

The following questions were presented to *Professor Mahmoud N. Musa* in July 2006 by *Mrs. Gladys Martines Lopez* of the Spanish newspaper *Diagonal*. The questions were presented in French and the answers were in English. Both the questions and answers were translated into the other language.

G. Lopez: In 2003, you started an international association to solve the Israel-Palestine conflict through one state. After 3 years, at what stage is found this idea? To what degree this initiative is accepted by Palestinians and Israelis considering that the Israeli and Palestinian authorities oppose this idea?

Prof. M. Musa: As it is becoming increasingly more obvious that the two-state solution is not workable, support for the one-state solution is increasing.

There are no statistics of the degree of acceptance of this solution. However, I believe that the majority of Palestinians support this concept. The problem is that none of the major political organizations is proposing this solution.

As for Jews inside and outside Israel, only a small minority support such a solution. They are mostly intellectuals, religious anti-Zionist groups, far-left individuals, and “humanists”. I estimate the supporters to be about 5% inside Israel and about 10-15% outside Israel.

G. Lopez: When did you become convinced of the need to establish one state and why? What is the role of the Oslo accords?

Prof. M. Musa: I personally have always believed that this is the only solution that would bring peace to Palestine and the whole Middle-East, and would be just to involve all including Jews.

Israel is a colonial-settler state created and supported by imperial powers in order to control the Middle East.

I am also an internationalist who believe that the struggle should be over values, such as human rights and socio-economic justice, rather than between ethnic groups over land.

I am also, no doubt, influenced by the personal experience of my father who lived and worked amicably with Jews in Haifa before being driven out in 1948.

As for the Oslo Accord: this is very unfortunate, because it has created significant strata within Palestinian society in the occupied territories who have an interest in maintaining the status quo.

These are: the political class, the police, the bureaucracy, some of the business people, and even some of the intellectuals, associated with the non-governmental organizations. This will hinder the acceptance of the one-state solution among Palestinians in the West-Bank and Gaza.

G. Lopez: The movement for one state adopted the principle at the African National Congress of South Africa in its struggle against Apartheid, One Person, One Vote. How are the situations of Apartheid in South Africa and Israel comparable, taking into consideration that “Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East”

Prof. M. Musa: South Africa and Palestine: There are similarities but also considerable differences. Both South Africa and Palestine/Israel are colonial-settler states, with the colonialists coming from Europe. In south-Africa, the colonialists did not seek to drive out the Blacks totally out of the country as the Zionists did in Palestine. Further, the Afrikaners sought to employ and exploit the Black peoples, while the Zionists sought from the beginning of their immigration to establish their economy and other institutions apart from the Palestinians. This is what they called: “conquest of land, conquest of labour”. The black leadership in South Africa represented by the African National Congress never accepted this separation, while the Palestinian leadership represented by Fatah succumbed and accepted this imposed separation officially in 1988. Internationally: the role of Israel in serving imperialist powers is more important than that of South Africa.

G. Lopez: The most important issue for Palestinians is the right of return of the refugees. Is the one-state capable of absorbing millions of people? What is to be done with the colonies in the West Bank? What is to be done with “Law of return” of the Jews?

Prof. M. Musa: Yes, the country can accommodate the refugees. In fact, studies show that 80% of the refugees came from rural areas that are now sparsely populated.

The colonies will stay. However, there has to be equity of distribution of land, housing, and other resources. Our movement has socio-economic justice as an important goal.

The “Law of return”: we support the concept of a spiritual-cultural home for all Jews of the world in Palestine/Israel. Individuals who want to live in the country will go through a reasonable immigration process with priority given to those with religious motivation or family connections. We do not see this as constituting a problem since most Jews have a better quality of life where they live now. Consider, for example, the ratings of quality of life of the major cities of the world by *Mercer Human Consulting* that rated Tel Aviv at the same level as Bangkok and Sao Paulo.

G. Lopez: Some defendants of the two-state solution, like Mohammed Baraka, consider that the one-state solution means “abandoning the struggle” of the Palestinian people for sovereignty. How do you respond to this?

Prof. M. Musa: Is this Mohammed Baraka the member of the Israeli Knesset from the Front for Justice and Equality?

I am surprised that he would say that, and I do not agree with this at all.

The one-state will have all Palestinians in one political entity. The struggle will continue peacefully for human rights and socio-economic justice. Does the struggle of humanity ever end?

The two-state solution will deprive two-thirds of Palestinians of their home-land. Furthermore, this entity will not be sovereign because of the vast disparity between it and Israel.

One has to be cautious with anyone who derives his social and economic status from the status quo.

G. Lopez: The Establishment of one-state does not automatically eliminate apartheid. How would you keep such condition from continuing, taking into consideration the

state of domination that existed for over 50 years. Even if you eliminate Apartheid legally, how do you prevent socio-economic inequality between Israelis and Palestinians from persisting?

Prof. M. Musa: One would hope the two sides will enter this with good will. Palestinians should not enter this with the hope of becoming a majority and achieving domination, nor should Jews hope to be dominant through their wealth and their connections to foreign powers.

Inequality will not automatically end, but this will be an essential step. The other alternative of two-state solution will serve to perpetuate inequality.

In the case of two-states, Palestinian workers will work in Israel for low wages because they have no rights, this will in turn drive the wages of Jewish workers down. The one-state solution serves the interests of the lower strata of both sides.

One should add that Palestinians have a high level of education and are energetic. They will contribute to the prosperity of the country under normal conditions.

G. Lopez: Warschawsky and other authors advocate a two-state provisional solution as a step towards a binational solution. Why do you consider this not possible or undesirable?

Prof. M. Musa: No. Two-states will not be a step towards the one-state solution. In fact, this will be a step in the opposite direction. When classes develop in society who benefit from the existence of a state, they will constitute a significant hindrance towards developing one-State because they will lose their privileges. These people are the politicians, bureaucracy, police and business people. We already see this with the Palestinian Authority.

G. Lopez: The proponents of the one-state are today divided between those who call for a binational state, like the late intellectual Edward Said, and those who call for a secular democratic state. You advocate for the second position, can you explain why? At what point do you find the debate today over one-state in Israel and Palestine?

Prof. M. Musa: The difference between a bi-national and secular democratic state is subtle, but important. We are for the democratic state; this issue has been resolved.

We do not want to encourage nationalism; we want to promote inter-ethnic solidarity. This does not mean that we seek to obliterate all feelings of national identity. I believe that Edward Said meant: “a state for the two peoples”, not a bi-national state.

G. Lopez: Considering the degree of violence that exists today in Israel/Palestine, do you think that the one-state solution can be envisaged in the short or intermediate future?

Prof. M. Musa: We have been continuously acting reflexively because of the environment of urgency that Israel creates. There is a need to think strategically, develop a plan and stick to it.

When I see the senseless and blind violence of Israel, I am reminded of the Greek saying: “**He who the gods want to destroy will first make mad**”. The resolution of this problem may be closer than anyone thinks. Let us always be prepared.

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