The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy.

المبادرة الفلسطينية لتعميق الحموار العالمي والديمقراطية



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's <u>speech</u> at Bar Ilan University

Media Monitoring Unit

June 2009

In cooperation with FORD FOUNDATION

1

Analysis of media material and report writing:

<u>Ruham Nimri – Coordinator of Media Monitoring Unit</u>

Copyright reserved

"The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy- **MIFTAH**"



P.O. Box 69647 Jerusalem 95908

Tel. Ramallah 970 2 2989490

Fax Ramallah 970 2 2989492

E-mail: info@miftah.org

Website: www.miftah.org

Introduction:

The speech delivered by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday, June 14 at Bar Ilan University's Begin-Sadat Center in Tel Aviv, came in the context of his attempt to respond and deal with a new political situation created by the new US administration and the EU. This new policy is aimed at aborting previous doublestandard approaches for dealing with certain aspects of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. On the one hand, the US Administration has always demanded that Palestinians fully commit to the Road Map and its conditions, while it did not request the same level of commitment from Israel. It left Israel to behave according to its own convictions regarding settlements, borders, the wall and checkpoints. This has helped to justify the subjugation of Palestinians through imposing new realities in their daily life. From the US administration's first day in office, the differences in policy from George Bush's Republican administration were apparent. Statements from the new US officials began to address the danger of continuing with settlements in the Palestinian territories, mentioning Palestinians' right to self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian state. This change in American policy reached its climax during the speech delivered by US President Barak Obama entitled "A New Beginning" for reconciliation with the Arab and Muslim world at Cairo University in Egypt on June 4. President Obama publicly made defined and clear demands for halting settlements and recognizing the two-state solution, demands which mean a compliance with the Road Map.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech was more of an attempt at deceit and maneuvering. It was a desperate endeavor to please the US administration and the international community on the one hand and an attempt to preserve his narrow right-wing government, on the other. This was very clear by Netanyahu's many difficult if not impossible conditions which he set as prerequisites for his consent to the idea of establishing a Palestinian state. These conditions will effectively kill any prospect for negotiations on several issues. For example, demanding that the Palestinians recognize the Jewish identity of the state of Israel, the declaration that Jerusalem would remain the unified capital of Israel, the demilitarization of the future Palestinian state and monitoring of its borders, in addition to his total rejection of the right of return, leaves nothing left to negotiate over between the two parties.

Palestinian papers' coverage of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech

The three Palestinian papers gave a lot of space on their front pages to Netanyahu's speech as main news items, in addition to local and international reactions to the speech which, as we mentioned before, was full of political pitfalls. The three papers also allocated their regular columns and cartoons to commenting on the speech. As expected, the three papers focused on four issues raised by Netanyahu. From a Palestinian perspective, these issues are the most difficult and dangerous, which are the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state, rejection of a settlement freeze, Jerusalem as the unified capital of Israel and rejection of the refugee right of return.

Al-Quds newspaper:

The main news item on the front page of Al Quds newspaper was as follows:

Disregarding the Road Map and the Arab initiative, conditioning recognition of the Jewish character of Israel and unified Jerusalem as its capital (subtitle)

Netanyahu challenges Obama and refuses to freeze settlements and offers Palestinians a semi state (main title)

In its main news item, the paper highlighted Netanyahu's clear rejection to freezing settlements and his condition of recognizing Israel as a Jewish state. The news described Palestine as a "semi-state", which, according to Netanyahu, is a demilitarized state without Jerusalem as its capital. Moreover, the paper considered his speech a challenge to US President Barak Obama. Within the context of the news piece, the paper pointed to Netanyahu's disregard for the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

تجاهل خريطة الطريق والمبادرة العربية واشترط الاعتراف بيمودية اسرائيل والقدس موحدة وعاصمة لما





تل جَيب - رئيس الوزراء الاسرائيلي بنيامين نتانياهو خلال القاء خطابه امس.

In addition to the main news item, several news pieces followed related to local, Israeli, Arab and international reactions.



The regular column (Al Quds editorial) entitled "Nothing New in Netanyahu's Speech," analyzed the speech and its meaning. As expected, the writer attacked Netanyahu's speech and described it as deceptive and an attempt <u>"to react to President Obama's famous speech in Cairo. Mostly, it is an attempt to contain the tension between Israel and its biggest ally due to Obama's firm position on the need for Israel to comply with the two state solution and halt all forms of settlements." The important thing in Netanyahu's speech, according to the article, is what was between the lines rather than his actual words. In short, there was nothing new in Netanyahu's speech that the world does not know about him and his right-wing coalition.</u>

Al Quds' cartoon was also sarcastic towards Netanyahu's speech, depicting him as a scrap vendor, trying to sell old conditions in an attempt to buy time and procrastinate by proposing these old conditions as new to move forward in peace negotiations.



In another cartoon, the cartoonist is asking where the "small and non-viable" Palestinian state can fit in the great Israel, which controls this state, and the Road Map, "custom tailored for it."



Al-Ayyam newspaper:

As with Al Quds newspaper, the main news item in Al Ayyam described Netanyahu's speech as cancelling out the issues in the conflict.

<u>He put a number of preconditions for accepting a demilitarized state</u> (sub title) <u>Netanyahu's speech: canceling out the two issues of Jerusalem and refugees, opposing</u> <u>any halt to settlements and insisting on the Jewish character of Israel</u> (main)





In addition to the main news item, Al Ayyam published three other news pieces regarding the Palestinian Authority, President Obama and Arab Knesset member Muhammad Barakeh's reactions to Netanyahu's speech.

بركة: تمخض الجبل فولد نتنياهو

القس - الأيادة قال عضو التقيمت محمد بركة، يُديم الديفقراطية السلام والمساواة، في تعقيبه على خطاب رئيس الإسراطيلية يتعامين تنتياهم مساء امس: «إن الجبل تم تنتياهم و منتياهم في على حالته كان تكل الخطاب بي سياهات وصيافات في محاولة بانسة لتجميل موافقه ال المد حكالة سام يبياجات وصياغات؛ في محاولة بائسة لتجميل مواقفً الرفضية لافاق الحل. واضاف بركة: «إن نتنياهو حافظ في خطابه على ام رمواقف كل مركبات حكومته اليمينية المتشددة، التي تشا

أوبامايرحب اخطاب نتنياهو خطوةمهمة إلىالأمام واشنغنُ – رويترز: رحبت إدارة الرئيس الأميركي باراك أوباماً س، يتبنى رئيس الوزراء الإسرائيلي بنيامين تتنياهو دولة فلسطينيا تفصلة، ووصفت الأمر يانه ، خطوة مهمة إلى الامام، وقل رويرت جين المتحدث باسم البيت الأبيض «يرجب ال المهمة إلى الإمار في كلمة رئيس الوزرا «ننتياهو... الرئيس ملة دولة إسرا ثيل اليهودية و فلسطين المستقلة . التاريخية للشعبين . م بالدولتين... في الأرض لىعيىن،. نعتقد ان هذا الحل يمكن ان يضمن وينبغي ان يضمن التنبة صر(

م الله – «الإيام وكالات قالت السلطة القلسطينية، مساء امس: إن وقال عبدريه لوكاة فرانس برس، «لقد تحدث نتنباهو عن بولة فلسطينية، بريض الحكومة الإسرائيلية بنيامين تنتباهو يعتبر شطّ اكل مبارات ثم افرقها من محتولها، لأله لا يوجد وقف استيطان. وروضا المنتقدة وصلحاً لروقة الأليس الالبيركي براك اوياما. المتر امي سر منطقة التحرير الفلسطينية باس عبر ربه ان تنتباهو عبر خطابه ان «تكون بولة للسطين»، حصل بريده ان تنتباهو عبر خطابه ان «تكون بولة للسطين»، حصل بريده ان تنتباهو الموالي المركة الصهيونية، . الدولة الفلسطينية.

عبدربه : يريدالدولة محمية إسرائيلية

السلطة : خطاب نتنياهو ينسف كل مبادرات السلام ويمثل تحدياً لواشنطن

Also, Al Ayyam's regular column addressed Netanyahu's speech. The writer described him as garrulous and speaking nonsense. The writer, Hassan Al Battal, tried to link between Netanyahu's speech and US President Barak Obama's speech at Cairo University. He believed that Netanyahu's speech was basically an attempt at evasion by which he wanted to say: "There is no need for Palestinians and Arabs to engage in a rhetoric circus. Let's leave matters to US – Israeli, and Israeli – world Jewry debates!!"

Al Ayyam's cartoon was the frankest and clearest in commenting on the challenging and evasive nature of Netanyahu's speech. The cartoonist described the speech as a slap in the face to US President Obama. The implications here are very clear- after delivering his reconciliation speech in Cairo in which he promised to work for a better future for the

region, Netanyahu's speech came as a painful slap in the face to President Obama, who strives for change!



Al Hayyat Al Jadeedah newspaper:

Al Hayyat Al Jadeedah newspaper was no different in its coverage of Netanyahu's speech from the other two papers (Al Quds) and (Al Ayyam). Its main news item read as follows:

<u>Netanyahu's speech: rejecting a settlement freeze and the return of refugees and accepting a demilitarized state on condition of recognizing Israel as a Jewish state (main)</u>

<u>Palestinian Authority: Netanyahu's stance sabotages all peace initiatives and the US</u> <u>Administration should shoulder its responsibilities (subtitle)</u>

خطاب نتنياهو : رفض تجميد الاستيطان وعودة اللاجئين وقبول بدولة منزوعة السلاح شرط الاعتراف باسرائيل دولة للشعب اليهودي



The paper did not publish a picture of Netanyahu while delivering his speech similar to Al Quds and Al Ayyam. Instead, it published a picture of American peace activists raising banners against settlements in front of Bar Illan University, during the speech.



There was also a picture of President (Abbas) during his meeting with the mayor of Paris at the presidential headquarters in Ramallah.



(تصوير: ثائر غنايم)

الرئيس لدى استقباله رئيس بلدية باريس في مقر الرئاسة برام الله امس.

Al Hayyat Al Jadeedah ran one separate news item commenting on the speech, which was President Obama's comment on it.

اوباما: خطاب نتنياهو خطوة مهمة الى الامام

واشنطن - ا.ف. ب-رحب الرئيس الاميركي باراك اوباما أمس بخطاب رئيس الوزراء الاسرائيلي بنيامين نتنياهو الذي تحدث فيه للمرة الاولى عن مبدأ قيام دولة فلسطينية، معتبرا انه » خطوة مهمة الى الامام». وجاء في بيان للبيت الابيض ان »الرئيس يرحب بالخطوة المهمة الى الامام التي تضمنها خطاب رئيس الوزراء نتنياهو ». واضاف البيان ان اوباما »يؤيد حلا يقوم على دولتين، دولة يهودية لاسرائيل ودولة فلسطينية مستقلة على الاراضي التاريخية للشعبين». واوضح البيت الابيض ان اوباما »يعتقد بان هذا الحل يمكن وعليه ان يؤمن في الآن عينه امن المرائيل ويلبي الطموحات المشروعة للفلسطينيين بدولة قابلة للحياة، ويرحب بقبول نتنياهو هذا الهدف». واشار البيت الابيض الى ان اوباما »سيواصل العمل مع جميع الاطراف – اسرائيل والسلطة الفلسطينية و شركائنا في اللجنة الرباعية – بقبول نتنياهم ومسؤولياتهم من اجل التوصل الى حل يقوم على دولتين للنزاع الاسرائيل – الفلسطيني والى سلام شامل».

Al Hayyat's regular column ("Our Life" by Hafez Al Barghouthi) was different in style from the regular columns of Al Al quds and Al Ayyam. It tried to link the context of Netanyahu's speech with the divided Palestinian reality and the weak Arab reality, represented in the weak Arab peace initiative that is not supported by "an alternative option," in addition to the Palestinian state of division. The writer put the lion's share of responsibility on the Arab world and the Palestinians. If the reality was different, Netanyahu would not have delivered his belittling speech to the Palestinians and Arabs. He <u>"played on the current situation of Arabs and Palestinians, which lacks conciliation</u> <u>and is unable to take on any action because of the perpetual impotence flowing through</u> <u>their veins."</u>

Al Hayyat newspaper was the only paper that did not assign the daily cartoon to Netanyahu's speech. Contrary to Al Quds and Al Ayyam, the cartoon addressed the state of Palestinian division and its impact on Palestinian history.



Findings:

- ✓ Coverage of the three Palestinian papers: Al Quds, Al Ayyam and Al Hayyat Al Jadeeda of Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech was very good. They succeeded in highlighting the most important points in the speech. They commented on and addressed them with a high level of media professionalism by giving space in the regular columns to raise the necessary questions following the speech. Their cartoons also addressed the subject in addition to several reports and news items for commentary and reactions at the local, Arab and international levels.
- ✓ The Monitoring Unit feels that Al Hayyat Al Jadeeda's failure to assign its daily cartoon to addressing Netanyahu's speech was a shortcoming. It should have addressed the speech through its cartoon, which is considered one of the most creative instruments for expressing its position as a major media outlet in Palestine.
- ✓ The three papers successfully and professionally addressed Netanyahu's speech, without being dragged into media rhetoric full of incitement and slander. Through their coverage and commentaries, the papers exposed some of Netanyahu's intentions and his obvious policy, aimed at freezing and maintaining the status quo.