

The One-State Solution and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Palestinian Challenges and Prospects

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As the Israeli-Palestinian peace process continues to stalemate, voices calling for an inclusive single state in Israel/Palestine as an alternative to the two-state solution have grown louder. This article reviews the Palestinian debate around the one-state solution and analyzes the challenges its advocates face in generating political support, central among which is the difficulty of redefining the Palestinian cause in terms of a struggle for equal political rights within a single polity rather than in terms of a struggle for a separate state.

Since the collapse of the Oslo peace process in 2000 and the eruption that same year of the Al-Aqsa intifada, the prospects for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have grown increasingly bleak. The doubling of the Israeli settler population in the West Bank and East Jerusalem between 1993 and 2009 to over 494,000 settlers, the construction of a 709 km separation wall that cuts into Palestinian land in the West Bank and once completed would incorporate 11.5% of it into Israel, and the institutionalization of more than 99 Israeli checkpoints that cut Palestinian areas into over 12 disconnected geographic areas, have killed the prospects for any viable sovereign Palestinian state.¹ This reality has been further aggravated by Israel's 2009 war on Gaza, the rift between Hamas and Fatah, and the failure of the international community to push the stalled Israeli-Palestinian negotiations towards fulfilling the 2003 "Road Map" to peace, which endorsed the idea of the Palestinian state as the only solution to the conflict.

In view of this impasse, a growing number of scholars and political activists have been calling for the alternative of a one-state solution in all of Palestine, inclusive of Jewish Israelis and Palestinians. Since 2009, a number of major conferences took place across the globe to discuss the prospects and viability of one-state solution.² Numerous

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1. See Foundation for Middle East Peace, *Projection of Israel West Bank Partition Plan, 2008*, <http://www.fmep.org/maps/redeployment-final-status-options>, and *Comprehensive Settlement Population 1972–2008*, http://www.fmep.org/settlement_info/settlement-info-and-tables/stats-data/comprehensive-settlement-population-1972-2006. B'tselem, *Restriction on Movement*, http://www.btselem.org/english/Freedom_of_Movement/Checkpoints_and_Forbidden_Roads.asp.

2. These were *Israel/Palestine: Mapping Models of Statehood and Paths to Peace*, York University, Toronto, June 22–24, 2009; *Re-envisioning Israel/Palestine*, Human Science Research Council, Cape Town, June 12–14, 2009; *One State for Palestine/Israel: A Country for all of its Citizens?* University of Massachusetts Boston, March 28–29, 2009; and *The Haifa Conference on The Right of Return and the Secular Democratic State in Palestine*, Haifa, May 23, 2010. Each of these conferences was attended by over 300 participants and had between 30–40 different presentations/speakers.

books and articles have been published over the past few years advocating this idea, as well as vehemently opposing it.³ The Palestinian civil society-led campaign calling for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, which began in 2005, is gaining ground among political activists for the Palestinian cause in Europe, South Africa, and North America. These activists argue that Israel has created an apartheid reality that can only be dismantled by promoting a democratic one-state solution.⁴ Within the Palestinian community, a number of politicians have threatened to reconsider this option if Israel fails to give the Palestinians a viable and independent state.⁵

The aim of this article is to analyze the extent to which the one-state solution is or can become a clear political movement for the Palestinian people, one which can enable them to achieve their rights that the two-state solution failed to protect. This question seems all the more pressing today as the one-state solution is an old idea that was often found morally attractive but politically unfeasible. First proposed by Judah Magnes, Martin Buber, and Brit Shalom in the late 1920s and 1930s as a way to enable Jews and Arabs to live in a bi-national state in Palestine, it was rejected by both Zionists and Palestinians for compromising their national rights. Although it was presented to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in 1947, and then reformulated by Fatah in 1969 and the PLO in 1971 under the slogan of a democratic state in Palestine inclusive of Jews, Muslims, and Christians, the one-state idea did not find political support among the international community. It continues to be rejected by the majority of Israelis who claim sole Jewish sovereignty over Palestine.⁶ It is thus inevitable to ask how advocates of the one-state solution can meet this opposition and turn their ideal into a concrete political movement that can galvanize local and international support. This is especially challenging given that supporters of the one-state solution have not yet formed a clear political party or cohesive political movement.

This article focuses on the challenges to the creation of a one-state movement among the Palestinian people.⁷ It argues that there are three fundamental challenges. First, the difficulty of redefining the Palestinian cause in terms of a struggle for equal political rights rather than for a state *per se*. The one-state solution forces a re-evaluation of the “state” paradigm as a framework for defining the Palestinian struggle for self-de-

3. See Virginia Tilley, *The One-State Solution: A Breakthrough for Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Deadlock* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005); Ali Abunimeh, *One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); Sari Makdisi, *Palestine Inside Out: An Everyday Occupation* (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2007); Garry Sussman, “The Challenge to the Two States Solution,” *Middle East Report* (Summer 2004); Meron Benvenisti, “The Case for Shared Sovereignty,” *The Nation*, June 18, 2007; Brian Klug, “The State of Zionism,” *The Nation*, June 18, 2007. See also the “One State Declaration” on www.electronicintifada.org. For opponents of the one-state solution, see Benny Morris, *One State, Two States, Resolving the Israel/Palestine Conflict* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

4. Nancy Murray, “Dynamics of Resistance: The Apartheid Analogy,” *Electronic Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 8 (Spring 2008).

5. See Saeb Erekat, Palestinian Chief Negotiator, quoted in “Biden Visits Mideast to Push Peace Talks,” *The New York Times*, March 9, 2004.

6. See Benny Morris, *One State, Two States*.

7. While it is also important to analyze the prospects for establishing such a one-state movement within Israel, time and space limits restrain the possibility of covering this dimension which will be taken up in a follow-up paper.

termination and as the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is by no means an easy task, since it is not yet clear how a movement based on the achievement of political rights within the whole of historic Palestine can meet Palestinian national and individual political rights. It is also unclear how such a movement would address the question of Jewish Israeli political and civil rights in Palestine, and at what cost. The second challenge for the one-state movement is to frame the solution it offers in realistic, rather than utopian terms. This, in turn, necessitates addressing the present power structures and legal frameworks available, both domestically and internationally, which remain favorable to of the two-state solution. Third, building a one-state movement entails identifying and nurturing the kind of leadership and grassroots activism that can mobilize support for this idea among the various Palestinian constituencies and examining the extent to which it can impact, if not change, the present Palestinian leadership.

FROM STATEHOOD TO EQUAL RIGHTS

The first major step toward building a Palestinian and Arab movement for the one-state solution lies in re-situating the Palestinian struggle for self-determination within a “rights” paradigm. It requires that the Palestinian political movement and its leadership shift its political goals from establishing an independent Palestinian state toward the achievement of equal political rights within a single polity. This is a particular challenge given the central role that the “state” paradigm has played in defining the content of the Palestinian cause and serving as its vehicle. It is all the more difficult considering that all Palestinian political parties today continue to adhere to the concept of a Palestinian state as the aim of their struggle and solution to their plight. This is the case for Fatah and the PLO at large, the parties to the left — the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), and the People’s Party — and Hamas.⁸

The creation of a Palestinian state has been the framework for defining Palestinian self-determination since 1971, when the 8th Palestinian National Council adopted the idea of a democratic state in all of Palestine, and not just liberation, as its aim. Echoing Fatah’s proposal of 1969, the democratic state represented the first Palestinian attempt to come to terms with the reality of Jewish presence on the land, rather than negate it, albeit within a nationalist Palestinian paradigm. It envisaged a “free and democratic society in Palestine for all Palestinians whether they are Muslims, Christians, or Jews.”⁹ Yet by 1974, the PLO, under Yasir ‘Arafat’s leadership of Fatah, started to drift away from this idea as an attainable aim. They instead aimed for “setting up a patriotic, independent fighting people’s regime in every part of liberated part of Palestine,” a “national authority” that will carry on the liberation process and establish a “democratic Palestinian state.”¹⁰ Although the boundaries of this state were not specified, by 1974 the PLO had insinuated its implicit willingness to accept the principle of a Palestinian state on part, rather than the whole, of Palestine.

8. See interview with Khalid Mishal in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Spring 2008), pp. 59–73.

9. Alain Gresh, *PLO: The Struggle Within* (London: Zed Books, 1988), pp.18–48.

10. See Palestinian National Council Resolutions, June 1974, in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, *The Israel-Arab Reader: A Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict* (London: Penguin Press, 2008).

This *de facto* abandonment of the one-state objective was largely the result of pragmatic political calculations. Diplomatically, there was no response to such a vision from the Israeli establishment, which had always refused it.¹¹ The international community, moreover, has, ever since 1947, envisaged partition, rather than a single united state, as the solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution 181, supported by a two-thirds majority on November 29, 1947, clearly stipulates the creation of an Arab and a Jewish state in Palestine as the only means for resolving competing national claims over the land by the Zionist and Palestinian national movements. UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 242 in 1967, which has been the basis for all Arab-Israeli peace negotiations ever since, stipulated the acceptance of the Jewish state by its Arab neighbors in exchange for land and peace. Within the PLO, some argue, Fatah — which took the lead in talking about the one-state idea — was not genuinely interested in it.¹² It was, rather, concerned with establishing its power among the Palestinian political movements and putting the PLO on the international map as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Regionally, the PLO under ‘Arafat was determined to assert the independence of Palestinian decision-making from Arab countries’ interference and their manipulation of the Palestinian cause for their own national and political gains. ‘Arafat wanted to ensure that the PLO alone had the sovereign right to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians, while being excluded from any peace negotiations which were based on UNSC Resolution 242. The quest of a Palestinian state was central to asserting this independence and affirming Palestinian national, not simply individual, rights.

The idea of the Palestinian state fulfilled four core functions for the Palestinian political struggle. First, it became the vehicle for asserting Palestinian self-determination. It made the Palestinian problem not a refugee problem in need of a humanitarian solution as UNSC Resolution 242 stipulated, but rather a political cause for national liberation.¹³

Second, it provided the framework for organizing and channeling Palestinian resistance. Since 1964 and more so since 1969, the PLO leadership has worked on setting up the institutions of the Palestinian state before territorializing it.¹⁴ The PLO, with its various political institutions, political parties, electoral structures, and economic services, acted like a state in exile. The fighters in Lebanon and Jordan in the 1960s and 1970s as much as the Palestinians resisting in the West Bank and Gaza, found in the PLO their political expression as well as their protector, and in the dream of the Palestinian state, however loosely defined, the meaning of their struggle for return to their homeland and their liberation.

Third, the independent Palestinian state became the means for fulfilling desired

11. See Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000); and Ilan Pappé, “The Birth, Demise, and Future of One Palestine Complete,” *Electronic Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 8 (Spring 2008), pp.151–164.

12. Mustapha Hussein, “*Gorub Hal al-Dawlatein*” [“The Demise of the Two State Solution”], *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 76 (Fall 2008), pp. 31–42.

13. UNSC Resolution 242 does not mention the word Palestinian and only calls for a “just solution to the refugee problem,” not specifically one based on UN Resolution 194 (Read UNSC Res 242, at www.domino.un.org). The drafters of this resolution envisioned an Arab-Israeli solution wherein the Arab states would speak for the Palestinians and resolve the question of land and refugees through a possible return of the West Bank to Jordan and the Gaza Strip to Egypt.

14. Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

rights, including the right of return, political rights of citizenship long denied in the West Bank and Gaza Strip as well as in the Arab world, and economic rights of growth and development. The concept of a Palestinian state on part of Palestine ensured Palestinian sovereignty, even if it would have compromised Palestinian territorial rights and would have been unable to provide justice to the refugees displaced in the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. This sovereignty was key, since it provided the means for ingathering all the refugees (even if only on part of historic Palestine), independence from manipulation by other Arab countries, protection of national and individual rights, and ensuring that Palestinians could live with dignity.

Fourth, the concept of the Palestinian state became the price for the Palestinian compromise with Israel. It was the only currency the PLO could use in an international system that was constituted of nation-states and of nations' rights to self-determination, and which declared that the only solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict is partitioning Palestine. In 1988, the PLO proclaimed "the establishment of the State of Palestine on our Palestinian territory with its capital holy Jerusalem" but accepted the principle of land for peace by officially recognizing Israel and UN Resolutions 242 and 181. Although the boundaries of the state it declared then remained undefined, it was understood to be in the West Bank and Gaza. The state that the PLO sought to territorialize through the Oslo peace negotiations since 1993, albeit on part of historic Palestine, was considered the best it could get given the regional and international juncture at which it found itself. While it excluded the Palestinians inside Israel from its polity and did not ensure full justice to all refugees, it promised to end Israeli occupation, ingather the exiled (or some of them), provide individual political rights for those without citizenship rights, and protect Palestinian national identity.

However, the Oslo peace process did not promise, nor create, a Palestinian state. It did not end the occupation, it simply redefined it.¹⁵ The Oslo years allowed the establishment of Palestinian autonomy with limited and truncated territorial jurisdiction, over less than 22% of the West Bank. It created a Palestinian Authority with functional jurisdiction over 93% of the Palestinian people but with no sovereignty. Over the past 17 years, this Authority proved to be more concerned with security than with accountability, with policing than with citizenship. Since the Al-Aqsa intifada, Palestinians saw further expansion of Israeli settlement housing by over 4% per year, the doubling of the settler population to over 494,000 Israelis in the West Bank and East Jerusalem in 2009, the construction of the 709 km separation wall, and the imposition of 99 permanent checkpoints and 300 to 459 temporary obstructions which have deepened Palestinian territorial and social fragmentation and destroyed any possibility for a viable Palestinian state to emerge.¹⁶ The present negotiations remain stalemated with continuing Israeli settlement construction, and seem unlikely to provide the Palestinians with a contiguous state over more than 58% of West Bank, given Israel's insistence on the demilitarization of the Jordan valley, sovereign control over east Jerusalem, and the construction of a separation barrier.¹⁷ Many observers, ranging from respected academics to former President Jimmy Carter, have argued that the outcome of the Oslo interim

15. Rima Hammami with Salim Tamari, "Occupation Means for Territorial Ends," *Electronic Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 8 (Spring 2008), pp. 23–39.

16. Data from B'tselem, *Restriction on Movement*.

17. Various maps of the separation wall are available at http://www.nad-plo.org/listing.php?view=maps_wall; also see "Israel Offering Mini-state of Cantons," *Jerusalem Post*, May 7, 2008.

agreement was an apartheid reality, not independence. It created unviable Palestinian Bantustans that are more analogous to the South African autonomies of the Apartheid era than to the dream of national independence.¹⁸

Yet, while the dream of a Palestinian sovereign independence evaporates, it is far from evident that the one-state idea can replace it and galvanize a mass movement. For it to become the locus of Palestinian political struggle, the one-state idea needs to fulfill the four key functions that the idea of the Palestinian state performed for the cause so far. In other words, it needs to become a coherent political project, not just an ideal, one that can protect Palestinian rights, provide a vehicle for Palestinian political organization and resistance, and offer viable legal and political strategies that address concretely the domestic and international challenges it faces.

THE ONE-STATE SOLUTION AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

Palestinian proponents of the one-state project, such as Ghada Karmi, Karma Nabulsi, and Mustafa Barghouti, argue that it is morally “superior” or more “legitimate” than any other solution because it allows for the re-invigoration of the concept of popular sovereignty to protect political rights.¹⁹ Unlike the Oslo peace negotiations, which focused on those living in the West Bank and Gaza, the one-state solution would include all Palestinian political constituents, be it those in the Diaspora or those inside Israel. It is better placed to fulfill Palestinian rights, both political and civil, than the two-state solution, as it acknowledges and protects the “right of return,” as mandated by UNGA Resolution 194, allowing the possibility for Palestinian refugees to return home.²⁰ It would also acknowledge the rights of those Israelis and Jews living on the land. According to Omar Barghouti, the one-state solution provides relative justice, as it “enables victims to live with their victimizers on an equal basis, despite all the injustices of the past.”²¹

The strongest argument for the one-state idea today probably lies in the fact that, from a practical political point of view, a two-state solution has been tried for the past 20 years and failed. The PLO’s historic compromise of 1988, which recognized Israel’s existence, failed to territorialize the Palestinian state. Moreover, the demographics of Israel-Palestine suggest that the one-state reality already exists, but one that is more

18. See, among others, Leila Farsakh, “Independence, Cantons or Bantustans: Whither the Palestinian State?” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Spring 2005), pp. 230–245; Nancy Murray, “Dynamics of Resistance: The Apartheid Analogy,” *Electronic Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 8 (Spring 2008), pp. 132; Jimmy Carter, *Palestine: Peace not Apartheid* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006); and Henry Siegman, “For Israel, Defiance Comes at the Cost of Legitimacy,” *Financial Times*, February 14, 2010.

19. Karma Nabulsi, “Popular Sovereignty and Justice,” paper presented at conference entitled *One State for Palestine/Israel: A Country for all of its Citizens?* University of Massachusetts, Boston, March 28–29, 2009; Ghada Karmi, *Married to Another Man: Israel’s Dilemma in Palestine* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

20. According to official estimates, there are 6.8 million Palestinian refugees who fled or were expelled from their homes in 1948, of which 4.3 million are registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). See *Badil, Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2004–2005* (Bethlehem: *Badil*, 2006), <http://www.badil.org/Refugees/facts&figures.htm>.

21. Omar Barghouti, “*Al-Dawla al-Dimuqratiyya al-‘Almaniyya hiya al-Hal al-Wahid wal-Amthal*” [“The Secular Democratic State is the Only Possible and Ideal Solution”], *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 76 (Fall 2008), pp. 8–25.

analogous to the apartheid system of control than one that might set the stage for a viable two-state solution or democratic single state. In 2008, 5.6 million Jews were living in Israel/Palestine, equal to the number of Palestinians living in it (3.9 million in the West Bank and Gaza and 1.7 million living inside Israel).²² By 2015, Palestinians will be a majority in Israel/Palestine, given their higher population growth rate (2.7% compared with 1.8% in Israel),²³ making the question of their lack of real political rights increasingly troublesome both to the Israelis and the present Palestinian leadership.

Meanwhile, it is not clear that either the Palestinians or the Israelis are particularly ready for co-existence within a single state. Israelis, both within the mainstream political establishment and the society at large, reject the one-state solution. They fear that it will negate their Jewish identity and feel a need for their own state that would protect them from a resurgence of anti-Semitism. Benny Morris, among others, considers the one-state idea a means to eliminate the Israeli people and their culture, fearing that Arab demographic growth will make Israelis effectively a minority in historic Palestine.²⁴ Palestinians, at the official and the grassroots levels, have also expressed doubts about the feasibility of the one-state option because of the vehemence of the Israeli opposition, and more so out of fear of Israel's economic and political domination over the Palestinians within a single state.²⁵

These fears appear to be validated by the latest statements from prominent figures among the Israeli Right that have come out in favor of the one-state solution, provided that the result be a Jewish state.²⁶ *Likud* Knesset speaker Reuven Rivlin maintains that "it's preferable for the Palestinians to become citizens of the state than for us to divide the country." Moshe Arens, the prominent *Likud* Defense and Foreign Minister of the 1980s, argues that "we already [are] a bi-national state." While many worry about the demographic implication of the bi-national option, Tzipi Hotovely, the youngest *Likud* Knesset member, argues that a "bi-national danger" is preferable to a Palestinian state. "In the bi-national process we have a degree of control, but the moment you abandon the area to the Palestinian entity, what control do you have over what will happen there?" Members of the settler movement in the West Bank, both from within the *Gush Emunim* as well as *Yesha*, have started formulating plans that would provide Palestinians with citizenship rights in a dual- or triple-stage process over a period of a decade or two. Rather than fear or disengage from the Palestinian demographic conundrum, the Israeli Right is tackling the issue in a way that ensures Israeli control. As Hotovely put it, "I want it to be clear that I do not recognize national rights of Palestinians in the Land of Israel. I recognize their human rights and their individual rights, and also their individual political rights — but between the sea and the Jordan there is room for one state, a Jewish state."²⁷

While the plans of the Israeli Right are still considered unrealistic, they reflect how the one-state idea can be hijacked and entail the capitulation, rather than the fulfill-

22. World Bank, *World Development Indicator, Country Data Profile — Israel*, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/ISRAEL.html>.

23. World Bank, *World Development Indicator, Country Data Profile — West Bank and Gaza Strip*, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/WBGS.html>.

24. Benny Morris, *One State, Two States*, pp. 140–160.

25. Findings based on a series of interviews conducted with political official and grassroots organizations in the West Bank, March–July, 2008.

26. Noam Sheizaf, "The Endgame," *Haaretz Magazine*, July 15, 2010.

27. Noam Sheizaf, "The Endgame."

ment, of the Palestinian right to self-determination and national identity. Advocates of the democratic one-state solution counter this challenge by arguing that such proposals by the Israeli Right prove the “apartheid character” of Israeli plans. Their strategy so far has been to reframe the debate over the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle and to explain the superiority, and justice, of their “one state” version. This inevitably entails explaining how their one-state project can meet Palestinian and Israeli nationalist concerns while protecting their individual political rights.

POLITICAL AND LEGAL STRATEGIES

So far, proponents of a democratic one-state solution have focused their attention on devising strategies to dismantle the structure of Israeli domination rather than engage with Israeli nationalist concerns. They have relied on two kinds of mobilizing strategies that seek to challenge the international consensus on the two-state solution and fight Israeli annexation schemes. The first strategy entails academic and grassroots activism that seeks to portray Israel as an apartheid state, arguing that Israel is a colonial state that is dispossessing Palestinians of their land and economic resources as well as discriminating against them inside and outside Israel’s 1948 borders.²⁸ This activism seeks to educate the international community about the parallel between Israel’s “matrix of control” and the South African apartheid regime in an attempt to get the international community to hold Israel accountable to international law. The Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions launched by over 170 civil society organizations in the West Bank and Gaza in 2005 is central to this activism and has been gaining ground internationally²⁹ as well as within certain Israeli academic circles.³⁰ It is part and parcel of an effort to cause a paradigm shift in thinking about the conflict from being composed of two national groups seeking territorial separation to being a single colonial structure that can best be dismantled by creating a democratic state for all of its citizens. In other words, it is a struggle for equal rights for all, Israelis and Palestinians, not statehood *per se*.

The second line of action is a legal strategy. From attempts to get the EU to boycott products from Israeli settlements to discussions of the constitution of the democratic state, “one state” proponents have been drawing on various international legal

28. See, among others, Uri Davis, *Apartheid Israel: Possibilities for the Struggle Within* (London: Zed Books 2004); Roanne Carey, *The New Intifada: Resisting Israel’s Apartheid* (London: Vintage Press, 2001); and “Palestinian BDS National Committee Marks Five Years of Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions,” Global BDS Movement, July 9, 2010, <http://bdsmovement.net/?q=node/755>.

29. So far, major supermarkets in Italy, the UK, and Norway have announced their boycott of Israeli produce from the settlements. Deutsche Bank, a global financial institution, as well as the Norway State Pension Fund, Sweden’s largest pension fund Foersta, and Denmark’s Danske Bank divested from Elibit systems, a large Israeli technology company. Culturally, a number of known figures openly called for boycott of Israel or cancelled visits to official cultural events in Israel (e.g. Ken Loch, Judith Butler, Naomi Klein, Roger Waters, Nigel Kennedy, and Vincenzo Consolo). See “Palestinian BDS National Committee Marks Five Years of Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions,” and Jeff Helper, “Campaign against Apartheid,” Israeli Committee against House Demolition, <http://web.archive.org/web/20080426085515/http://icahd.org/eng/campaigns.asp?menu=4&submenu=4>.

30. Rachel Giora, *Milestones in the History of the Israeli BDS Movement: A Brief Chronology*, January 18, 2010, <http://boycottisrael.info/content/milestones-history-israeli-bds-movement-brief-chronology>.

documents, from the 4th Geneva Convention and the UN Convention against the Crimes of Apartheid, to UN Resolution 194, among others. They find two legal documents particularly relevant as they make their political case for a democratic one-state solution, and thereby also address the question of how individual and collective rights of people living in Israel/Palestine today can be accommodated.

The first document is Fatah's declaration in 1969 and the Palestinian National Council Resolution of 1971 which called for the creation of a democratic state in which Jews, Christians, and Muslims could live together on equal basis in historic Palestine. While this model was not expanded upon in the following years, it was not explicitly rejected by the PLO declaration of independence in 1988. It remains attractive today to the general Palestinian public.³¹ This resolution, however, fudges the question of Jewish national rights rather than addressing them directly. While it recognizes the right of Jews living in Palestine, it repudiates Zionism and fundamentally envisages Palestine as an Arab state. It does not explain how it will deal with the question of Jewish self-determination or the reality of an Israeli society that has been in place for over 60 years. In this respect, this proposal risks not being much different from that of the Israeli Right, insofar as it prioritizes one national identity over the other.

In an attempt to escape this conundrum, proponents of the secular democratic state today argue that while they reject Zionism, they do not negate cultural and ethnic differences. They advocate a secular, democratic state based on a "one person, one vote" model that prioritizes individual rights, and leave it to private forces and constitutional mechanisms to define the means to express and protect Israeli and Palestinian national identities.³² The problem, however, is that they do not always accord enough attention to the impact of demographic realities on the political rights of different communities living within one polity and ignore the risk that one group, by its sheer demographic size or expansion, can compromise the individual and group rights of the other group and turn it into an endangered minority. As Liv Grinberg puts it, "without the conditions for deep mutual recognition between the two communities, formal democratic institutions cannot guarantee political stability ... a democratic state without additional political institutions could enhance the politicization of religion and the polarization of extremist ethno-national trends."³³

The second legal document that supporters of the one-state option draw upon is the UNSCOP Minority Report in 1947. This report proposed the creation of a federated state with full citizenship for Jews and Arabs and a bicameral parliament, one based on proportional representation and the second based on equal ethnic representation, thereby protecting individual and communal rights of those living in Palestine. This proposal received 50% of the UNGA vote, but then was shelved. Today, a few law professors are trying to resurrect it to make it legally, as well as politically, attractive for Palestinians and

31. See results of poll conducted by the Center for Development Studies, Survey of Final Status Issues, March 2007.

32. Barghouti, "Al-Dawla al-Dimuqratiyya al-'Almaniyya hiya al-Hal al-Wahid wal Amthal" ["The Secular Democratic State is the Only Possible and Ideal Solution"], and George Bisharat, "Israel and Palestine: a True One-state Solution," *The Washington Post*, September 3, 2010.

33. Lev Grinberg, "Israeli-Palestinian Union: The 1-2-7 States Vision of the Future," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Winter 2010), p. 49. See also Bisharat, "Israel and Palestine: a True One-state Solution," which addresses this challenge by proposing a number of constitutional guarantees and mechanisms for reconciliation that protect and respect individual and collective rights.

Israelis.³⁴ Variations of this bi-national model appeal particularly to leftist Israelis,³⁵ and have been supported by Palestinians of Israeli citizenship such as Azmi Bishara, among others, who suggest that Israeli identity, rather than Zionism, needs to be recognized as much as Palestinian culture and identity.³⁶ These advocates envisage a single state along the lines of the Belgian or Swiss models, a federated or confederated state that protects Israeli and Palestinian cultural and political institutions and gives them their autonomy within a single state. They seem to suggest that with the appropriate constitution and gradual, creative approaches, national and individual rights can be protected.

So far, though, there is no Palestinian consensus on whether the one-state option should be bi-national or secular democratic, largely because there is no agreement on how far to engage with present Israelis and their ethnic concerns. Historically, the Palestinian national movement has never seriously considered how to cooperate with Israeli Jews to bring about a single state.³⁷ Today, this is all the more difficult given the reality of occupation. Except for the Palestinian citizens of Israel, few Palestinians so far are now interested in reaching out to Israelis, let alone addressing their fears, the way that the African National Congress (ANC) did in South Africa when it worked with white activists to dismantle the apartheid regime. Most Palestinian activism for the one-state solution inside the West Bank and Gaza considers that the only way to combat Zionism and its strong institutions, both in Israel and internationally, is to fight it, not engage with it or find the “liberal” forces within it, for that would be self-defeating.³⁸ They are willing to accept non-Zionist Jews, but so far have not coordinated any official or explicit political alliances with grassroots organizations in Israel calling for equality, such as the work of *Zochrot*, Israeli Physicians for Human Rights, and Israelis for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, among other groups. They expect Israeli “one state” supporters to do their share of mobilizing within their communities rather than calling on Palestinian support in this regard.

REGAINING THE INITIATIVE: WHO CAN TAKE THE LEAD?

Another major challenge for the one-state movement is to identify the leadership that can steer it. The present Palestinian political leadership, while not immune to the one-state idea, has not endorsed it. A number of senior Fatah figures, such as Saeb Erekat, Ahmad Qura’i, and Nabeel Shaath, have used the “one state” idea as a

34. See George Bisharat, “Maximizing Rights: The State Solution to the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict,” *Global Jurist*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2008); and George Bisharat, “Between Utopianism and Realism: Evaluating Obstacles to the One- and Two-States Solutions” and Michael Lynk, “Partition, Federalism and the Future of Israel/Palestine,” papers presented at *Israel/Palestine: Mapping Models of Statehood and Paths to Peace*, York University, Toronto, June 22–24, 2010.

35. Meron Benvenisti, “The Case for Shared Sovereignty,” *The Nation*, June 18, 2007; Yehuda Shenhav, *The Time of the Green Line* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2010) quoted in Sheizaf, “The Endgame.”

36. As’ad Ghanem, “Cooperation Instead of Separation: The One-State Solution to Promote Israeli-Palestinian Peace,” *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2007).

37. Alain Gresh, “*L’Epineux Partage de la Palestine: Un Seul Etat Pour Deux Reves*” [“Israel/Palestine: Beyond the Peace Process”], *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 2010.

38. See Omar Barghouti, “Organizing for Self Determination, Ethical De-Zionization, and Resisting Apartheid,” presented at *One State for Palestine/Israel: A Country for all of its Citizens?*, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA, March 28–29, 2009.

threat in the face of Israel's intransigence on withdrawal from the Occupied Territories.³⁹ However, no one has taken it up as a serious political program. Palestinian parties to the left, such as the People's Party (formerly the Communist Party), the PFLP, or the Palestinian Initiative (*al-Mubadara*) under Mustafa Barghouti, have been tempted by it. They have focused on the importance of enhancing civic participation in framing the struggle and defending citizens' rights.⁴⁰ Yet, they are mainly active in explaining why and how Israel has killed the two-state solution, rather than defining what the one-state solution is, let alone campaigning for it.

Hamas, on the other hand, has long declared that its aim is the return of the land and destruction of the Zionist entity.⁴¹ Since the 2006 Mecca Reconciliation Agreement, it accepted the idea of a Palestinian state within the borders of 1967 with full sovereignty. Khaled Mishal, the head of Hamas' political bureau, maintained that Hamas does not accord much attention presently to the shape and nature of this state (i.e., whether it will be Islamic or not) so long as it entails the end of the occupation.⁴² Its acknowledgement of Israel is thus implicit. Its main priorities now are not the one-state solution, but rather reconciliation and power-sharing with Fatah, as the March 2009 negotiations in Cairo revealed. Its attention is focused mainly on asserting itself as the main Palestinian political party of resistance and in proving itself capable of controlling and managing Gaza on its own since 2007. According to Ghassan Khatib, it is Hamas, not the one-state movement, which will dominate Palestinian politics and change its direction for the coming years.⁴³

Fatah finds itself presently at a very difficult juncture, as its legitimacy is weakened in the face of Hamas, especially after the Gaza war.⁴⁴ During the 6th Fatah National Convention, held in Bethlehem in August 2009, the delegates were concerned with the direction the party should take *vis-à-vis* the Oslo negotiation process, the question of armed resistance, and of relations with Hamas, not with the one-state option. The generational struggle within the party between the old guards and the young cadres for more effective presentation was partly resolved with the latter being more represented in the main Fatah organ, but it is still too early to say how far they are redirecting the party away from the struggle for a Palestinian state. What has been noted is that the young Fatah cadres in the West Bank at least have started an internal debate on whether or not to adopt the one-state solution as a political project.⁴⁵ While many are in favor of it and assert how Fatah has been at the lead of the one-state idea, no one has yet articulated it as a political project. Both young and old cadres cannot yet envisage a political struggle for citizenship and equal rights before first obtaining their own Palestinian state.

39. "Biden Visits Mideast to Push Peace Talks," *New York Times*, March 9, 2004 and Ahmad Qurei, "Palestinians Might Demand Citizenship," *Jerusalem Post*, August 11, 2008.

40. See statement by *Al-Mubadara*, <http://www.almubadara.org/new/english.php>.

41. Khalid Hroub, *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice* (Washington, DC: Institute of Palestine Studies, 2000).

42. Interview with Khalid Mishal, *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Spring 2008), pp. 63–68.

43. Ghassan Khatib, "Azma Rahina am Istifad Dur Tarikhi" ["A Present Crisis or the End of a Historical Role"], *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 76 (Fall 2008).

44. See International Crisis Group, *Update Policy Briefing*, March 2009.

45. Based on fieldwork data collected by the author during a Fatah internal meeting, Ramallah, May–June, 2008. See Also PASSIA Meetings, *The Fatah Movement and its Role in the Palestinian National Movement*, Jericho, June 29, 2008, <http://www.passia.org/passiametings>.

Activists for the “one state,” however, do not agree and seek to impact the leadership by calling on it to return to what Karma Nabulsi calls the “Palestinian Principles” [*al-Thawabit al-Filastiniyya*]. According to Nabulsi, the first step towards making the one-state project center-stage in Palestinian politics is to unify the fragmented Palestinian body politics. It requires a return to the “Palestinian Principles” that she discusses, and necessitates reviving the PLO as well as re-constituting the concept of popular sovereignty as its *modus operandi*. She further argues that this can only happen by placing the “right of return” at the core of the Palestinian struggle and by reaffirming the role of refugees in defining and leading the Palestinian cause, as they did in the 1970s and 1980s.⁴⁶

The reform of the PLO has long been on the political agenda, particularly since its *raison d’être* was put into question with the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1994. The failure of ‘Arafat to maintain the autonomy of the PLO and his authoritarian style led to its demise as a central political forum for Palestinians. Yet, most political parties remain attached to it since it is the only entity which represents all Palestinians inside and outside the occupied territories. Moreover, the PLO and not the PA is the Palestinian negotiation party to Oslo or any future agreement. However, most attempts so far to revive the PLO have focused on how to include Hamas within it. While there are concerns for reviving the organization institutionally and politically, there has been little serious consideration by any of the present parties, including Hamas, on how to bring a more effective representation and voice to the refugees as much as to the Palestinians inside Israel. It is still unclear how the PLO can take up the mantle of the one-state solution before it first reactivates itself as the forum for Palestinian politics. This will depend on the ability of the various Palestinian constituencies to push the political leadership towards adopting the one-state project as their political platform and strategy.

PALESTINIAN CITIZENS OF ISRAEL

The most important Palestinian constituency framing the Palestinian struggle today in terms of equal political rights and not statehood *per se*, and thereby laying the foundation for a democratic one-state solution, is inside Israel and increasingly in the Diaspora. Azmi Bishara’s⁴⁷ campaign within Israel calling for a state for all of its citizens has been key in changing the terms of the Palestinian struggle to a struggle for equal rights rather than simply national self-determination. It has helped mobilize the Palestinian youth in Israel as well as various grassroots, legal, and academic institutions to campaign for full equal rights. This can be seen in the work of *Adala, Mada Al-Carmel*, and the Haifa Declaration, among others, who seem to implicitly call for their right to a bi-national state.⁴⁸

In a sense, the Palestinian citizens of Israel are best placed to lead the one-state movement, in view of the historical juncture that the Palestinian cause has reached. The trajectory of the Palestinian cause can be traced as one in which the refugees took the lead in articulating the Palestinian right to statehood and return in the 1960s through the 1980s and formed the core of the PLO until they were superseded by the Palestinians in

46. Karma Nabulsi, “Popular Sovereignty and Justice,” presented at *Once State for Palestine/Israel: A Country for All of its Citizens?*, University of Massachusetts, Boston, MA, March 28–29, 2009.

47. Azmi Bishara, *Min Yahudiat al-Dawla ila Sharon [From the Jewishness of the State to Sharon]* (Ramallah: Muwatin, 2005).

48. See, for example: www.mada-research.org/archive/haifaenglish.pdf.

the West Bank and Gaza. The latter moved center-stage with the eruption of the first intifada in 1987 and the Oslo process that sought to territorialize the state in the confines of the West Bank and Gaza. Yet, as the Palestinian state project has been transformed into an aid-dependent Palestinian Authority fragmented and constrained in its ability to defend the Palestinian cause, it seems inevitable that the only alternative for protecting Palestinian rights and representing all of its constituents is a solution based on equal rights in all of historic Palestine. The Palestinian citizens of Israel are the best placed to articulate the Palestinian cause in those terms and to lead it by virtue of their experience with the Israelis over the past 60 years.

It is not clear though, whether the Palestinian citizens of Israel are willing or able to take a leadership role, given the fierce opposition they receive from Israel and the failure of the present Palestinian leadership to incorporate them. The institutional links with the PLO as much as with the Palestinian political parties have always been weak, if they have existed at all. The incidents of October 2000 in which 13 Palestinian citizens of Israel were killed for demonstrating in support of Al-Aqsa intifada shows the danger of their identification with larger Palestinian concerns. Attacks on Bishara and *Tajamu'*, which led to the former's exile, have shown the danger of campaigning for a bi-national state and left many Palestinians inside Israel without leadership. It still remains to be seen how a new leadership can emerge and what strategies it can forge to ensure its survival given the discrimination and intimidation that Palestinian citizens of Israel continue to face.⁴⁹

THE PALESTINIAN DIASPORA

Palestinians in the West, activists, students, and academics, have been the most vocal for the one-state solution. Edward Said is probably the most remembered among Diaspora Palestinians for advocating the one-state solution in the 1990s.⁵⁰ Many others have since developed the debate and reached larger audiences all over the globe. The most important grassroots organizational work for the one-state solution has been among students and activists in the UK as much as in Canada, and increasingly in continental Europe, and finally in the US. Following the example of South Africa's Anti-Apartheid Movement, these activists have relied on three important strategies that are central for any successful one-state movement. First, they emphasize the apartheid nature of Israeli rule in order to show how the one-state solution is the only way out of the present dispossession. Second, their work is based on collaborative initiatives that include Jews and Israelis, Arabs and Palestinians. They thus show the centrality of reaching out to the other side, the Israeli as much as the Arab and Westerner, and the feasibility of such outreach once outside the Occupied Territories. Third, they rely on civil disobedience campaigns. The student sit-ins in numerous British and some American universities during Israel's latest war on Gaza recentralized the Palestinian cause internationally. The "Israel Apartheid Week" campaign that started at the University of Toronto in 2004 was, by 2009, a major international event that included over 40 universities in over 20 countries in North America, Europe, and Asia. Most have adopted the call for a BDS campaign, with its three aims of the "right of return," an end to the

49. "Extremist Settlers to March on Umm Al-Fahim," *Al-Jazeera English*, October 27, 2010.

50. Edward Said, *End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000).

occupation, and an end to discrimination inside Israel, refocusing the struggle on political rights rather than on statehood.

THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Various forums within the West Bank and Gaza are starting to talk about the one-state idea as an inevitable option for the Palestinian political struggle today.⁵¹ The few polls conducted on this question in the Occupied Territories find that over 40% of the Palestinians today are in favor of the one-state solution, defined vaguely as entailing Jews, Christians, and Muslims living together.⁵² The nationality and constitution of this state still remain vague, for most Palestinian activism inside the West Bank and Gaza remains focused on combating the occupation, not on defining its end result. What is new in this activism is its increasing reliance on civil grassroots action, rather than militarism. This can be seen in the Campaign to End Israel's Apartheid Wall, the weekly demonstrations against the separation wall in Ni'lin, Budrus, and Bil'en, and in the BDS campaign. Although BDS does not take a position on the one-state solution, this campaign has become an effective organizing tool for refocusing the Palestinian cause worldwide on the issue of Palestinian rights rather than statehood *per se*. It has succeeded in calling attention to Israel's violation of Palestinian rights and framing these violations in an apartheid framework of analysis, as well as inducing international companies to withdraw their business from Israel.⁵³ However, unlike the South African Anti-Apartheid experience, the BDS movement in the West Bank and Gaza does not attempt to work with what they term the "enlightened colonizers." So far it has shown no interest in engaging Israelis; its proponents maintain that only successful international sanctions will make "Israelis lose their privilege, face the colonial nature of Zionism," and eventually join hands with the Palestinians for the sake of justice and equality.⁵⁴

THE REFUGEES

Refugees represent the most supportive constituency for the one-state movement, and the largest numerically. Yet they are not at the forefront of articulating the debate for the one-state solution or defining the meaning of national and individual rights in a democratic state. It is an activism that is grassroots-based and concerned with opening spaces for popular representation. The most vocal among them are in Lebanon and Jordan and to some extent in the West Bank and Gaza. Most of their campaigning for the one-state solution is in Lebanon and passes through their defense of the Right of

51. Fieldwork data. See also Ali Jarbawi, "Kay la Yaqun Al-Ma'zaq al-Falastini Qadaran Mahtuman" ["In order for the Palestinian Crisis not to be an Inevitable Fate"], *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 76 (Fall 2008), pp. 7–27; and The Palestine Strategic Study Group, *Regaining the Initiative: Palestinian Strategic Options to End the Occupation*, August 2008, <http://www.palestinestrategy-group.ps/>.

52. Center for Development Studies, *Nata'ij Istitla' al-Ra'i hawla al-Wadi al-Niha'i* [Survey on Final Status Issues], Birzeit University, March 2006.

53. See PACBI and BDS campaign websites at www.pacbi.org and www.bdsmovement.net.

54. Omar Barghouti, "Organizing for Self Determination, Ethical De-Zionization, and Resisting Apartheid."

Return. A number of initiatives have taken place in Lebanon by voluntary organizations and political activists seeking to link refugees together by overcoming geographical obstacles. Their ability to revive the PLO has so far remained limited.

MOVING FORWARD, MOVING BACK

Although the one-state idea has not broken the international consensus on the two-state solution, it offers new ways to move beyond the present stalemate. The problem, though, is that the stalemate might last for quite a long time, given that the main political actors, both within Israel/Palestine and the international community, are not pushing for a resolution, and have not been swayed by the one-state option. The Obama Administration continues to talk about a Palestinian state, but has so far been unwilling to put any pressure on Israel to end all settlement construction, remove the separation barrier on Palestinian land, or deal with the myriad of checkpoints and bypass roads. Chief US negotiators, such as Aaron Miller and Robert Malley, see a long-term interim solution which would postpone indefinitely the most difficult issues such as Jerusalem and refugees. Many seem to think that “a non-violent *status quo* is far from satisfactory,” as Shlomo Avineri put it, “but it’s not bad.”⁵⁵ That might be the case from an Israeli point of view, but many fear that Israel plans to link Gaza to Egypt and the West Bank to Jordan, consolidating the dissolution of the Palestinian cause rather than its resolution.

In view of this situation, some observers are calling for creative interim institutional designs that can address the present concerns of Israelis and Palestinians. Some question the utility of territorial sovereignty in the present context of globalization and call for the creation of parallel states in a form of a “condominium.”⁵⁶ Others are proposing new institutional designs that can include the positive elements of both the one-state and two-state options. Lev Grinberg suggests the creation of an Israeli-Palestinian union which includes a shared administration based on parity. Rather than negate the present Palestinian and Israeli nationalist and security concerns, such a union would include two separate democratic nation-states bound by an economic union and seven federated provinces or states that enjoy some relative autonomy.⁵⁷

While all these proposals are interesting, they presume good will on the part of Israel and a willingness to accept Palestinians as equal, let alone dismantle its structure of domination. They show yet again that building a one-state movement in Palestine requires a serious re-consideration and debate over the concept of statehood, citizenship, and identity. The experiences of the independent Arab states, as well as of the limited Palestinian autonomy have clearly shown that statehood and sovereignty *per se* do not guarantee political rights. What needs to be developed and fought for is the notion of equal political rights as citizens and the institutional means to protect these rights, no matter what kind of state polity these fall under. This is not easy, since the nature of the state shapes the nature of political rights that people acquire in it. Yet, the one-state

55. Alain Gresh, “Israel/Palestine: Beyond the Peace Process.”

56. Mathias Mossberg, “One Land, Two States? Parallel States as an Example of ‘Out of the Box’ Thinking on Israel/Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (Winter 2010), pp. 40–45, and Nathan Witkin, “The Interspersed Nation-State System: A Two-State/One-Land Solution for the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (Winter 2011).

57. Lev Grinberg, “Israeli-Palestinian Union,” p. 49.

movement is unlikely to succeed before leading, and resolving, a society-wide discussion on what it means to be Palestinian and Israeli in a new state. It inevitably needs to address, rather than negate, the continuous presence of the Israeli-Jewish culture and how to live with it. As the example of the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa demonstrates, any call for an inclusive state cannot avoid addressing the rights of the “other.”

Most of the Palestinian debate on the one-state solution, while inclusive of Jews, avoids engaging with the complexity of Jewish identity and history. It clearly repudiates Zionism, but it seeks to incorporate the Jewish person as a neutral repentant entity. There is little discussion of what to do with the Israeli culture that has developed over the past 60 years or with the Jews that care about their language and their culture who want to remain in Palestine as Hebrew speakers (and who do not identify as Palestinian). The bi-nationalists argue that these people have a place in the one-state entity so long as they accept the democratic game. The secular democrats are either silent or expect the Jews to become *de facto* Palestinians. There is little discussion of what the identity of this new state will be, implying that it is either going to be Arab-Palestinian, or at best left open. As Islamic parties’ constituencies expand in the Arab world and Palestinians increasingly define their identity in religious rather than national terms, one wonders how the one-state movement can have any resonance in the Palestinian and Arab “street.”

In my view, two central debates need to take place for the one-state movement to gain momentum. The first is an open discussion on identity and a free open space to understand Israeli culture in its Western dimensions as much as its Arab roots which it often negates. It can start by rehabilitating the concept of the Arab Jew, albeit with the understanding that cultural identities are historically determined and always in flux. Such rehabilitation can enable the average Arab and Palestinian to see the Jewish people as part of the broader Arab heritage, not as an alien, Western product, and thus as somebody to live with, not to expel. The one-state movement can start by rediscovering the role that Jewish people have played in Arab society and politics in critical, rather than dismissive or romantic terms. There is an urgent need to learn and diffuse knowledge about the role of Jews in the Arab national independence movement in the 20th century and in their opposition to Zionism, as much as to reexamine the role of Arab societies and governments in ostracizing long-established Jewish communities in a number of Arab countries, be it in Iraq, Yemen, or Egypt.⁵⁸ Building bridges with increasingly vocal, if still mainly academic, Israelis of Arab descent who are not shy of challenging their state and want to re-engage with their Arab heritage can only help the movement both within the Arab world as much as with Israelis. Building alliances with Israeli organizations and individuals, irrespective of their Western or Arab heritage, and who are above all critical activists against Zionism and advocates of “one state” is a necessity (e.g. *Zochrot*, Physicians for Human Rights, etc.).

The second debate that needs to take place is about multiculturalism in Israel as well as in the Arab world and within Palestinian society, and how to reinvigorate the present Arab identity with the cosmopolitan character that it once had. Rehabilitating the cosmopolitan nature of the Palestinian Arab identity is key to moving forward as

58. See Adam Shatz, “Leaving Paradise,” *London Review of Books*, November 6, 2008 and Lital Levi, “Historicizing the Concept of Arab Jews in the *Mashriq*,” *Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 98, No. 4 (Fall 2008) pp. 452–469.

much as fostering channels for effective political participation and protection of equal citizenship rights in a bi-national or secular democratic state. It is all the more necessary in the global world in which we live today. The starting point of the debate has to be an agreement on both sides of the need to dismantle Zionism as a colonial project. However, if it is to flourish, the one-state movement cannot focus on the negation of Israeli culture, or on a primordial Islamic identity and Arab nationality which historically have always been porous.

CONCLUSION

This article has explored the extent to which the one-state solution can become a clear Palestinian political project, rather than a slogan, which can help rebuild the Palestinian body politic and keep the Palestinian cause center-stage in international politics. It has shown that while the one-state movement is growing it is not yet a cohesive political force or an organized political movement. So far, it is made up of intellectuals and activists, in Israel/Palestine as much as in the Diaspora, each working in their own locality and trying to reach out to others. Palestinian activism for the “one state” so far appears more concerned with asserting Palestinian rights and keeping the Palestinian cause visible, rather than seeking to convert Israelis to their cause.

The challenges facing the one-state idea remain huge, not least of which are vehement Zionist opposition, lack of international support, and the reluctance of Palestinian leadership. The one-state protagonists have so far been forthcoming in addressing the first challenge facing the one-state debate: the importance of redefining Palestinian struggle in terms of rights, not simply statehood. When it comes to impacting the present Palestinian leadership, one-state supporters hope that the loudness of their voice will be heard, or rather, are waiting for a new leadership to emerge from the ashes of Oslo and the Palestinian leadership’s defeat. In terms of defining their legal and political strategy, they are still debating the options while supporting a grassroots boycott movement. They have avoided addressing the nationality of this one state, as they are inconclusive on whether it should be bi-national or secular democratic. Many still do not want to discuss the question of Israeli national/political rights within a single state, a question that needs to be addressed openly and critically if the movement is to gain momentum.

In this respect, however, there is much to learn from South Africa’s anti-apartheid struggle, in terms of discourse as much as in strategy. The South African struggle emphasized equal political rights, when the white government and many blacks were pushing for separate development and Bantustans that would be declared “sovereign states.” It emphasized working across the board, for a state for all of its citizens. Above all, it showed that while reconciliation and collaboration with the previous oppressor does not entail loving your partner, it does necessitate respecting the equal rights of the other. These lessons must be internalized by the advocates of a one-state solution if they are to have any hope of overcoming Israeli occupation and colonization. Developing the ability to address the difficult issues of identity, equal rights, civic responsibility, and political power is also a prerequisite for building a one-state movement that can surmount the serious domestic, regional, and international challenges it faces.