

Mobilizing Support for the 'VOTE for Peace' (Nusseibeh-Ayalon) Initiative

"Vote for Peace"

Introduction

Cognizant of the dangerous deterioration inherent in the continued spiral of violence being witnessed and practiced by Palestinians and Israelis over the past two years, and in the absence of any serious official attempt to offset this deterioration, several hundred peace activists from both sides convened together on the 28th.December 2000 to sign a document titled "Time for Peace" (see Annex I) at the New Imperial Hotel in East Jerusalem. The signing ceremony, held under the auspices of friends in the international community of the two peoples, was to inaugurate a public, or "grass-roots" joint peoples peace campaign, in the belief that a concerted and growing public pressure could eventually make itself felt at the policy-making level of the respective leaderships.

Since that signing ceremony both the difficulties as well as the challenges for launching and carrying out such an initiative became all the more apparent. While the area was plunged into even further bloodshed and conflict, various initiatives organized by the Peace Campaign were met with obstacles and opposition. A major "Human Chain" event was foiled by a total curfew on towns and villages in the West Bank imposed by the Israeli Army, and angry reactions by various power centers in the Palestinian community were voiced at the unprecedented public call for a halt in suicide attacks, signed again by a number of activists in the Palestinian community. (Notwithstanding, it is our belief that this unprecedented public call marked a turning point in the course of events, eventually leading to bold public statements by the Fatah Organisation, among others, against these attacks).

The peoples' initiative was predicated on two principles. The first was the belief in the need for mobilizing people on both sides in support of negotiations and a peaceful settlement. But the second principle was the belief that such positive empowerment of the people can only come about if trust in peace were to be restored; and that such trust in turn can only come about if there were to be clarity or transparency concerning the final destination of the negotiation process. In this light, the "Time for Peace" document

had set out the general outlines of a vision of a peaceful settlement between the two peoples. By setting out this vision, it had cut across the myriad of failed transitional and phased arrangements since the signing of Oslo which had been worked out and prepared by the various parties in order to achieve peace; or at least to get the two sides back to the negotiation track. The real challenge was felt to be the total loss of trust in the value of negotiations and peace. Such trust could only be achieved or restored through setting out the outlines of a shared vision of the outcome of those negotiations. Otherwise, it was felt, and especially faced with the continuing deterioration associated with the context of phased and transitional agreements, neither side would be enthused much by a renewed call for negotiations.

While the "Time for Peace" document had been simple and clear in pointing out and determining the way in which the essential points of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should be addressed; and while, also, many prominent Israelis from the peace camp (including non-Government Labour Party members such as Yossi Beilin and Meretz members headed by Yossi Sarid) had participated in the ceremony and declared their support for the campaign, nonetheless a further clarification seemed to be required on some of the points, primarily in order for such a document to be regarded as a realistic and therefore genuine expression of political will. This additional clarification was achieved in the document signed by Ami Ayalon and Sari Nusseibeh, (The "Vote for Peace" document- Annex 2) and it relates to the sensitive issues of Jerusalem, the Palestinian Right of Return, and settlements. Clearly, if a two-state settlement is to be achieved it would have to reflect boldly the principles outlined in the document, and it would have to be such as to appeal sufficiently to the respective publics to ensure their support, thereby allowing the respective leaderships' to take the formal steps necessary to ending the conflict.

In order to create this appeal and develop the necessary support, as well as to begin addressing those challenges, the document along with an explanatory letter by Sari Nusseibeh was circulated among some five hundred grass-roots activists, mainly in the Fatah movement, in the West Bank and Gaza. The role of the document as a **political instrument** was explained, and a call for comments was solicited. Once again, the effort proved to be ground-breaking, in that it engendered serious debate in political circles across the West Bank and Gaza, and while some opposition was voiced, some support and understanding was registered. Two contact points were established to facilitate communication and debates, one in the north (Tulkarem), and another in the south (Hebron) of the West Bank. A further contact point is soon to be established in Gaza.

Why the "VOTE FOR PEACE" Initiative?

Vision for a durable political solution

The idea of the "Vote for Peace" initiative is to launch a public diplomacy campaign which will impose itself on the agenda of the respective political leaderships, especially in the wake of the Israeli elections. The formal launch is planned to take place in the context of the formation of two complimentary groups, or councils, who will simultaneously declare themselves as twin partners in the public campaign. In the aftermath of the Israeli elections, the gathering storm in the Gulf, and the anticipated re-engagement by the international community in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process through the road-map, the initiative comes to assume a major role. The next few years will determine whether a two-state solution is indeed realizable. An extremist Israeli Government will forestall a peaceful solution not only for the duration of its incumbency, but for a much longer period. And beyond that period, it is not clear that the two-state model of peace now being thought of will be workable, or even desirable. By itself, the road-map stands to face failure for the same reasons its predecessor agreements failed, namely the absence of a shared vision of the intended future of negotiations, or a final-destination map. By developing a joint public vision of that destination, and campaigning for it with a view to enforcing it onto the formal political agenda of the major political players in the region, including that of the local governments, it is believed that maximum utilization will be made of the forthcoming window of opportunity. The public campaign for the "final-destination" map will create the necessary support for the implementation of the "road-map", making the latter a successful transition to peace. To miss out on the opportunity of peace now because of the complexity of the situation will only succeed in increasing this complexity in the future. Therefore, however difficult the challenges today are, the potential challenges in the future will be even more difficult.

It is in the interest therefore of a just and durable peace in the region to strengthen the Israeli and Palestinian peace camps. The "Vote for Peace" initiative sets out to do this, through a method that envisions the mutual and simultaneous reinforcement of trust between the two sides. Because it is partly within the Palestinians' power to determine Israeli public attitudes, just as it is partly within the Israeli power to determine Palestinian public attitudes. Interactive public campaigning will reinforce the respective peace camps in the two communities.

Objective

To develop, in coordination with the Israeli side, a critical and well-organised Palestinian peace camp (The Peoples' Campaign for Peace and Democracy –HASHD), centered around the shared vision of the future contained in the "VOTE FOR PEACE" document.

Two strategies are to be employed, direct and indirect. Directly, a network of advocacy centers will be established throughout the Palestinian territories which will become main information-dissemination and recruitment points. Indirectly, a network of "partner community-service" and action centers will be sought out and integrated, or established as an associative backbone to the peace campaign. HASHD will therefore be a peace-advocacy operation, as well as a community-service outlet. This combination will ensure for HASHD a political as well as a practical voice.

The Strategy, a background

The Peoples' Peace Campaign which was launched in December 2001 initiated a new phase in Palestinian political strategy, and it led naturally to the evolution of HASHD as a Palestinian peace and democracy movement, advocating an end to violence and a resumption of negotiations for the creation of a democratic Palestinian State. Besides the countless non-violent as well as media activities undertaken over the past year under the umbrella of the Peoples' Peace Campaign, a movement was launched to advocate the "Vote for Peace" Document. This new initiative clearly required a more serious engagement within the Palestinian community. A group of activists from the West Bank and Gaza indicated their willingness to rally around this initiative, and to form a leadership council for it. A media campaign was launched during the last week of November 2002 in the main local newspaper, Al-Quds, outlining the message of HASHD to the Palestinian People. This message contained two components, a vision for a settlement (the "Vote for Peace" Document), as well as a vision for a future Palestinian State (Annex III). This message remains the cornerstone of HASHD'S future activities.

MAIN ACTIVITIES OF THE INITIATIVE

This initiative targets the Palestinian community, with a view to developing a peace camp that aims at achieving an independent, free and democratic State through non-violent means. Israeli public attitudes will be under constant scrutiny, with a view that positive attitudes on one side reinforce positive attitudes on the other. The recovery of trust in the value of negotiations and peace will be the primary imperative and driving force of HASHD's activities.

This will be done by establishing a network of 11 to 15 centers in the cities of the West Bank and Gaza Strip to become the focal points of HASHD activities. Each center will become a focal information-dissemination and advocacy point, and will mobilize people in its own community by carrying out activities such as town hall meetings, setting up dialogue groups, recruiting supporters, organizing media campaigns, non-violent training, etc. The nodes will be inter-linked and guided by an overall leadership council, which will be the main interlocutor with the Israeli side.

In parallel, HASHD will also establish a number of associated community-service centers, primarily for women and youth, especially in the outlying and country regions. Such centers will act as service-providers in their respective communities, and their explicit association with the peace-advocacy centers will help reinforce the peace campaign. Where such centers already exist and would welcome support and association, HASHD will immediately set out to integrate these centers into its own network. A good example is that of the 'Peace & Democracy Development Centre' in Qualquilya , with which HASHD has already established a link.

HASHD will also work with the intention of mobilizing and acquiring the support of members of the Fatah leadership councils as well as The Palestinian Legislative Council (to address the Palestinian people and the Israeli public through the use of a strong consistent peaceful message.) In addition to commitment of Palestinian political figures, **HASHD** aims to acquire letters of endorsement from International prominent figures, support of the EU Parliament and the US government.

B. In the 1st year HASHD will help in the creation of three Associated Community Service Centres (Seed money (1)to recruit peace activists (coordinators) and (2)to cover political & cultural activities related to peace dialogue & democracy.

B1.Youth Network

• Field Coordinators 2x 600 x 12 x 11	79,200
• Secretary	
• Activities	25,000
	(104,200)

B2. Women Centre in Jenin

• Supervisor 1x800x12	9,600
• Field Coordinators 2x600x12	14,400
• Secretary 1x300x12	3,600
• Activities in peace dialogue	25,000
• Field development actions	25,000
	(77,600)

B3. Student Network (WB & GS)

• Field Coordinators 4 x 600 x 12	28,800
• Secretaries 2 x 600 x 12	14,400
• Activities in peace dialogue	25,000
• Field development actions	25,000
	(92,400)

B.4 Peace Development Centre (Qalquilya)

• Supervisor 1x600x12	7,200
• Field Coordinators 2x600x12	14,400
• Secretary 1x300x12	3,600
• Activities in peace dialogue	25,000
• Field development actions	25,000
	(75,200)

B. Sub-total 349,400

C. Media Advertisement campaign

C1. Tools/Programs

Opinion polls (3-4)	30,000
Press:ads,appeals & petitions	70,000
TV interviews	60,000
TV spots	60,000
Billboards	75,000
Radio programs	25,000
Posters, pamphlets, flyers & T-shirts	35,000
	(355,000)

C2. Actions, cultural and political

Town Hall talks and meetings 20 x 2000	40,000
Facilitators, hall rentals, hospitality	
Visits & talks	40,000
Conferences (high level political) 5 x 6000	30,000
Cultural events 20 x 1000	20,000
Vigils, non-violent demonstrations	30,000
	(160,000)

C3. Workshops

Organizers & facilitators	20,000
Training courses	15,000
Campaign awareness sessions,	15,000
Lectures , video film projections	15,000
Coordinators 5 x 500 x 12	30,000
	(95,000)

C. sub-total **610,000**

D. Transportation

1. Local travel 2000 x 12 24,000

2. International travel 20 pax x 1000 x 2 40,000
(airtickets incl. taxes, permits, transportation to and from airport)
(participation of 15 council members + 5 support people of **HASHD**,
with Israeli counterparts in 2- international conferences)

3. Accommodation/perdiem

Local	10,000
International: 20 people x 3 days x 2 conf. X \$150	18,000

D. Sub-total **92,000**

E. Management expenses

• accountant 800 x 12	9,600
• reporting 500 x 12	6,000
• auditing	3,000

E. sub-total **18,600**

F. Interaction activities with Israeli Counterparts

• Workshops	3000
• Meetings	3000
• Joint planning	2000
• Actions (political & cultural)	20,000
• Evaluation	5,000

F. Sub-total **33,000**

Grand TOTAL

1,901,482,00

More Instrumental activities

- **Setting up Peace advocacy Centres , network stations & liaison offices in eight to eleven locations.**
- Setting up/supporting community-service centers/programs, primarily for youth/students and women.
- Developing a set of media communications (pamphlets, TV spots, written ads, newspaper articles, interviews, etc.)
- **Mobilising & Recruiting** Palestinian men and women, professionals, teachers and students, volunteers and peace activists, to help develop awareness and support for the initiative.
- **Training in non-violent expressions, peace culture and democracy.**
- Reach-out and Advocacy through the media, town-hall meetings, dialogue groups, work-shops, direct interaction with public figures, NGOs, PNA officials, political movements etc.
- **Surveillance of Palestinian Public Opinion, through polls, questionnaires, etc.**
- **Setting a Website,** Internet Network system to develop virtual dialogue
- **Interaction with Israeli counterparts (workshops, meetings, joint planning and evaluation).**

'Vote for Peace' - Proposed Budget (in US\$)

Time Framework – 12 months

- **Setting up 'Peace Advocacy Centres' in 11 locations: main cities of the West Bank (incl. E. Jerusalem) & Gaza.**

- **Operating a network Community Service Centres: Youth/Students/Women & Community development.**

A.1. Setting up HASHD 'Peace Advocacy Centres' in 11 cities

- Director 1 x 1000 x 12 x 11 (132)
- Field Coordinators 2 x 800 x 12 x 11 (211,200)
- Assistant 2 x 600 x 12 x 11 (field & activities)(158,400)

Sub-total 501,732

A2. Rentals

11 centres x 1000 x 12 mths 132,000

Overheads 10% 13,200

Network support coordination
sub-total 145,200

A4. Monthly running costs

- electricity 11 x 100 x 12
- water 11x50x12
- telephone 11 x 300 x 12
- telefax 11x200x12
- Overheads 10%

A5. Office Equipment

Furniture and office utilities

(3 offices + 1 meeting room per center) (1000 x 4 x 11) 44,000

Computers: desk tops 20 x 1200 24,000

Laptops 3 x 1500 4,500

Photocopiers 5 x 1500 7,500

Telephones (incl. cellular) 11 x 300 3,300

Fax machines 11 x 350 3,850

Scanners 5 x 300 1,500

Printers 11 x 400 4,400

Sub-total 93,050

A6. Virtual dialogue – IT

Web site – home page set up : 'Vote for Peace' 6,000

Internet connection 300 x 11 3,300

ADSL membership 100 x 11 x 12 mths 13,200

Webmaster fee 500 x 3 x 12 18,000

Technician fee 300 x 3 x 12 10,800

Sub-total 51,300

A. Sub-total 798,482