



**Action for Peace - ITALY**  
[Info.actionforpeace@tiscali.it](mailto:Info.actionforpeace@tiscali.it)

## **Palestine-Israel: there is an urgent need for peace policies**

*This document has been discussed and written by the below listed Associations and sent to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on July 2007*

After 60 years of dispossessions, oppression and violence, during the years of the second Intifada, the Palestinian people experienced the progressive reduction of its space for representation and political perspective.

First Arafat and then Abu Mazen have been delegitimised and considered by the Israeli Government and by the international community unreliable partners for the peace negotiations; furthermore, the most prominent Palestinian political leaders from different political positions, starting with the most secular and pragmatic ones, have been eliminated.

In the last seven years through targeted executions and arbitrary arrests, the Israeli Government has decapitated the Palestinian political leadership, leaving it in the hands of young militants without any political strategy beyond the armed resistance – a strategy which is legitimate - but useless and counterproductive, as demonstrated by these years of the second intifada. This is one of the reasons why we are among those who criticise this strategy, while strongly condemning the attacks that have butchered civilians. We are also aware, however, that we have not been able to make a political, peaceful and effective alternative to armed violence prevail. Nor the international Community, particularly the European Institutions, chose to do so. Particularly the Eu Inst, which have not in fact diverged from US policy and, in so doing, have let the Palestinian people be increasingly strangled. The wall, the territorial fragmentation, the increasingly difficult circulation of goods and persons inside the occupied territories have destroyed the Palestinian economy.

The irresponsible embargo imposed by the international community on Palestinians after the democratic elections of Hamas for the PNA Government, have given the coup de grace to an already fragile economy and submitted an occupied population to an enormous collective punishment. How is it possible to keep talking with them about “democracy”?

Therefore the clashes between Hamas and Fatah militias in the Gaza strip and the division of Palestinian occupied territories between the two main Palestinian political forces were not an unforeseeable development nor do they represent a sudden explosion of fratricidal hatred among Palestinians, as someone often suggests and in some cases wishes. However those armed and violent men bear a heavy responsibility for this clash, and for its victims and horrors.

We welcome the liberation of the British journalist obtained by Hamas; and we hope that also the Israeli corporal Shalit is soon set free, through an exchange of political prisoners, including Marwan Barghouti, a man who is committed to the territorial and political unity of the Palestinian people and to peace between Palestine and Israel.

Palestinian women and men are brave and determined and have the same needs as any other people: material needs (jobs, education, health, access to markets and common goods) and ideal needs (to design their future, have the right to freely choose their political representatives, to self-determination). At present they are exhausted. The condition of poverty and social violence has fed and increased military and political violence, also by palestinian groups, added to the Israeli murderous raids. We ask the Italian Government and the European Union to pursue peace policies, for national reconciliation, not military interventions.

The Palestinian people, has already accepted painful compromises, and has tried to find exit ways, in order to stand up to the international isolation, which has been very clear after the election of Hamas. It is a heavy responsibility of the International community and the European Union to have closed every door, seconding the repeated Israeli refusals, without using any tool of political or diplomatic pressure, in order to make International Law prevail. The Arab League's Peace Initiative for the recognition of the Israeli State by all the Arab countries in exchange for Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, the Mecca agreements and the consequent birth of a national unity Government including all the political forces, with both Fatah and Hamas, have been systematically ignored.

Palestine has always been a laboratory for the breeding of all the conflicts that have covered the Middle East in blood during the last decades. Many governments and powers in the area have used Palestine as a tool for achieving their goals. Even in recent years in that land there has been a hidden struggle among power groups, supported by continuous external pressures, interested on one hand in increasing a reactionary fundamentalism and on the other hand in repressing it also through the funding of almost private militias. These armed groups have nothing, or almost nothing, to do with the Palestinian people national liberation struggle.

The solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could have really designed a new Middle East. On the contrary the comprehensive confrontation imposed on the region by the permanent war of Bush administration through the occupation of Iraq, has pushed the events towards the worst perspective, cancelled the negotiation field and imposed the strengthening of occupation. The US have intervened heavily, implementing a strategy, that is now the same for Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, based on social fragmentation (geographic, between groups or power interests) and giving "military and political arms" to the different factions. In so doing, the US have pushed to the extreme consequences the difficulties on the Palestinian side, in the attempt to destroy the national perspective through internal clashes.

The civilian population has been squeezed between the Israeli military occupation and conflicting armed factions: therefore they payed the highest price as usual, in terms of loss of human lives, worsening of the economic situation and lack of political representation.

During the years of the second Intifada, Italian civil society actors (Ngos, Associations, trade unions, local authorities, movements) have tried with all the means at their disposal, to support the struggle of the Palestinian people and indicate to our institutions the direction to follow, often becoming spokespersons for the requests coming from the Palestinian and Israeli civil societies, in the effort to be actors for a just and lasting peace solution between Palestine and Israel. Marches and demonstrations in the streets, support and concrete solidarity projects, information and awareness raising activities, civilian missions in the Occupied territories and in Israel with the task of monitoring human rights and protecting civilian population, campaigns to put pressure on the Italian and European institutions. The institutional responses have been scarce, weak and un effective, and at the same time there has been a cultural and political regression that makes to day more and more difficult a broad social involvement in the solidarity policies and actions.

We feel the lack of a courageous and determined initiative making Italy an important actor in the transformation of the conflict and in defusing the middle eastern powder keg: this role has been partially played during the Israeli aggression to Lebanon last summer. There is no need to invent solutions for the stability of the region and a just peace between Palestine and Israel. They are already spelt out in the many UN Resolutions, there is only a need to implement them and make them operational.

Once again we request to the Italian Government, with the strength and the urgency required by the present situation:

1. To make pressures on the Israeli Government to put an end to the isolation of Gaza strip, demanding that it immediately resumes the supply of fundamental services (water, electrical

- power); guarantees the passage of persons and goods through Rafah and Karni (on the border with Egypt) and Eretz (on the border with Israel ).
2. To work at European level in order to reactivate the presence of EU observers (EUBAM) on the border between Gaza and Egypt.
  3. To ask for the immediate liberation of Marwan Barghouti, considered by many observers, including some Israelis, the only personality able to reassemble the different Palestinian tendencies and with an adequate authority to restart peace negotiations on behalf of all the Palestinians, according to the spirit of the document signed in prison with Hamas representatives and other components of PLO, the only legitimate representative of Palestinian people
  4. To act for the promotion of an International Conference of the Middle east area where have to participate all the actors involved (Hamas, Hezbollah, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, PLO) for a final and comprehensive peace agreement, including all the points.
  5. To support the presence of international unarmed observers under the auspice of UN in the occupied Palestinian territories (Gaza, West Bank, East Jerusalem) composed by members coming from neutral countries, including arab and muslim personnel, with the task to:
    - facilitate the dialogue between different parties;
    - prevent and monitor violations of International Law and of civilians' rights by all the armed actors (Israeli and Palestinians)
    - To propose alternatives and solutions to the ongoing impasse, that can come from a careful observation of the territory and talks with all the parts in conflict.

We wish that Palestinian people can find its political and territorial unity, investing all their energies in the struggle for the end of Israeli military occupation and that political forces can advance in the renewal of PLO inside the Occupied territories and in the diaspora, in order to strengthen links with a population the has the right to, and deserves freedom and democracy. At the same time we will continue to act with all those forces, Palestinians and Israelis, who recognise the respective right to freedom, justice and selfdetermination.

#### **ACTION FOR PEACE – ITALY :**

**Associazione per la pace;**

**Arci;**

**CGIL;**

**Fiom-Cgil;**

**Rete nazionale Radiè Resh;**

**Piattaforma Ong per il Medio Oriente;**

**Pax Christi, Campagna ponti non muri;**

**Ebrei contro l'occupazione;**

**Donne in nero Italia;**

**Servizio Civile Internazionale;**

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