

# FUTURE POLITICAL OPTIONS FOR PALESTINIANS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA: A STUDY OF POSSIBLE SCENARIOS

By [Belal Shobaki](#)

## Scenario Four: The Escalation of Popular Confrontation with the Occupation and the Outbreak of a New Palestinian Intifada

Arguably, this scenario correlates with the previous scenarios: the collapse of the PA may yield a new state of struggle, while the creation of such a wave of struggle under the PA may be conducive to its collapse. Moreover, the escalation of popular confrontation with the Israeli regime and the outbreak of a new Palestinian intifada would increase the likelihood of the third scenario — the revival and reform of the PLO — as the factions would be pressured by the public to accomplish this task.

Discussions around an upcoming Palestinian intifada draw inspiration from [previous Palestinian experiences](#), specifically the first and second intifadas. However, this overlooks the possibility that a new state of struggle may emerge in the form of an intifada that differs from its predecessors, which is more likely given that many factors have changed, including:

I. *Firstly, the Israeli “withdrawal” from Gaza.* Direct clashes between Palestinians, Israeli settlers, and the Israeli military have transformed into full-fledged military confrontations since the Israeli military’s so-called withdrawal from Gaza, as seen in the recurrent offensives against the besieged enclave. Therefore, the participation of Palestinians in Gaza in a new intifada would take a different form, which could include militarized action involving missile launches or, in the case of land invasion, direct engagement with occupation forces. Popular resistance would take the form of [rallies and vigils](#) near the border fence on certain days rather than daily.

It is likely that Gaza’s engagement in any upcoming struggle would involve limited military action in support of Palestinian popular resistance in other places, as witnessed in the Saif al-Quds battle, which was launched in support of popular Palestinian resistance in Sheikh Jarrah and the 1948 territories.

II. *Secondly, the deteriorating state of Palestinian life in some host countries,* especially in recent years, which brought new crises in the wake of profound societal transformations taking place in the region, particularly in Syria and Lebanon. This new situation has reminded Palestinians in the diaspora of their need to participate in the Palestinian struggle, which could provide them with a way out of their present hardship. Although the prospects of Palestinian national action abroad are very limited, especially with the current security and political instability in Lebanon and Syria, Palestinians in neighboring Arab countries are [interacting more](#) with the events unfolding inside Palestine, and are beginning to organize marches to the borders, delivering a clear message that the sole solution to the refugee issue is their return, and that the Palestinian cause goes beyond the West Bank and Gaza, and is inclusive of all Palestinians. Accordingly, Palestinians in the diaspora would participate in any upcoming intifada through mobilizing material or moral support, or even physical resistance in later stages, as their capabilities permit.

III. *Thirdly, the active reengagement of Palestinians in 1948 territories in the Palestinian national cause.* After decades of attempts to eliminate solidarity among Palestinians across colonized Palestine, and to focus their political action on obtaining civil rights from the Zionist establishment, new trends have emerged, specifically among Palestinian youth:

- Lack of confidence in obtaining equal civil rights, particularly in view of recently enacted laws to Judaize the Zionist state, and the Israeli right's monopolization of Zionism.
- Redefining the national cause in the Palestinian psyche, where the cause is no longer about obtaining civil rights but rather an existential drive to confront settler colonialism. This definition recognizes the different tools of oppression and control used by the settler-colonial regime against the Palestinian people. Accordingly, Palestinians in 1948 territories have progressed from their position of solidarity to be major [participants in the unified Palestinian struggle](#) against the Zionist project.

These new trends constitute the foundation for the engagement of Palestinians in 1948 territories in any new Palestinian intifada. This engagement would take different forms, including rallies, protests, direct confrontation with the Israeli occupation forces in mixed areas, and economic obstruction through strikes and boycotts. These actions could later develop into ongoing activities that impede the daily lives of Zionists.

IV. *Fourthly, the hegemony of the security forces in the West Bank and their increased power.* In the aftermath of the Second Intifada, Palestinian security services were rebuilt under direct US supervision, transforming their patriotic military doctrine into a functional one. Their role expanded dramatically throughout years of political division, to the extent that their efforts have been commended by Israeli occupation forces. Security coordination has defined this stage: Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the West Bank have been undermined, while the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine has been restrained. The Independent Commission for Human Rights documented thousands of [politically motivated](#)

[arrests](#) by the security forces who threaten, torture, and even kill political opponents, even those unaffiliated with a particular organization, including the assassination of political activist Nizar Banat on June 24, 2021.

This new reality in the West Bank reduces the chances of any popular wave of anger turning into a large-scale and sustained intifada, as the PA relies on Fatah's popular base and restricts that of other Palestinian factions. Therefore, the likelihood that this scenario materializes is slim, unless the PA ceases its security-based approach first, and economic approach second. This is possible only if Palestinians overcome the current climate of fear and take collective actions to pressure the PA to either rectify its conduct or restructure entirely, as discussed in detail in the second scenario. In other words, the outbreak of a large-scale and sustained intifada in the West Bank would not succeed without radical change in the behavior of the PA. Without this change, a Palestinian intifada in the West Bank would take the form of sporadic waves of anger that maintain the struggle without leading to a new reality. Any military action against the occupation from within the West Bank would be rare, individually initiated events with limited impact unless the security services cease their control and coordination with Israel — which would allow Palestinian resistance organizations to rebuild, and the Fatah movement to abandon its position as the ruling party within an authoritarian regime, returning to its roots as a liberation movement.

Accordingly, one must consider the different circumstances when envisioning the shape of the new intifada — one in which all Palestinians participate in different geographical zones and with different sets of resistance tools available. Such an intifada may be geographically limited to one place outside the dominance of the Palestinian security forces, in which case the role of Palestinians in the West Bank could be limited to solidarity activities. However, this is unlikely as the West Bank's involvement in any upcoming intifada is only a matter of time.

What makes this scenario possible in the near future includes continuous Zionist settler-colonial projects of annexation, expansion, and Judaization; continued arrests, assassinations, restriction of freedoms, and deprivation of rights with US support (either overtly, as during the Trump administration, or covertly); in addition to the silence of the international community and the preoccupation among Arab regimes with internal issues or intra-Arab disputes. Moreover, both the growing far-right in Israel and the oppression of Palestinians as a decisive factor in polarizing the Zionist public should motivate Palestinians to rise and confront these policies.

Other factors pertain to the Palestinians themselves, notably, popular consensus on resistance and rejection of the PA (as seen during the popular wave of anger in Jerusalem and the 1948 territories, as well as the Saif al-Quds battle). That uprising garnered unprecedented popular sympathy and solidarity at both the Arab and international levels. Such solidarity would not have been achieved without breaking free from traditional media platforms controlled by pro-Zionist forces and using the virtual space that enabled Palestinians and their supporters to communicate their narrative to the world.

The fact that the Israeli regime pressured these digital platforms to reduce Palestinian content on social media networks further attests to the [role of the digital space](#) in shaping this support. Although some platforms, [including Facebook](#), entertained Israel's request, Palestinians' content has persisted.

Although these factors have only grown in importance, the obstacles presented by the first scenario — namely, continued financial and security support to the PA, which reinforces the policies aimed at creating the “New Palestinian” in the West Bank and prolongs the state of division — still lie ahead and may prevent the outbreak of an intifada soon.



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