

Amin Jumayyil's mandate runs out on 22 September.) But nothing is certain, and the hypothesis of a non-election, hence of a constitutional vacuum, is still plausible. But if any bets had to be made today, the vast majority of the Lebanese would wager on the elections' taking place, which was not the case last autumn.

The mood is quite simply not the same any more. Internally, the calm is continuing, and this is becoming more significant day after day as the election deadline approaches. Positions that had until then been very hardline have become almost conciliatory. Everyone has become wiser. It is as if the war itself has come of age.

At the regional level, the Syrians, who are running things in the Lebanese environment, are not so sure of themselves as they would have one believe, and their power is openly or insidiously nicked. Even if they are still playing at knocking down the structures of the Lebanese state, they are afraid of the vacuum that they themselves are creating, having discovered that in Lebanon you quickly lose all control over the chaos you yourself have helped to produce. And the Israelis, with enough on their hands in the occupied territories and having recovered from their Lebanese adventure, are simply reminding Lebanon that it cannot elect a president hostile to Israeli interests.

Internationally, the United States is once again beginning to talk to Syria about preparing for the election of a Lebanese president, while the Soviet Union is taking a conciliatory stance and has got Walid Jumblatt to make—from Moscow—one of his exceedingly rare moderate statements.

So if Beirut is speculating—and speculate it does furiously with its rumor mills working at full capacity—it is on the chances of presidential hopefuls like Johnny 'Abdu, Raymond Eddé, and Michel 'Awn, rather than on the risk of a constitutional vacuum.

The Shultz Meeting with Edward Said and Ibrahim Abu-Lughod

The text of Said and Abu-Lughod's remarks to the press conference following their meeting with Secretary of State George Shultz was carried in WAFA, on 31 March 1988.

On Saturday, 26 March, two prominent Palestinian-Americans, Dr. Edward Said of Columbia University and Dr. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod of Northwestern University, met with U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz to discuss the Middle East.

The meeting was held at the State Department at the invitation of Mr. Shultz as part of the ongoing consultations between the Reagan administration and Arab Americans concerning the situation in the West Bank and Gaza. Both Dr. Said and Dr. Abu-Lughod are U.S. citizens and members of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the legislative body of the Palestinian nationalist movement. The meeting was welcomed by the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which considered it a positive step toward facilitating the peacemaking process. After their meeting with the secretary of state, Dr. Said and Dr. Abu-Lughod held a press conference outside the State Department.

The following is the full text of their remarks:

Opening statement read by Edward Said:

We met with Secretary of State Shultz today at his invitation. As U.S. citizens and members of the Palestine National Council we were pleased to do so and very much appreciate the opportunity afforded us by Secretary Shultz. We exchanged views with Mr. Shultz and conveyed to him the commitment of the Palestinian people to a settlement premised upon the Palestinian right to self-determination and the implementation of all UN resolutions relevant to Palestine and the Middle East conflict. We consider the meeting to be a

step forward in current American efforts and policy to facilitate a peacemaking process, which would involve the relevant parties, including the PLO, the representative of the Palestinian people, and would also involve the United Nations, and the parties directly concerned. We conveyed to Secretary Shultz the urgent need to lift Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, as a preparatory step on the road to achieving peaceful coexistence between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews.

Q: Did you bring any message from Mr. Arafat?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: We consulted with Mr. Arafat and he is in favor of a peacekeeping force that will facilitate the implementation of Palestinian national rights and the independence of the West Bank and Gaza.

Q: Was there any special message for Mr. Shultz from Mr. Arafat?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: The message is for peacemaking in the Middle East to be genuine and credible and it must accept Palestinian independence.

Q: How do you see this meeting changing the way the Palestinian issue is seen by the U.S. government?

Dr. Said: We took very seriously the invitation to us as members of the Palestine National Council and as Palestinians and Americans who are connected closely to the Palestinian scene so to speak, and who are active in this country. We are Palestinians who are committed to a peaceful resolution of this conflict in which our people as Palestinians have suffered the most.

Q: Did you discuss with Secretary Shultz how the Palestinians might be involved in the actual negotiations when they get under way?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: We made it very clear to the secretary of state that the Palestinian people have a legitimate representative that is acknowledged the world over, which is the Palestine Liberation Organi-

zation. Therefore, any discussion of the issue of Palestine must include the representatives and delegates delegated for that task by the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Q: What did the Secretary say to that?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: The secretary of state made a statement which he shared with us that the Palestinians must be involved in all discussions affecting the control over their lives. I think it is clear that the United States government is not yet ready to accept the participation of the PLO in an international peace conference at this time.

Q: What does that say to both of you then about the prospects for that conference?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: We are engaged in a process that is dynamic. It is historically true that national liberation movements the world over did not receive acknowledgment from the contending powers when they started. But to make peace eventually the Palestine Liberation Organization and all other national liberation organizations in the world will receive recognition.

Q: Are you going to continue the dialogue with the secretary of state on a lower level?

Dr. Said: We met with the secretary of state as Americans, as colleagues. He, after all, has an academic background. We are academics and we are directly concerned with the conflict in the Middle East. I think we parted on a positive note saying that we would be in touch if the situation required it and if we felt that as individuals and as members of the PNC that we could advance the [peace] process, then we would certainly do so.

Q: Do you consider the Palestine National Council as part of the Palestine Liberation Organization?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: The PNC created the PLO. In equivalent terms the PNC is the

Congress of the Palestinian people. It is the legislative organ. The PLO includes the executive, which is the equivalent of the president and the secretary of state, and so forth, and the bureaucracy. National Council resolutions obviously go to the executive in the implementation of Palestinian policies.

Q: Professor Said, did you feel that you were representing the PLO here today?

Dr. Said: We felt that we were representing our people and that because of our membership in the PNC we have a kind of representation that is slightly out of the ordinary.

Q: In other words, did you feel that you represented and could speak for the PLO here today?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: It should be clear that we reflect the views of the Palestine Liberation Organization and what we stated to Mr. Shultz was consistent with what any representative of the PLO would have conveyed to him, but we were not delegated by the PLO for this session nor were we invited by secretary of state Shultz on behalf of the PLO.

Q: Will you be reporting back to Chairman Arafat about your meeting with Secretary Shultz?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: As members of the National Council and as Palestinians we are in touch on a constant basis with the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organization. We do not report because we are not officers, but as congressmen we do share our information with the Palestinian constituency, including its leadership.

Q: Do you believe that your meeting with Secretary Shultz sent a strong message to Israel about the state of the peace process?

Dr. Said: I would hope it would send a strong message to all those who are concerned with peace in the Middle East. That is to say there is, I think, a general

recognition on the part of this administration at this point, as symbolized by this meeting, that the Palestinians play an important role in any future settlement since the conflict is between them and the Israelis. As he says in the text of one of his statements, the secretary of state recognizes that the Palestinians should achieve political and economic control of their own future.

Q: Do you think that at this meeting you brought the U.S. closer to recognizing self-determination for the Palestinian people?

Dr. Said: It's hard to say. We were more interested in leaving the door open for the future and more concerned now with improving the understanding between the Palestinian people and the United States.

Q: Did you get an idea of when the secretary is actually going back to the region?

Dr. Said: No, we didn't discuss this at all.

Dr. Abu-Lughod: It was a communication session between the secretary of state and us. I think it was also important in another sense. This is probably one of the rare times when the secretary of state in practice is dealing with Palestinians in exile. Therefore, the message that ought to be understood by this is that there is a Palestinian people irrespective of location that must be involved in the peacemaking process to resolve the issues that affect the totality of the Palestinian people. Not only those under occupation who obviously have the most pressing problems at the moment, but the Palestinians in exile in the Arab world, the U.S., and Latin America. A very important point to be made is that the peacemaking process must address itself to the totality of the problem of the totality of the Palestinian nation.

Q: Has there been a discussion of the current situation in the occupied territories and what the U.S. might do to prepare a better atmosphere for future peace negotiations?

Dr. Said: We certainly made it clear that one of the major aspects of our interest in seeing Secretary Shultz was to relate to him directly as Palestinians our extraordinary unhappiness, our anger at the repressive measures taken by Israel against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. We also made it clear to the secretary that all Palestinians regard the U.S. as directly involved in the repression, since it is clear to everyone that the U.S. supports Israel politically and supplies it militarily and economically to an unprecedented degree. We wanted it understood by the secretary that Palestinians have a particular interest in addressing the United States' responsibility for the situation under which Palestinians now and in the foreseeable future are suffering on the West Bank and in Gaza. This was a very important component in what we had to say to him because its important for people in high office like the secretary to hear directly what is on the minds of the people who are directly involved and directly suffering from this extraordinarily brutal and oppressive regime on the West Bank and Gaza.

Dr. Abu-Lughod: We suggested to Mr. Shultz that the credibility of the peace-making process initiated by the U.S. will be enhanced if it undertakes certain measures that would lift Israel's occupation from the West Bank and Gaza and stops the measures of oppression and repression that Israel is undertaking to suppress the Palestinian uprising.

Q: Was there progress today on the central question of how the Palestinians are going to be represented in any peace negotiations?

Dr. Said: I think there's a greater understanding of the two sides in this and beyond that it's difficult to comment, but certainly we have achieved a closer understanding of the need to begin the process in some way. There is a need for ingenuity, for resourcefulness but, more importantly,

the secretary agreed with our view that what is necessary at the present time is to create an atmosphere in which the communities, Palestinians and Israelis, can move toward some sort of coexistence. That is the main point and he agreed with us on this point. We're dealing here with two national communities and not with the state of Israel on the one hand and a miscellaneous collection of inhabitants on the West Bank and Gaza on the other. There is a Palestinian nation. We made that point over and over again. I think the secretary understood it and in light of that I think then the practical steps that will follow, will, I hope, reflect this point.

Q: What was his reaction to your feelings and concerns about what is going on with respect to Israel?

Dr. Said: He expressed understanding and appreciation of the point of view that we were putting forward. It's difficult to believe that anybody would disagree with what we were saying and I certainly don't feel Secretary Shultz disagreed at all.

Q: Do PNC members support the charter of the Palestine Liberation Organization?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: The National Charter of the Palestinian people represents the Palestinian national consensus.

Q: Including the dissolution of Israel?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: It doesn't say that.

Q: What does it say?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: It says that the Balfour Declaration and other things are illegal.

Q: What was Secretary Shultz's reaction to what you said to him about Israeli measures in the occupied territories?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: Because the session was essentially a sharing of views, I cannot help but feel that conveying the authentic views of the Palestinian people will have an impact. We certainly will continue the dialogue and as we were departing he

[Shultz] expressed the hope that we will remain in touch with him. That tells me that what we were saying was being interpreted and analyzed. He mentioned the constraints under which the United States operates and that if, in fact, there is recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, that there are domestic difficulties that prevent direct dealing with it. The issue will have to be handled by credible representatives of the Palestinian people, a term that I think Mr. Shultz used. The discussion is now two steps ahead if we are in full agreement that the representatives who must negotiate and discuss the question of Palestine must be credible to the Palestinian people. The Palestinian people have said who is credible—the PLO—and it may delegate the task of discussion to any person or group that it wishes to do so.

Q: Will credible Palestinians from the Palestinian community be accepted as credible in the eyes of the U.S. administration to enter into the peace process?

Dr. Said: Yes, absolutely. The secretary used the words “credible” and “representative.” It’s important to note that there is a certain distance between some of the things that the U.S. stands for at present and what the Palestinians stand for at present but on this point—that the representatives of the Palestinians in any negotiations or peace conference would have to be “credible” and “representative” was a phrase used by the secretary and obviously used by us as well. I’m not saying that everything is resolved by the use of these words but there is an important meeting here on at least those two phrases.

Q: Are the PLO and PNC any closer today to recognizing Israel’s right to exist than they were before the meeting?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: The issue today is the Palestinian right to independence and sovereignty in Palestine. That is the crux of

the conflict in the Middle East and it is for the Palestinian Arabs represented by their own representatives and for Israeli Jews to work out the arrangements that will assure their mutual coexistence on a footing of equality.

Dr. Said: I want to respond to that. One of the purposes of this meeting and the discussion that ensued was to try to change the terms of discussion and the terms by which the Middle East conflict or at least the conflict between the Palestinians and Israel has been conveyed in the media. I think the insistence on the recognition of Israel and the whole series of obstacles thrown up in front of the Palestinians when Palestinians in fact are the victims, are part of this process of distortion and misrepresentation in the U.S. by parties who have no interest in seeing the conflict resolved. What we are trying to do, what we hope to do as people who are interested in peace, is to change the terms of the conflict and to bring the parties to understanding and coexistence in some way. It’s very important to focus on that. The Palestinian people are the chief sufferers from terrorism. They are the ones who have lost more lives and are certainly a dispossessed nation and for that reason it’s important not to harp on blaming the victims in this sense but rather on moving the process forward to a different level where people can try to achieve ways in which to live together.

Q: What do you think are the prospects for any Palestinians to meet with the secretary when he returns to the Middle East next week?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: Palestinians would meet him any time he invites them. . . .and the PLO has the perfect right and the obligation to nominate the delegates that the secretary would meet officially for that purpose.

Q: As I understand it the secretary wanted to meet with Palestinians earlier to explore the

issues but the PLO said "no," nobody should meet with him?

Dr. Said: I can't speak for other Palestinians at this point and say what they will or will not do, but I certainly think that there is an interest on the part of both the secretary of state and Palestinians to speak with each other. I don't think there's a problem there.

Q: In light of this meeting in the U.S., do you think it will be more likely that Palestinians from the territories will meet with the secretary?

Dr. Said: I can't really answer that.

Q: Do you two people standing here today recognize Israel as a sovereign state?

Dr. Said: People, individuals don't recognize states. States recognize each other.

Dr. Abu-Lughod: If a Palestinian state comes about, we'll have to address your question.

Q: How about the role of the Soviet Union in an international conference?

Dr. Abu-Lughod: It did not enter into the discussions.

Mossad and the New PLO Martyr

The Manchester Guardian Weekly carried the following editorial on the assassination of Abu Jihad in its 24 April 1988 edition.

The deafening silence of the Israeli government on matters of fact in the immediate aftermath of the murder of Yasir Arafat's deputy in Tunis speaks volumes about the moral condition of the Jewish state on the eve of its fortieth anniversary. If ever there was a case for a prompt and convincing denial on the highest authority, it was surely when Mr. Arafat accused Mossad, the Israeli secret service, of the assassination. Instead the hours rolled by and the government said it would make no comment. Nobody is as yet in a position to produce evidence acceptable in a court of

law that the killing of Abu Jihad was the work of Israeli agents. But it looks as though the fair-minded will have to manage without assistance from the Israeli government, whose friends abroad are finding it harder to defend its conduct than they have ever done. The best the prime minister, Mr. Shamir, could say was that he knew only what was on the radio.

That leads inexorably to the question of the value of assassination as an instrument of policy. The rationale behind the imputation of Israeli guilt is that the murdered man, as PLO military chief, was behind the revolt in the occupied territories, now in its fifth month. This may or may not have been true, but begs a number of questions. The uprising began in December, and there is evidence that it took the PLO leadership as much by surprise as the Israelis. If the protests had flared up and died away as others have done in the past, the theory that they were the result of an external plot might have held up. As it is, the revolt has been sustained at an unusually high level for an unprecedented period and the deaths are well into three figures. The Palestinians have also endured thousands of injuries, beatings, detentions, and the illegal deportation of suspected agitators. While there is no shortage of fanatics in the Middle East (consider only the hijackers of the Kuwaiti jumbo), it is simply not credible to argue that so many Palestinians would defy the Israeli army for so long merely to embarrass the occupying power. Students of these matters will not be at all surprised that the murder was followed by yet another upsurge of protest during which the death toll rose by more than 10 percent in a single day. Mossad—or whoever—has presented a resistance movement which showed signs of flagging with a new martyr.

Israelis show no less readiness to be provoked. The death of a teenage Israeli girl was immediately attributed to Palestin-