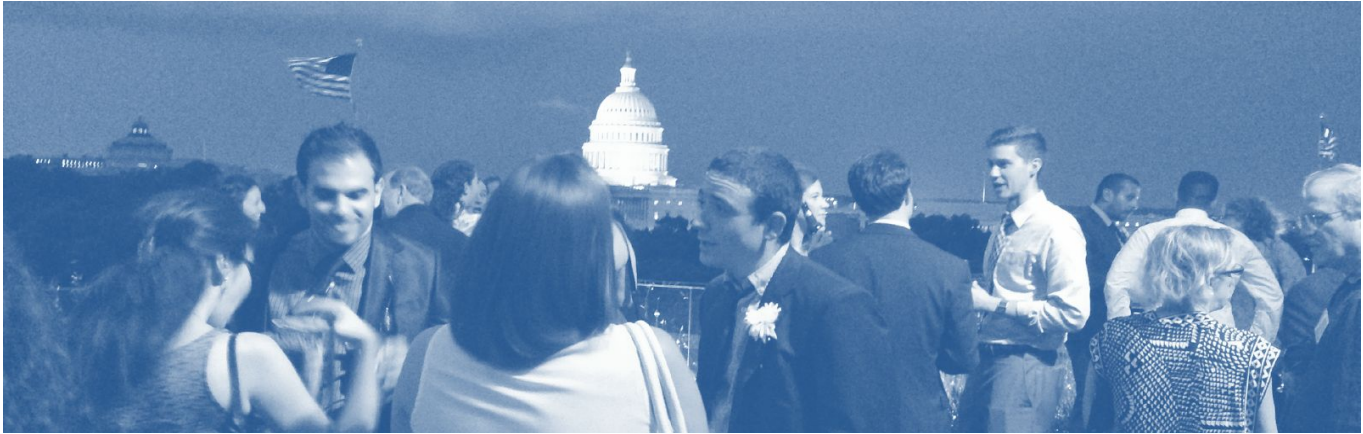




PLO DELEGATION TO THE UNITED STATES



The Washington Scene

October 2015

Staff members of the PLO Delegation are keen on attending key events in the capital that relate to Palestine and the Middle East. This bulletin offers a brief summary of these important conversations that take place in academic and policy circles. The views expressed in these events and reported here do not necessarily represent the views of the General Delegation of the PLO to the United States.

Reports in this issue

The 2015 Edward Said Memorial Lecture with Dr. Cornel West

The Future of Bipartisanship on Israel

NCUSAR Panel: The Palestinian Future

The 2015 Palestine Center Annual Conference

House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on Palestinian Authority Incitement

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing on the U.S. Role and Strategy in the Middle East

The 2015 Edward Said Memorial Lecture with Dr. Cornel West

Where: First Congregational United Church of Christ

When: October 1, 2015 5:00pm

About: Dr. Cornel West is Professor of Philosophy and Christian Practice at Union Theological Seminary and Professor Emeritus at Princeton University. He has also taught at Yale, Harvard, and the University of Paris. Dr. West has written over 20 books and has edited thirteen, among which are *Race Matters*, *Democracy Matters*, *Brother West: Living and Loving Out Loud*, *Black Prophetic Fire* and *Radical King*. In 1993, Dr. West was recipient of The American Book Award. He has had a diverse career spanning from academia to media icon. A frequent guest on the Bill Maher Show, Colbert Report, CNN, C-Span and Democracy Now, he also has appeared in over 25 documentaries and films including *Examined Life*, *Call & Response*, *Sidewalk and Stand*, as well as science fiction feature film, *The Matrix* - for which he was the commentator (with Ken Wilbur) on the official trilogy released in 2004. A few days after Dr. Edward Said's untimely death in 2003, Dr. Cornel West described him as follows: "Edward Said was the last great humanist. He was a literary genius. He was an intellectual giant. He was part of the tradition that goes from Erasmus to Vico, from Swift to Cesare, from Auerbach to Lionel Trilling." As the Palestine Center's Edward Said Memorial Lecturer this year, Dr. West will discuss the profound legacy of Edward Said in social and political thought. He will explore Dr. Said's role as an "engaged intellectual" whose voice provoked introspection, deep questioning, dialogue, and enduring change. Dr. West's lecture will also be livestreamed for those unable to attend.

Link: [The Jerusalem Fund](#)

The Future of Bipartisanship on Israel

Where: SEIU: Headquarters & Conference Center

When: October 15, 12:00 pm

About: The Future of Bipartisanship on Israel was a panel event sponsored by the Institute for Palestine Studies. This event, moderated by Rashid Khalidi, editor of the *Journal of Palestine Studies* and a professor at Columbia University, featured four panelists discussing US-Israeli relations and how they affect Palestine. The panelists were Paul Pillar, former CIA analyst; Maya Berry, Executive Director at the Arab American Institute; Youseff Munayyer, Executive Director at

the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, and Nihad Awad, the Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Each panelist focused on a different discussion area, including U.S. interests and the State of Israel, demographic change, the role of Congress in policymaking, and the Israeli connection to Islamophobia. Mr. Pillar stated that the U.S. benefits from its relationship with Israel, but in the same way that it benefits from any normalized relations with a state, and that Israeli policies that deny Palestinians the right to self-determination are contrary to U.S. interests. Director Berry discussed the increasing partisanship of the Israeli issue, but shifting demographics could change the way the public views the conflict in the future. Mr. Munayyer agreed with her about partisanship, but also mentioned discussed Israeli lobby's effectiveness on influencing the Iran deal and what they gained in the end. Mr. Awad made the link between some networks funding both Islamophobic groups and pro-Israel groups. At the end there was an audience Q & A session where the panelists fielded questions ranging from the effects of financial aid to the Israeli lobbying model.

Link: [The Future of Bipartisanship on Israel](#)

NCUSAR Panel: The Palestinian Future

Where: Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center

When: October 15, 10:00 am

About: The twenty-fourth annual Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference hosted by the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations was held for two days in Washington D.C. on October 14th-15th, 2015. During the second day of the conference, the second panel of the day was on the timely topic of the Palestinian Future. The chair of the panel was Ms. Randa Fahmy, President, Fahmy Hudome International; Treasurer, Board of Directors, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations. Speakers on the panel included H.E. Maen Areikat, the Chief Representative of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) to the United States; Mr. Matthew Reynolds, North American Representative for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; Dr. Jim Zogby, the founding President of the Arab American Institute; Dr. Imad Harb, Distinguished International Affairs Fellow, National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations. Serving as the Commentator was Dr. Tom Mattair, Executive Director of the Middle East Policy Council. The panel discussed the current situation regarding the Palestinian Question, and how with the recent escalation of tensions on the ground between the Palestinians and the Israelis had escalated in October, and how both could (if possible) move forward from the Israeli incitement against the Al-Aqsa compound. All panel members contributed various viewpoints representing various perspectives: the official stance of the PLO, the stance of UNRWA, the Arab and Arab American perspective, and the historical significance of the Palestinian Question. At the end of the panel presentation, the floor was opened to questions from the audience. Panelists discussed possible solutions to the current escalation of violence on the ground, how to pressure Israel to end the occupation of the Palestinian Territories and the Blockade of Gaza, to how to influence the U.S.-Israeli partnership to bring more accountability for the question of Israel and Palestine.

Link: [National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations](#)

House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on Palestinian Authority Incitement

Where: Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2172

When: October 22, 10:00 am

About:

The House Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing entitled “Words Have Consequences: Palestinian Authority Incitement to Violence” about the PA inciting violence in Jerusalem. The witnesses included Mr. Elliott Abrams, Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations; Dr. Johnathan Schanzer, Vice President for Research at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies; Mr. David Makovsky, Ziegler Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, as well as Rep. Ed Royce (R-CA), chairman of the committee, Eliot Engel (D-NY), the ranking member of the committee, as well as other committee members. This was a full committee hearing.

The hearing placed blame on President Abbas and the Palestinian Authority for the recent wave of violence in Jerusalem. Members of both parties denounced the P.A. and Abbas for purposefully inciting violence and stoking tensions and teaching hatred to Palestinian children. Members cited inflammatory rhetoric, false rumors, and the educational system to blame for the violence without mentioning occupation or any Israeli actions. Some congressmen and witnesses called for the closing of the PLO office in Washington D.C. and drastically cutting foreign aid money to the P.A. until Palestinian leadership stops inciting violence and changes their tone.

Link: [Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing](#)

The 2015 Palestine Center Annual Conference

Where: Palestine Center, The Jerusalem Fund

When: Friday, October 23, 2015

About: The Palestine Center’s 2015 conference examined multiple aspects of the current situation, focusing on the context and representation of Palestinians in the media, regional and international politics, and the United States. Internationally renowned scholars, activists, journalists, and practitioners analyzed factors on the ground and larger policies in four panels. The conference began by examining how the U.S. media chooses to cover events dealing with Palestine and the Palestinians and the extent of the influence of particular interests, such as the Israel lobby, on this coverage. It also considered how the grassroots landscape, including voices of activist Americans, Palestinians, Palestinian Americans, Jewish Americans, and others, is transforming public opinion. During the second Panel, speakers explored the efforts by individuals and organizations to defend the rights of Palestinians to free speech, academic

freedom, and nonviolent activism. They highlighted the challenges that the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement faces as well as the defense of students and faculty as they experience the criminalization of dissent on university campuses. The third panel, discussed the context of the Palestinian situation at present, following the “Arab Spring” upheavals of the last few years, with a focus on the effects of regional politics on refugee populations in the Arab countries nearby. Panelists also considered international efforts on Palestine, like United Nations initiatives, the International Court, and US policy toward Israel and Palestine. The Fourth Panel, surveyed the situation in Gaza at present as understood by the Palestinians in Gaza themselves and by the nongovernmental organizations and international donors working in reconstruction and relief.

Link: [The Jerusalem Fund](#)

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing on the U.S. Role and Strategy in the Middle East

Where: Dirksen Senate Office Building 419

When: October 28, 9:30 am

About:

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing regarding the U.S. Role and Strategy in the Middle East. The witnesses included The Honorable Anne Patterson, Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State and General John R. Allen, the Special Presidential Envoy For The Global Coalition To Counter ISIL at the U.S. Department of State. Chairman Bob Corker (R-TN) and Ranking Member Ben Cardin (D-MD) presided over the hearing, with a majority of committee members attending. This was a full committee hearing.

The hearing evaluated the strategy of the United States in the Middle East in recent times. Much of the hearing was focused on the conflict in Syria and how the United States can work with our allies to make progress in defeating ISIL. Assistant Secretary Patterson spoke of how the U.S.’s long-term goals have been sidelined because crisis management and counterterrorism efforts have consumed our energy. General Allen spoke about Russian involvement in Syria and how it greatly complicates the conflict. He asserted that Russia’s greatest concern is propping up Assad and removing the greatest immediate threats, specifying moderate forces instead of ISIL, but warned that this could create new extremist threats in the future.

Link: [Foreign Relations Committee Hearing](#)