

International Assistance to the Palestinians After Oslo

Political guilt, wasted money

Anne Le More

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIANS AFTER OSLO

Why has the West disbursed vertiginous sums of the money to the Palestinians after Oslo? What have been donors' motivations and above all the political consequences of the funds spent?

Based on original academic research and first-hand evidence, this book examines the interface between diplomacy and international assistance during the Oslo years and the *intifada*. By exploring the politics of international aid to the Palestinians between the creation of the Palestinian Authority and the death of President Arafat (1994–2004), Anne Le More reveals the reasons why foreign aid was not as beneficial, uncovering a context where funds from the international community were poured into the occupied Palestinian territory as a substitute for its lack of real diplomatic engagement. This book highlights the perverse effects such huge amounts of money have had on the Palestinian population, on Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinian territory and on the conflict itself, not least the prospect of its resolution along a two-state paradigm.

Conventional wisdom argues that if the Palestinian economy did not improve after Oslo, it was primarily due to the corruption of the Authority headed by President Arafat. In fact, the story of Palestinian corruption is much more complex, involving Israeli and Palestinian businessmen, politicians and high-ranking security personnel. For its part, the deterioration of the living conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and the multi-faceted process of Palestinian territorial, demographic, socio-economic and political fragmentation after Oslo was largely caused by a number of mutually reinforcing Israeli policies and continuing occupation and colonization of the Palestinian territories in a generalized context of persisting violence on all sides.

International Assistance to the Palestinians after Oslo gives a unique narrative chronology that makes this complex story easy to understand and makes this book a classic for both scholars and practitioners, with lessons to be learned far beyond the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

Anne Le More holds a PhD in International Relations from Oxford University. Her research interests include the Middle East, and more broadly, the Arab and Muslim world. She has published a number of articles and is the co-editor of *Aid, Diplomacy and Facts on the Ground: The Case of Palestine* (Chatham House, London, 2005).

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AFTER OSLO

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A MES PARENTS ET MES SŒURS,
À LA MÉMOIRE DE NOTRE GRAND-MÈRE
PATERNELLE

The conviction that everything that happens on earth must be comprehensible to man can lead to interpreting history by commonplaces. Comprehension does not mean denying the outrageous, deducing the unprecedented from precedents, or explaining phenomena by such analogies and generalities that the impact of reality and the shock of experience are no longer felt. It means, rather, examining and bearing consciously the burden which our century has placed on us – neither denying its existence nor submitting meekly to its weight. Comprehension, in short, means the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality – whatever it may be.

(Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 1951)

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PREFACE

The story being told in this book is little known, although a great many of its constitutive parts will be familiar to most readers. So much is written on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and in particular on the Oslo ‘peace process’ after 1993, that this is hardly surprising. What may be of significance, therefore, are not only the intricate detailed facts that are presented here for the first time, but what they demonstrate: the way international politics and economic assistance are so deeply interwoven.

What may also be of interest is the underlying theme of continuity. Precisely because the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is so high-profile and under constant media spotlights, one has perpetually to struggle to remain on the top of what is going on. There always seems to be a new development, a new declaration, a new commitment, a new event. We are constantly told of a series of novel episodes, some worthy, some entirely insignificant, but all accentuating the impression that most of these events are already *passé* as we are acquainting ourselves with their occurring.

Fundamentally, however, very little changes. There are many ups and downs, high hopes dashed by periods of despair, quiet disrupted by violence, but the underlying trends remain remarkably constant. This also should not come as a surprise considering that the balance of power between the two parties has remained stable, although the gap between the two has widened and the expectations of the two populations have been propelled to ever more extreme thresholds. This continuity is often overlooked. In the excessive attention devoted to the minutiae of the conflict, the big picture gets lost.

And the big picture – mirroring the balance of power – has remained steady, and steadily deteriorating. It is one of continuing Israeli occupation, dispossession, colonization and segregation; of increasing territorial, demographic, socio-economic and political fragmentation of the Palestinians; of a persisting humanitarian crisis and more mismanagement, authoritarianism, lawlessness and chaos in the West Bank and Gaza; of more hatred, radicalization and indiscriminate violence against civilians on both sides; of detachment and incomprehension; and of a two-state solution growing ever more remote. It is above all a picture of a vast amount of money being poured in by

the international community as a substitute for its lack of real diplomatic engagement.

A political strategy would necessitate tackling head on the root causes and asymmetrical structure of the conflict. This would entail confronting its history, and the legitimate national rights and grievances of both peoples. This would imply having to deal, at last, with the hard issues which the Oslo 'peace process' sought to evade – the Palestinian refugees, the frontiers between Israel and a future Palestinian state, the status of Jerusalem, Israeli settlements, and security arrangements. As nothing serious is being done in order to influence Israeli policies so that a just and viable compromise can be reached, international donors are providing funds *en masse* to the Palestinians. This is partly humanitarian impulse, partly to assuage our guilty conscience. It is also being done in the hope that this may 'induce' the Palestinians to accept whatever deal the international community may be able to extract from the Israelis.

This was the rationale behind the creation in the early 1950s of the United Nations Relief and Work Agency to take care of more than half of the native population living in Palestine at the time, who were displaced and dispossessed as the result of the first Israeli–Arab conflict and the creation of the State of Israel. After Oslo, and to this day, the same logic was extended to the remaining Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This book begins with the Oslo process, when the Palestinian Authority (PA) was created and then Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat moved from Tunis to the occupied territory. It ends with his death at the close of 2004. This story, however, is still unfolding.

In the spring of 2006, a few months after Hamas received a democratic mandate from the population of the West Bank and Gaza, Western donors decided to stop direct funding to the Palestinian government. The conventional view – as epitomized in the media by the plethora of articles on PA officials not being paid for months – is that since then the Palestinians have been stranded with very little money. The staff on the PA payroll indeed stopped being paid. However, while officially no money went to the budget of the Authority, more funds were actually disbursed in 2006 than ever before. The money simply came in through different channels: out of the unprecedented US\$1.2 billion disbursed that year, some US\$700 million transited directly through the office of President Abbas and the rest through international agencies, whether the United Nations or non-governmental organizations. While ever vaster amounts of international funding continue to be disbursed to the Palestinians, their living conditions and lives under occupation continue to deteriorate. The prospect of seeing the emergence of a viable independent state is also becoming ever less plausible, and so is the prospect of economic development and reaching a just agreement which will at long last bring peace for them and for the Israelis. This book explains exactly how this happened, and in so doing also provides the reader with some of the answers to why it happened.

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Ich weiß nicht, was soll es bedeuten,
Daß ich so traurig bin;
Ein Märchen aus alten Zeiten,
Das kommt mir nicht aus dem Sinn.
Heinrich Heine, *Die Lorelei*, 1824

CHRONOLOGY

1991

October Madrid Peace Conference

1993

13 September Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government, Oslo
1 October Donor Conference to Support Middle East Peace, Washington
 DC
5 November First Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, Paris
16 December First Consultative Group meeting, Paris

1994

29 April Paris Protocol on Israeli–Palestinian Economic Relations
4 May Gaza–Jericho Agreement (Cairo Agreement)
10 May Arrival of first Palestinian police force in Gaza
1 July Establishment of the PA; arrival of Chairman Arafat in Gaza
29 August Transfer of power from the Israeli Civil Administration to the
 PA; expansion of Palestinian self-rule over education,
 taxation, social welfare, tourism and health completed by
 December

1995

6 January First meeting of the Local Aid Coordination Committee,
 Jericho; formation of Sector Working Groups
5 June First meeting of the Joint Liaison Committee
28 September Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Oslo II)
4 November Assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Rabin

CHRONOLOGY

1996

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 20 January | First Palestinian presidential and legislative elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip; PLO Chairman Arafat becomes PA President |
| 7 March | Inauguration of the first Palestinian Legislative Council |
| 29 May | Likud wins Israeli elections; Netanyahu Prime Minister |

1997

- | | |
|------------|--|
| 17 January | Protocol concerning Israeli redeployment in Hebron |
|------------|--|

1998

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 23 October | Wye River Memorandum |
| 30 November | Donor Conference to Support Peace and Development in the Middle East Peace, Washington DC |

1999

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 4–5 February | Last Consultative Group, Frankfurt |
| 4 May | Expiry of Oslo agreement; end of five-year transitional period |
| 17 May | Labour wins Israeli elections; Barak Prime Minister |

2000

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 24 May | Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon |
| July | Failure of Camp David Summit |
| 28 September | Outbreak of the second <i>intifada</i> or ‘Al Aqsa <i>intifada</i> ’ |

2001

- | | |
|------------|--|
| January | Failure of Taba Summit |
| 6 February | Likud wins Israeli elections; Sharon Prime Minister |
| September | First informal meeting of the Quartet (the United States, the European Union, Russia and the United Nations), New York |

2002

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| March/April | Israeli Defence Forces Operation Defensive Shield into the occupied Palestinian territory |
| 23 June | ‘100 Days Reform Plan’ of the Palestinian government |
| 24 June | President Bush speech on ‘vision’ for peace in the Middle East |
| 10 July | Quartet launches Task Force on Palestinian Reform |

CHRONOLOGY

Summer	Sharon's request to UN Secretary-General for assessment of the humanitarian situation in the WBGs – Bertini Mission
20 December	Principals-level Quartet, New York: finalized 'Roadmap' draft

2003

14 February	President Arafat's decision to appoint Prime Minister Abbas (Abu Mazen) as first Palestinian Prime Minister
29 April	Roadmap process begins and ends; Aqaba Summit
May/June	
7 September	Abbas resigns; Qorei (Abu Ala) Prime Minister

2004

April	Sharon's Disengagement Plan is announced
14 April	Exchange of Bush/Sharon letters
11 November	Death of President Arafat

2005

9 January	Palestinian presidential elections; Abbas becomes President
Summer	Israel disengages from Gaza

2006

January	Palestinian legislative elections; Hamas won 44 per cent of the popular vote and 74 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council
---------	--

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AHLC	Ad Hoc Liaison Committee
CEC	Central Elections Commission
CG	Consultative Group
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
COGAT	Office of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (Israeli)
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
DPA	Department of Political Affairs (UN)
EAP	Emergency Assistance Programme
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GA	General Assembly (UN)
GCO	General Control Office (PA)
GIE	Gaza Industrial Estate
GOI	Government of Israel
GSS	General Security Services (Israeli)
HAMAS	Harakat Al-Mukawama al-Islamiya (Islamic Resistance Movement)
HEPG	Humanitarian Emergency Policy Group
ICJ	International Court of Justice
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDF	Israeli Defence Forces
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFI	International Financial Institution
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

IR	International Relations
JLC	Joint Liaison Committee
LACC	Local Aid Coordination Committee
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MEPP	Middle East Peace Process
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Israeli)
MoF	Ministry of Finance (PA)
MOPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (PA)
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIS	New Israeli Shekel
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OLAF	European Anti Fraud Office
oPt	Occupied Palestinian territory
PA/PNA	Palestine National Authority
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission (UN)
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office (UN)
PCSC	Palestinian Commercial Services Company
PDP	Palestinian Development Plan
PECDAR	Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PIEDCO	Palestinian Industrial Estates Development Corporation
PIF	Palestinian Investment Fund
PLA	Palestinian Liberation Army
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNC	Palestine National Council
REDWG	Regional Economic Development Working Group
RSG	Reform Support Group
RWG	Refugee Working Group
SC	Security Council (UN)
SG	Secretary-General (UN)
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General (UN)
SSR	Security System Reform
STA	Single Treasury Account
SWG	Sector Working Group
TA	Technical Assistance
TAP	Tripartite Action Plan
TFGWB	Trust Fund for Gaza and the West Bank (World Bank)
TFPI	Task Force on Project Implementation
TFPR	Task Force on Palestinian Reform

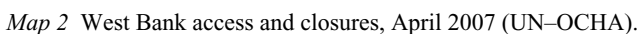
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

TIPH	Temporary International Presence in Hebron
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCO	Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator
UNTSO	United Nations Truce Supervision Organization
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WBGS	West Bank and Gaza Strip
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

End 2003, indicative exchange rate US\$1 = NIS4.5

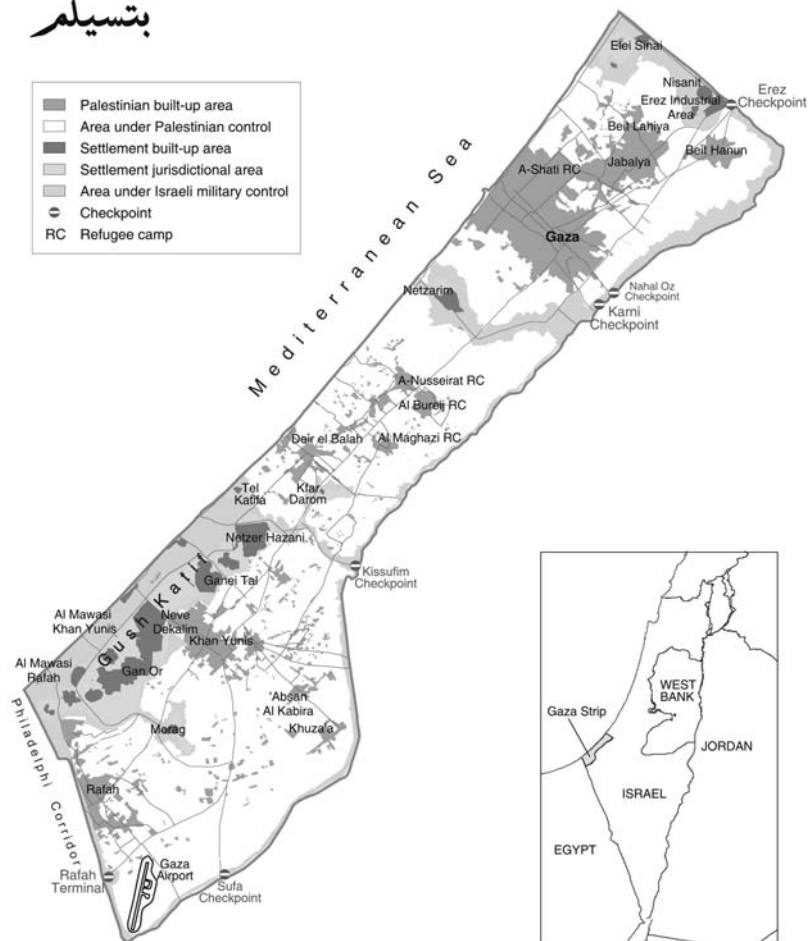


Map 1 General map, Israel and the region (UN).



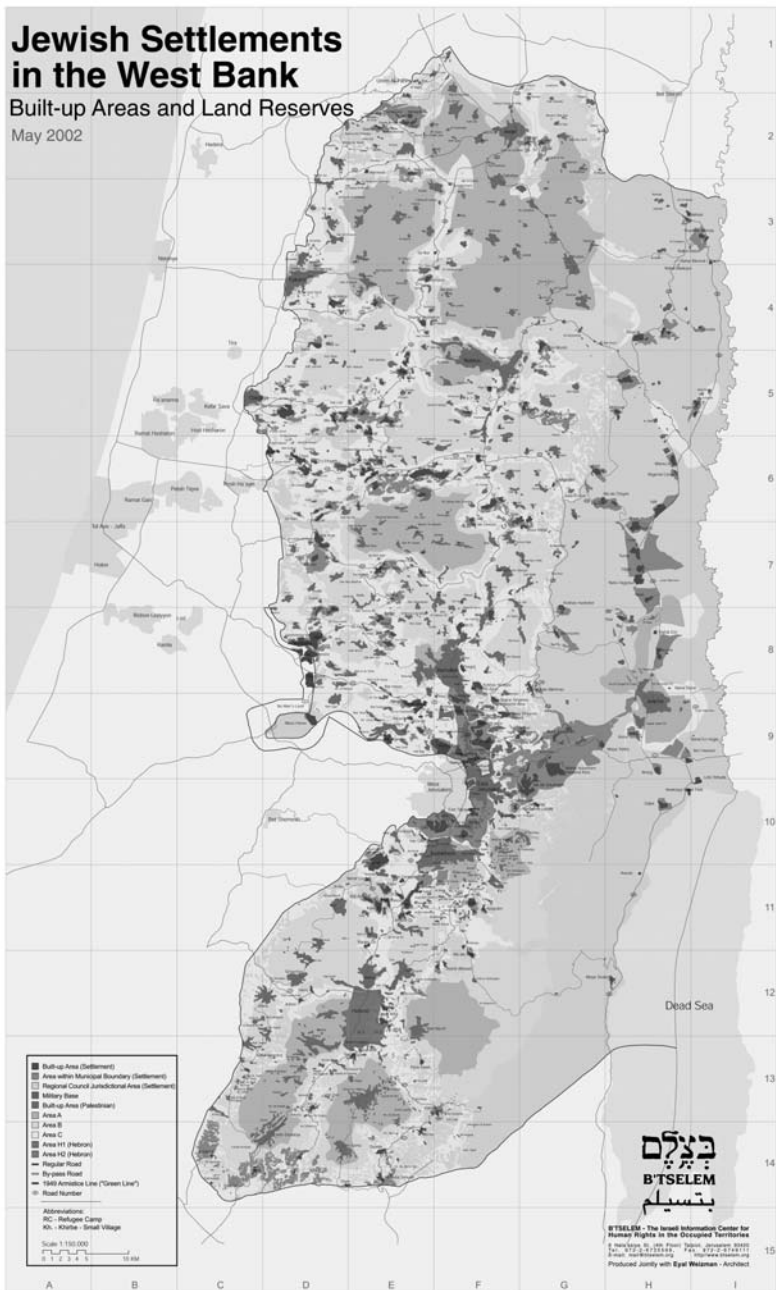
Map 2 West Bank access and closures, April 2007 (UN–OCHA).

The Gaza Strip

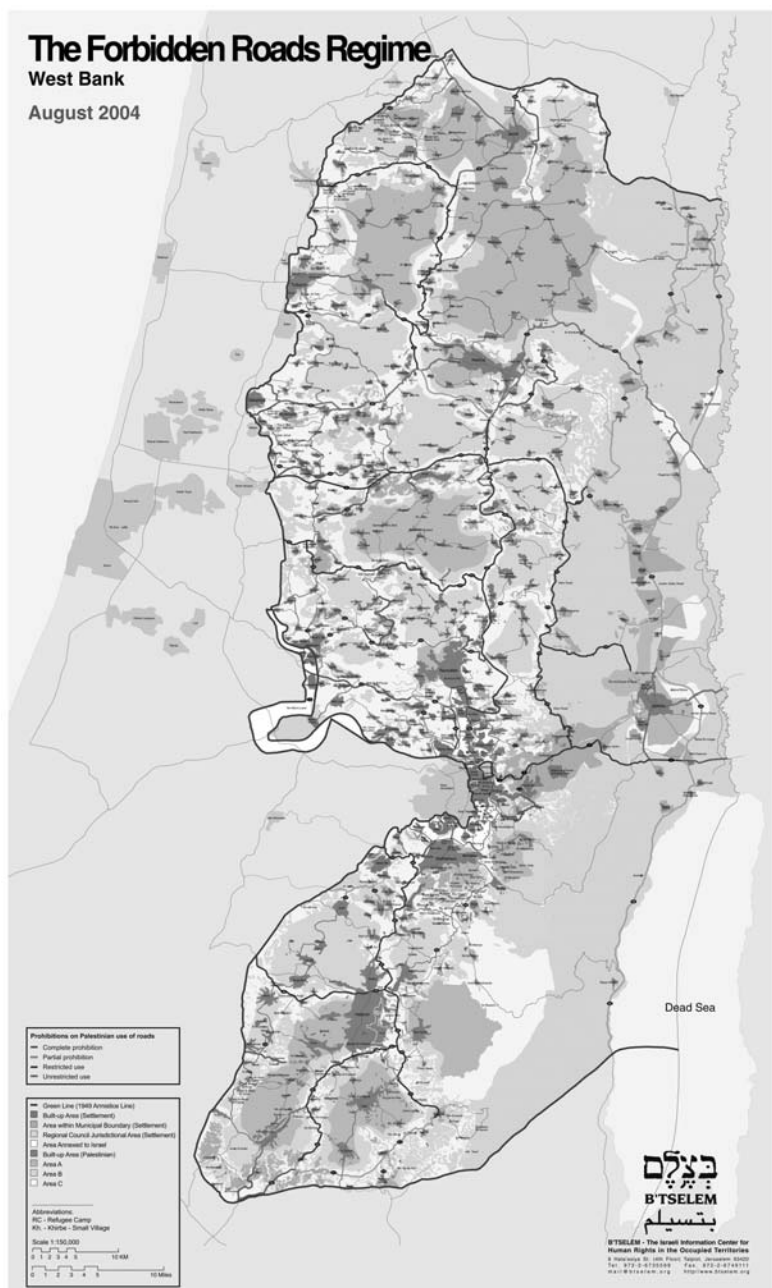


Source: Adapted from map of OCHA (UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)

Map 3 Gaza closures, July 2004 (UN-OCHA).



Map 4 Jewish settlements in the West Bank, May 2002 (B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories).



Map 5 The Forbidden Roads Regime, West Bank, August 2004 (B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories).