

(12) President al-Sisi interview with Sky News Channel, January 18, 2015

(13) the second part of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's interview with the editors of national newspapers; al-Ahram, al-Akhbar, al-Gomhuria, December 29, 2014

Israeli people to achieve peace and to urge its leaders to move forward on the path of peace.⁽¹⁴⁾

In all its contacts with world leaders, Egypt renews its appeals to the need to give hope to the Palestinians and give them a Palestinian State to live safely and peacefully in, side by side with the Israeli people. In this regard, President Abdel Fattah Sisi says "We all need, as well as peace and stability - loving nations, to offer all the guarantees to the nascent Palestinian State and to the State of Israel. This Palestinian State is not a threat to the Israelis and the Israelis do not constitute a threat to the Palestinians. And if we do not do so, tension and instability will always be the ruler. I imagine that the bravery and the courage to take this step will create a new reality that imposes itself on the entire region, and Egypt is ready to contribute to providing guarantees that achieve peace for both the Israelis and the Palestinians."⁽¹⁵⁾

The ruling positions to the Egyptian movement towards the Egyptian Palestinian cause can be crystallized in the following aspects:

1- Supporting the Establishment of a Palestinian State:

Egypt believes that the Palestinian cause is the core of the conflict in the Middle East, so she puts it on the list of priorities of its foreign policy. On the basis of Egypt's national

(14) The second part of the address of President Abdel Fattah Sisi to editors of national newspapers (Al-Ahram, Al-Akhbar, Al-Gomhoria) on December 29,2014

(15) President Sisi's interview with the French News Channel "France 24" on November 9, 2014

commitment to work to get the Palestinian people their legitimate national rights and establish their independent State, she is keen on playing an active role to enhance efforts of peace settlement between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. The Egyptian contribution in these endeavors has become an indispensable cornerstone for achieving progress in the peace process in the Middle East. Moreover, Egypt is working on coordination and is engaging in dialogue with international actors – on top of which are the United States and the Quartet. It also pushes Israel to continue negotiations with the Palestinian side, and it makes unremitting endeavors to resolve security and military problems between the Palestinian Authority and Israel to remove the obstacles to the peace process in the Middle East.

In order to effectuate this policy, the political leadership has conducted a series of meetings and consultations, most notably of which was a meeting of Former President Hosni Mubarak with US President George W. Bush in Sharm el-Sheikh in April 2008, and other meetings with US Secretary of State, as well as multiple meetings with the Palestinian President, the Israeli Prime Minister, and a large number of heads of Arab and foreign countries.

This is in addition to a number of meetings conducted by Foreign Minister with his counterparts in Western countries, Israel and other foreign countries, where the Egyptian delegations played an influential role in the framework of international and regional political and economic organizations, to promote and support the Palestinian position.

In this context, Egypt participated in the "Annapolis Peace Conference" in November 2007. Furthermore, it confirmed in its statement to the session (62) of the General Assembly of the United Nations in November, 2007, on the need for the success of negotiations between the Palestinian and Israeli sides, and reaching to a "two-state solution," according to International relevant references, as well as participation in conferences, that follow the Annapolis Conference, and are concerned with supporting the cause, particularly Paris Conference in December 2007, and Berlin Conference in June 2008.

In light of the deterioration of the internal Palestinian situation, following the takeover of "Hamas" on the reins of power in Gaza in June, 2007, Egypt has intensified its efforts to unify among the Palestinians, and she has already succeeded in gathering the Palestinian factions on the consultation table in Cairo, to reach an agreement that achieves Palestinian reconciliation, and achieves the desired national reconciliation as well.

In parallel with these efforts, Egypt deal - from a humanitarian perspective - with problems of the stranded Palestinians at the Rafah crossing, and she is keen on providing all the food and medical aids necessary for the Palestinians, and to end the suffering of patients, students and those working abroad, in coordination with the Palestinian Authority and Israel to allow these cases to cross, whether through the Awja or the Rafah crossings.

In this context, Egypt has received the Palestinian President several times during the year 2010, during which he discussed various aspects of the Palestinian cause, especially

the implications of the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip, Arab and international efforts to end it, as well as the American ideas to push the direct negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel.

Egypt has not stopped, during the summit meetings held in Cairo in 2010 that gathered the heads of Egypt, Palestine and Israel, its calling for the need for an Israeli strategic action that deepens confidence of the Palestinians in Israel's intentions, and encourages them to move to direct negotiations, through halting the settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories and lifting the siege imposed on the Palestinian people in Gaza.

On the basis of its commitment to coordinate between regional and international parties concerned in the Palestinian issue- salient of which is the United States- to achieve a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, Egypt held talks with US Vice President "Joe Biden" in July 2010, through which it called for the United States to intensify its efforts and consultations with the Palestinians and Israelis in order to provide a suitable ground to move on to direct negotiations, thus paving the way to reach comprehensive peace in the region.

These efforts were crowned by the launch of the first round of direct negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian sides in September, 2010 in Washington DC, while Sharm el-Sheikh has hosted in the same month the second round of negotiations. Egypt stresses in all forums on its positions supporting Palestinian rights and demanding to stop the Israeli settlement in all its forms.

2- Facilitating the Entering of Aids to Gaza and the Evacuation of the Wounded and Humanitarian Cases

The Egyptian government is working to facilitate the entering of aids to Gaza Strip as well as the evacuation of the wounded and the humanitarian cases, with the assurance that these efforts come within the framework of Egypt's keenness to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza Strip as a result of the Israeli siege imposed on it.

It is worth mentioning that the Egyptian authorities continued to open the crossing and allow the passage of individuals through it and delivery of humanitarian aids to the people of the sector in spite of the exceptional circumstances that Egypt has encountered, and is still, mainly the military operations to combat terrorism in Sinai.

3- Facing Israel's Efforts for the Judaization of Jerusalem:

Egypt is closely following the developments in the status of Jerusalem, especially Al-Aqsa Mosque, where the Egyptian diplomacy continues its role in facing the Israeli attempts to Judaize Jerusalem and to change the status quo on the ground, especially schemes of temporal and spatial division of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

4- Activation of the Joint Egyptian - Palestinian Committee

In the framework of the reactivation of the joint Egyptian - Palestinian Committee efforts, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry initiated by holding a preliminary meeting of the Committee on the level of senior officials in Cairo on May 5, 2014, as this represents a message of support to the Palestinian leadership

and the Palestinian people. The meeting discussed the possibility of the development of the contractual framework between the two sides and the promotion of mutual cooperation, leading to improving ties between the two parties. The Ministry holds regular briefing sessions for missions and diplomatic bodies accredited to Cairo. Furthermore, it issues sustainable directives to Egyptian missions abroad in communion with accredited countries to brief them on the latest developments in the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian cause, and the efforts made by Egypt in this regard.

Conclusion

Based on the historical commitment and national responsibility, Egypt has endured for nearly seventy years the duty of defending the Palestinian cause and has sacrificed the most precious cherished sons as martyrs so as the Palestinian people would regain their legitimate rights. The Palestinian cause has been permanently kept alive in the Egyptian national conscience. Before the revolution of July 23, 1952, the Palestinian question was at the concern of the Egyptian national movement. Additionally, Egypt was at the Arab forefront armies that participated in the 1948 war. Moreover, Egypt was subjected to the 1956 and 1967 aggressions due to its noticeably pro-Palestinian Cause political stances, its standpoint in the face of the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories and seawaters, and the rejection of the Israeli threats to the Arab States.

Egypt, which has completely restored the entire national territory victoriously in October 1973, has never abandoned its historic commitments in supporting the Palestinian cause. It has assisted the Palestinian leadership to go beyond its ordeal in Lebanon, to adopt the declaration of the Palestinian State in 1988 and to call for the Madrid Conference in 1991. Furthermore, Egypt supported the Palestinian-accepted Oslo agreement concluded in 1993, and other subsequent accords. Additionally, Egypt exerts every effort to ensure the Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian territories, starting by Gaza, and to hold serious settlement negotiations.

Egypt has always stood for the Palestinian negotiations and enabled the Palestinian Authority over the past two

decades to bring tangible gains on the way of establishing a Palestinian state. During the past years, it has also exerted strenuous efforts to heal the rift between the Palestinian factions, call on them to be united and to internally reorganize. Out of commitment to national duty, Egypt undertook an Egyptian initiative on January 6, 2009 to deal with the deteriorating situation in Gaza based on immediate ceasefire and starting a serious dialogue to settle disputes.

Egypt has many potentials to play its key role in getting out of this crisis due to the following considerations:

First, Egypt has a strategic position as far as the current events are concerned; as being the adjacent neighbor of the Gaza Strip on which the Israeli aggression is taking place.

Second, Egypt has played a central role in having helped the Israelis and Palestinians attain a period of calm on June 19, 2008 that lasted six months until just one week before the aggression.

Egypt has also maintained not to open the Rafah crossing formally in the absence of the Palestinian legitimate authority and the observers of the European Union in order to preserve the unity of the Palestinian territories, and to evade Israel's pretext, as being an occupying power, to shirk its obligations and to proceed its plan on full and permanent separation between the two parts of the Palestinian state.

Egypt also called for the need to find an international mechanism to ensure that the Gaza crossings are all open, without interruption. In spite that Egypt is keen on ensuring

the Rafah crossing open for humanitarian cases, but it realizes that this crossing is essentially for individuals rather than goods and that it cannot meet the needs of the entire sector. Therefore, it pushes for a formula to keep all other crossings to Gaza permanently opened.

The Palestinian Cause will perpetually remain at the top of the priorities of the Egyptian leadership, government and people. There is nothing more significant than the Egyptian persisting political and diplomatic activities in support to the right of the Palestinian people, on the foremost of which is its legitimate right to establish independent state.

Annexes

**President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's Address to Gaza
Reconstruction Conference**

Cairo-12 October, 2014

**Your Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas... the
President of the State of Palestine,**

Your Excellencies and Highnesses,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me pleasure in the beginning to welcome you on the land of Egypt; the house of Arabism. I would like also to salute the great Egyptian people who take pride in your presence today in Cairo and appreciate your response to this call that was extended to you by the Arab Republic of Egypt and the friendly Kingdom of Norway to confirm the consolidation of all of us with the brotherly Palestinian people in their ordeal and to reach an agreement on the best means of providing the required support for their legitimate leadership and national government in their efforts for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip; which has been and is still part and parcel of the Palestinian state which we all look for its independence and having its people enjoying their full legitimate rights on every part of its soil.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference constitutes an important and indispensable step for supporting the Egyptian efforts that

were launched since the outbreak of the recent Gaza crisis. Egypt has shouldered its responsibility for stopping the bloodletting and preserving the lives of the innocent Palestinians along with maintaining the potentials of the Palestinian people. Egypt since then has maintained its relentless efforts since the announcement of its initiative for a ceasefire where it sponsored several rounds of negotiations over the 51 days of the fighting until it succeeded, despite difficulties that hindered its sincere efforts, to help reach a comprehensive ceasefire agreement on August 26th. The Egyptian efforts were maintained to follow up this achievement to guarantee its stabilization that has been realized through inviting the Palestinian and Israeli sides to resume indirect talks in Cairo last month with a view to reaching understandings on pending issues and hammering out a rapprochement over the continuation of talks in the second half of the current month.

Going side by side with this, Egypt has been working to heal the Palestinian rift out of its responsibility in sponsoring Palestinian national reconciliation efforts and ending the state of chasm. These efforts have resulted in reaching understandings over reconciliation issues; a state of affairs that helped enhance the return of the Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Strip and the practice by the Palestinian national unity government of its responsibilities towards it in confirmation of the unity of the Palestinian land under one banner and one title for the legitimacy. Egypt's efforts did not stop at undertaking its political role but were maintained to include a humanitarian aspect through providing the needs of the brotherly Palestinian people of

food, medicine and medical supplies along with extending medical treatment for the injured Palestinians in Egyptian hospitals. Egypt will remain committed to supporting the Palestinian people and their legitimate cause in an expression of genuine stances and brotherliness through which Egypt confirms that the Palestinian issue has been and will remain the major issue of all the Arabs.

Egyptian efforts at all levels have been paving the appropriate ground for an urgent and required international action in coordination and cooperation with the Palestinian government to reconstruct the Gaza Strip and improve the tragic conditions that were caused by the recent crisis. The reconstruction and meeting the needs of the residents in the Gaza Strip are based on two axes; a permanent truce and the practice by the national authority of all its powers in the strip. We should all focus on these two axes and not to let down the Palestinian people who are pinning great expectations on this conference but these expectations are so humble if compared to the potentials of the international community.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The convocation of this conference undoubtedly drives home an important message to the Palestinian people and the region along with the whole international community at large. This message is not related only to sympathy and support along with readiness to extend assistance but also highlights the necessity of putting an end to the current state of affairs and the impossibility of returning to this state once again or seeking to achieve temporary stability that will never last. These are all correct conclusions that were supported by our

persuasion that the only way to durable peace and security for all peoples of the region is reaching a just and comprehensive peace in consummation of the peace process that was initiated by Egypt in the 70s of the past century.

There is no alternative to this settlement so that the Palestinian people could channel efforts for reconstruction while not afraid that what they have built through your support could be destroyed. It is not secret to you all that maintaining the deprivation of the Palestinians from their legitimate rights has been providing pretexts for those who are claiming to be defending the Palestinian rights to sow the seeds of animosity and division and to seek imposing their mandate on the brotherly Palestinian people on the plea of supporting the realization of their aspirations. Therefore, we have to work to deprive those all from the opportunity to capitalize on the suffering of the Palestinian people to attain their ulterior goals and at the same time confirm our keenness on observing the humanitarian values and principles and law along with international legitimacy to which we all cling.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Egypt has contributed to and supported all initiatives and sincere efforts that were aimed at establishing peace in the Middle East on just and sound bases. Out of this premise, Egypt has expressed in several stages its appreciation for the efforts exerted by the United States; the last of which has faltered in April. It has always been warning of the consequences of an unjustified escalation and tension before the outbreak of fighting in the Gaza Strip which constituted a dangerous alarm for all parties concerned against slipping into

the cycle of violence and destruction. Egypt, while being aware of the dangers and challenges besetting its region and out of its historical and regional role along with its vision which is based on time-honored values and principles, is calling for exerting sincere efforts with determination to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement. I am not extending this call only to leaders of states as I am keen that this call be heard by all the peoples of the region. These peoples have suffered so much from the scourge of wars and regretted the fall of victims. These peoples are still seeking to heal the injuries and are still listening to the cries of the wounded. Therefore, I address the Israeli people and government: It is high time to end conflict without delay and to give others their rights to establish justice so that prosperity and security could be achieved. I am confident that all of you share me the call to every father and mother and every child and old man in Palestine and Israel to make this moment a real launching point for establishing peace that guarantees stability and prosperity and makes the dream of joint coexistence a reality. This is the vision which is outlined by the Arab peace initiative. That peace which we all look for its establishment and that should be our legacy for the coming generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you once again on the land of Egypt and renew the appreciation of the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Kingdom of Norway for your response to their call. I wish that the outcome of this conference would be up to the level of aspirations and expectations of the Palestinian people and

other peoples of the whole region. I also confirm to you the readiness of Egypt to extend all possible support in coordination with the Palestinian leadership and international community according to its time-honored and responsible role towards its nation and region and in line with the principles of justice and legitimacy.

May peace and blessings of Allah be upon you all.

Information Sector

Central Department of Editing, Translation and Bulletins

Edited by: ***Dr.Ahmed Abul Hassan***

Translation by: ***Ashraf Awwad***
Yousra Gamal el-din
Enji Osama
Amal El-Kady

Directed By : ***Ashraf Madany***

Cover : ***Ayat Mekky***