

THE PUTRAJAYA ACTION PLAN

A three day International Conference on the theme 'Peace in Palestine' was held at Putrajaya, the administrative capital of Malaysia, from the 28th to the 30th of March 2005. The conference was attended by over 500 civil society activists from 34 countries, including Occupied Palestine and Israel. Through panel and workshop sessions, the participants sought to determine how civil society could contribute towards the quest for a just solution to the decades old Israeli Palestinian conflict.

Their modest ideas are embodied in this statement, the Putrajaya Action Plan.

The Putrajaya Action Plan recognizes that the root cause of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the Israeli occupation from 1948 onwards of Palestinian land and the consequent subjugation and oppression of the Palestinian people. If this subjugation and oppression has lasted so long, if Israel has been able to violate international law with impunity, it is largely because Israel is protected by the United States of America, the world's only superpower. This makes civil society in the US all the more important as a site for strategic intervention in the quest for a just solution to the conflict.

The participants of the Putrajaya 'Peace in Palestine' Conference are unanimous in the view that unless justice is done to the Palestinian people, there can be no security for the people of Israel. This is why the restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people is a vital pre-condition for peace not only in the Middle East but also in the world at large.

United Nations resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must serve as a logical starting point for the restoration of Palestinian rights. There must be total and complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank to its pre-1967 borders. A sovereign and independent Palestinian state that is at the same time contiguous and viable should be established on the Gaza and West Bank with Jerusalem as the shared capital of both Palestine and Israel. The Apartheid Wall must of course be fully dismantled. Palestinian refugees should be allowed to return to both Israel and the new Palestinian state while those who choose to remain in their land of domicile should be allowed to do so, with appropriate compensation. All Palestinian and Arab prisoners in Israeli jails should be freed. Once Israel takes these steps, Palestine and other states in the Middle East and the Muslim world should extend diplomatic recognition to Israel. At the same time, the entire Middle East should adopt a comprehensive treaty banning all weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

What is being proposed here reflects to a considerable extent the sentiments of the global community which regards a two state solution - Israel and Palestine living side by side-- as the most feasible solution at this juncture of history. It does not however preclude the eventual emergence of a single unified democratic state in which Jews, Christians, Muslims and others relate to one another on the basis of genuine equality and justice. Such a state will become a reality only if it is in consonance with the wishes of the majority of Palestinians and Israelis.

If a significant degree of justice is delivered to the Palestinians and if they are treated as equals in their relationship with the Israelis, peace will prevail in the Middle East. Civil society groups the world over should do much more to promote this vision of peace which emphasizes equality, justice, human rights and international law.

With this aim in mind, civil society groups and individuals at the 'Peace in Palestine' conference adopted a ten point programme which constitutes the essence of the Putrajaya Action Plan.

The Putrajaya Action Plan seeks to establish an **International Centre on Palestine for Civil Society in the South (ICPCSS)** to be located in Malaysia. ICPCSS will be governed by a Board whose members will be drawn from civil society groups in the South. The Centre will:-

- 1)** Coordinate the activities of existing Palestinian support groups and networks in the South; initiate the creation of new support groups and networks in countries of the South; forge close ties with Palestinian support groups and networks in North America and Europe; develop an effective relationship with the United Nations General Assembly's Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, the Division on Palestinian Rights and the International Coordinating Network on Palestine. Deepen links with the global justice and solidarity movements.
- 2)** Encourage Palestinian support groups and networks in the South and in other parts of the world to interact more extensively with civil society groups in Israel committed to the vision of peace envisaged by the Plan. Women and youth groups in particular should be at the forefront of this interaction. At the same time, ICPCSS will initiate lecture tours of the United States by Palestinian support group activists from the South who will tell the other side of the story to the American people. Israeli and Palestinian activists should join hands and speak with one voice on common themes in these lecture tours.
- 3)** Disseminate information and analysis about the root causes of the Israeli Palestinian conflict and the pre-requisites for a just peace through community newspapers and radio stations in the United States. Persuade Arab, Muslim and South-based groups to engage and interact with grassroots community organizations in the US.
- 4)** Increase the general level of awareness of the Palestinian struggle through maximum utilization of the various channels of mass communication. In this regard, internet in particular has a critical role to play. In similar vein, greater attention should be given to the production of television dramas and radio plays on Palestine especially in the languages of the nations of the South. There should also be more in-depth articles with historical perspectives in the print media aimed at correcting misconceptions about the Palestinian issue. As one enhances intellectual output, one should also develop a solid data base on the Palestinian struggle for justice.
- 5)** Ensure that civil society groups in the South attempt to persuade their governments to adopt a proactive approach towards the plight of the Palestinians. Since most governments in the South endorse the Palestinian cause, they should demonstrate their commitment by campaigning actively for the rights of the Palestinians in regional caucuses and in international forums. In this context, Southern governments should be pressed to end all military dealings with Israel.
- 6)** Strive to ensure that an impartial United Nations - and not the US --- plays the dominant diplomatic role in the resolution of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. For this to happen, international public opinion has to be mobilized on a global scale. The ICPCSS will work closely with other Palestinian support groups in Europe and North America to achieve this goal. The UN's pivotal role means that UN resolutions, international law and human rights in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will serve as the framework for achieving a just peace.
- 7)** Study in depth and detail how civil society groups in the South could organise a selective boycott of Israeli goods and divestment from that country in order to pressure Tel Aviv to withdraw completely from the West Bank and the Gaza. At the same time, ICPCSS will encourage direct aid for infrastructure and services in Palestine and trade in products it is able to export; and demand the reversal of Israel's exploitative water programmes which adversely affect food production and seriously disadvantage Palestinians.
- 8)** Support the right of the Palestinians to resist Israeli occupation in accordance with the principles of international humanitarian law. It follows from this that illegitimate forms of violence by both state and non-state actors must not receive sanction through distortions of religious and secular belief systems.
- 9)** Promote active and continuous dialogue leading to effective action amongst Jews, Christians and Muslims not only in Israel and Palestine but also in various other parts of the world. This dialogue should aim to eradicate prejudices and misconceptions; to strengthen mutual respect and trust and to build joint solidarity actions in the cause of justice and our common humanity. To this end, academic centres for inter-faith and inter-civilisational dialogue should be established in both Israel and Palestine and in other countries of the South.
- 10)** Struggle relentlessly for the emergence of a multi-polar world which will facilitate the deliverance of justice for the Palestinians. It is the consolidation of uni-polar politics in the post cold war era which has exacerbated the sufferings of the Palestinians. It has also led to the marginalisation of most governments and the UN. This is why governments, especially in the South, and people everywhere have a stake in striving for an equitable multi-polar world.

Adopting an Action Plan is not the real challenge. The real challenge lies in ensuring that the objectives contained in the Plan are successfully implemented. This demands sincere commitment from everyone.

We, who are gathered at this conference, should pledge to ourselves that we will do our utmost to realize the goals of the Putrajaya Action Plan --- for the sake of the people of Palestine and Israel; for the sake of Jews, Christians and Muslims everywhere; for the sake of humanity; for the sake of peace.

30 March 2005. Putrajaya, Malaysia.