



Conflicts Forum

NOTES & COMMENT

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Iraq Notes: “The Two Occupiers”

FROM OUR BAGHDAD CORRESPONDENT

There is a wry and ironic saying amongst Iraqis today: that Iraq is actually under the occupation of two foreign powers: the United States -- and Iran. The irony of this expression is elicited amongst all Iraqis with a laugh and then a shake of the head. The twin occupations are a tragedy, these Iraqis say, because Saddam Hussein spent fifteen years fighting the Americans, but hundreds of thousands of lives in fighting the Iranians. And who won?

Iran operates in Iraq today through political and military surrogates, primarily of Iranian origin, who are usually on Tehran’s payroll or who have ties to the Iranian secret police, the Iranian intelligence services, or Iran’s military. The vast resources of the Islamic Republic of Iran bankroll arm a handful of parties in Iraq, some of significant stature. Iraqis are well aware of Iran’s influence and have been for some time. But a growing number of Iraqis are discomfited by the idea of the Iranian presence and believes that Iran, having been established as a strong political force in the country, will be hard to expel.

Ordinary shopkeepers, students, housewives, and professionals that have not yet fled the affluent neighbourhoods of Iraq -- and were once of the nation’s power elite (and made the country run) -- are able to name the genealogy and background of all major Iraqi officials. These same people say, again with a laugh and a shake of the head, that the ties between the current government, in which the United States and its allies place so much faith, is “infiltrated from top to bottom” by people who have ties to, answer to, or owe Iran something. They say that the current government is filled with these “surrogates.” And who are they?

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***Making the Palestinians Diet* ~ ALASTAIR CROOKE**

There is an anecdote much admired by management consultants that tells the story of a famous US car manufacturer who commissioned an information consultant to determine why their products were lagging behind the Japanese competition. The company’s chief executive was particularly troubled by his corporation’s lack of technical innovation, this despite the number of good engineers employed. A case in point, he told the new information consultant, came in his review of a recent decision by the company’s engineering division, which was asked to design a new carburettor -- since the company’s old design was inferior to the carburettor of the competition. “We seem to have a communication problem in this company”, the executive told the information consultant, “and I expect you to fix it”.

After one month of research the consultant returned to the office of the CEO to present his findings: He said his inquiries had shown that while seventeen engineers representing the company’s various engineering divisions had indeed endorsed a new carburettor design, he discovered that when he questioned each of the engineers individually, not one of the seventeen agreed with the final decision. All of the engineers -- each one of them -- had acted to further their divisional interests or to agree to what they guessed would emerge as the likely consensus -- the line of least resistance. None of them wanted to rock the boat, none of them wanted to take a stand. The CEO was stunned by the report, and angered. “Fix the problem” he told the information consultant -- “and do it now”. But the consultant refused: “I’m a consultant. Real decisions are made by real leaders. By you. That’s your job.”

This is the same problem that plagues the European Union today. Speak to European officials individually, or even to their governments, and there is almost no one who believes that putting Palestinians on a “diet” will make them more moderate or help start a political process with Israel. Putting Palestinians on a “diet” (on rations that are just short of complete starvation) is the term coined by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s chief of staff, Dov Weisglas, to advocate the present US and EU policy of trying to isolate the Palestinian Government politically and financially to the point that it cannot pay the salaries of civil servants or function effectively as a government.

Read “Talking to Hamas” by Alastair Crooke published by Prospect Magazine, June 2006 on page 2

IN MARCH, CONFLICTS FORUM DIRECTORS MARK PERRY AND ALASTAIR CROOKE WROTE A TWO PART ARTICLE ‘HOW TO LOSE THE WAR ON TERROR’ PUBLISHED ON ASIA TIMES ONLINE. THE ARTICLE REVIEWS THE 2005 EXCHANGES OF CONFLICTS FORUM WITH THE LEADERS OF POLITICAL ISLAM IN BEIRUT:

PART I http://www.atimes.com/atimes/middle_east/HC31AK02.html

PART II http://www.atimes.com/atimes/middle_east/HD01AK02.html

PART III & IV WILL BE PUBLISHED IN JUNE.

NEW ON WEBSITE: BRIEFING PAPER #2

‘FINANCING THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY’ BY GEOFFREY ARONSON:

<http://www.conflictsforum.com/Briefs/Briefing2.pdf>: 

“Talking to Hamas” by Alastair Crooke, Prospect, June 2006

Almost no one believes that putting Palestinians on a “diet” will make them more moderate or help to restart a political process with Israel. The diet—a term coined by Ariel Sharon’s chief of staff, Dov Weisglass—refers to the US and EU policy of trying to cut off the Hamas government politically and financially so that it cannot pay the salaries of civil servants or function as a government.

The pressure is designed to give the new government no option but to accede to three US and EU demands: recognition of Israel, renunciation of violence, and acceptance of all earlier agreements dating back to the Oslo accords signed by the late Yasser Arafat, leader of Hamas’s rival Fatah movement.

Privately, most EU officials doubt the policy will work. But they feel trapped into adopting a position from which they lack the leadership or energy to escape, and the paralysis caused by the European divisions over Iraq still haunts Brussels in any area that risks a breach with the US. Some very senior US officials, however, are more than ready to make plain that the US is not interested so much in Hamas’s transformation to non-violence as in the failure and collapse of the Hamas-led government. US diplomats have told their European counterparts that “the Palestinians must suffer for their choice” (in electing Hamas). They would like to see Fatah return to power, albeit led by someone like the westernised Salaam Fayad, a former Palestinian finance minister and World Bank official.

To this end, the US is seeking to build a militia of 3,500 men around the office of the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, to enlarge the presidency staff and to channel as much of the expenditure and work of the government as possible through the presidency.

The US aims to create a shadow government centred around the president and his Fatah party as a counterpoint to a financially starved Hamas-led government—which will, US officials hope, prove ineffective and wither. Officials associated with Vice-President Cheney’s office talk openly with Fatah visitors about the desirability of mounting a “soft coup” that will restore the more pliant Fatah to power on the back of a humanitarian crisis.

In Beirut in early May, I spoke to Osama Hamdan, Hamas’s chief representative in Lebanon and a senior member of the Hamas political committee, about the situation facing the organisation: “Before the US or Europe had time to judge us by our actions, US pressure for building a siege had begun,” he said. “Initially, the new government made good progress in finding replacement finance from Arab and Islamic states, but subsequently there has been huge pressure exerted by the US on the Arab banking system in order to block others from transferring any funds by the commercial banking system to any bank in Palestine. People will suffer. In addition, Israel is withholding Palestinian revenues and tax receipts amounting to some \$60m per month, and is restricting border access. These actions are endangering the survival of the internal Palestinian economy”.

Hamdan explained that the government knew that the bloated state sector needed to be reduced in size and corruption eliminated—two measures that would cut the budget significantly. Hamas, he noted, had already offered the EU transparency of all government expenditure and a willingness to submit its accounts to independent audit. Palestinians, in his view, needed to be more self-reliant, both economically and in finding a solution to the creation of a Palestinian state. The problem, he said, was how to move from heavy dependency on European funding to greater self-reliance without creating more unemployment among the Palestinian Authority’s 160,000 employees, none of whom have been paid for two months. About a quarter of the Palestinian population of 3.9m depends directly or indirectly on these salaries. Hamas does not want to swap dependency on Europe for dependency on Arab governments, but neither can the government move towards greater self-sufficiency without some bridging finance.

On current trends, the World Bank forecasts that by the end of this year 67 per cent of people in the Palestinian territories will be living in poverty (defined as less than \$2 per day)—up from 44 per cent in 2005. Hamas’s first priority is to pay the salaries of government employees, but it has also been looking to Arab states to fund projects, such as building social housing in Gaza, that could soak up surplus public sector workers. Its problem is that, despite having secured pledges of finance from alternative Islamic sources, it can find no bank willing to undertake the transfer for fear of legal action by the US treasury.

On 10th May, the “quartet” (the US, EU, UN and Russia) agreed to provide limited emergency assistance to the Hamas government, to be channelled through a mechanism that the EU agreed to propose. This initiative, although welcome to Palestinians, is unlikely to do more than keep institutional collapse at bay. It will not resolve Hamas’s inability to transfer the funds the government has raised from Arab and Islamic states. It will also channel the assistance via the Fatah presidency rather than the Hamas-led ministry of finance, thus perpetuating the tensions between the rivals.

Originally, the US and EU argued that they had a moral duty to ensure that no funds raised from their own taxpayers reached a government they categorised as “terrorist.” Now it seems they are extending the argument to include monies from Bahrain and Qatar. But have the US and the EU thought through the consequences of a complete Palestinian institutional collapse?

Hamdan was not worried that the crisis might turn Palestinian opinion against Hamas. Recent polls have shown the movement increasing its popularity by 5 percentage points since the January election, with Fatah slipping by 3 points. Hamdan said: “People know it is not Hamas that is working against them, that the pressure is coming from Israel and the US. Equally, they understand the part played by a minority of Palestinians who do not accept the reality of change through a democratic process.” *(continued on page 3)*

The crisis has created an unprecedented workload for the external leadership that has left them with little time to reflect on long-term strategy. The political committee, based in Beirut for security reasons, remains responsible for overall policy, with the cabinet in Ramallah enjoying reasonably wide autonomy within the guidelines laid down by the committee and the election platform. Initial tensions between the committee and the cabinet seem to have passed, but it would be no surprise if they returned.

The focus is now survival. Hamdan describes why the US policy of channelling assistance to Abbas alone is so damaging: "Trying to create a parallel government threatens to undermine all Palestinian institutions. A failure here could damage the whole situation. No one will know which the real government is - each side will blame the other. There will be no Palestinian side, just two warring rivals. The impact of this internal conflict will not be confined to Palestine—it will affect the whole region."

Cynics may suggest that Israel has nothing to lose from internal Palestinian conflict. In practice, however, it seems that many Israeli officials are not keen on the US hardline objective of trying to return Fatah to power because they believe it to be fragmenting into personal fiefdoms. Not for the first time, we see the US being more Israeli than the Israelis.

The Palestinian president and some of the Fatah leaders are busy advocating to Israel the prospect of a "quickie" six-month negotiation on all final status issues related to a Palestinian state. The outcome would be put to a referendum of Palestinians, effectively bypassing Hamas and the government. President Abbas is convinced that the "peace majority" of Palestinians would endorse it wholeheartedly.

But it seems Israelis are not convinced that Abbas, whom they regard as weak, can deliver on any agreement. They are less sure than Abbas that Palestinians would endorse any proposal that Israel would be likely to offer him. Indeed, Israelis are not convinced that they want a Palestinian partner at all. The public mood is one of unilateralism. The new prime minister, Ehud Olmert, will have a sufficiently difficult time persuading his coalition colleagues—particularly Shas, the Orthodox Jewish party—to proceed with unilateral withdrawal. There is little appetite for final status talks, and not much popular enthusiasm even for Olmert's plan to finalise the borders of Israel on the back of a partial withdrawal from the West Bank. Many Israelis feel that even if the US endorsed a partial withdrawal to a "final border," such a declaration would have no real legitimacy. They expect the world at large would reject it.

After the withdrawal from Gaza last year, I talked to a number of veteran Israeli political correspondents. They were saddened that, after the trauma of uprooting settlements, nothing seemed to have changed for the better: there was still violence in Gaza, Qassam rockets were landing in Israel and Palestinians seemed no more ready to acquiesce to the Israeli objectives for a limited Palestinian state. These commentators were sceptical that limited withdrawal from the West Bank really would transform their country's strategic position.

It seems, however, that the new Israeli government will aim towards partial independent withdrawal from the West Bank, for the time being at least. And for this, Israel prefers Hamas to Fatah. To engage with President Abbas would undermine the claim that unilateralism is necessary "because there is no Palestinian partner." Unlike Fatah, Hamas does not want to negotiate on a partial solution, and can be plausibly labelled "a non-partner." As a result, some Israelis perceive Hamas as sharing a common interest in Israeli withdrawal that could lead to some "understandings." And as Israel knows, Hamas counts all Israeli departures from Palestinian land as a victory, especially without a quid pro quo.

This prospect would leave Hamas to concentrate over the coming year or two on its core objective of providing competent governance to the Palestinians. Osama Hamdan underlined the importance of bringing law and order to the Palestinians and, specifically, of resolving clashes between Hamas and Fatah factions: "Ismail Haniya [the Palestinian prime minister] has begun working... there are good signs that he will succeed in securing the internal situation. Some of the other groups, such as the popular resistance committees, have begun working directly with the interior minister, and a new co-ordinator of security, who is very popular and commands wide support among all factions, has been appointed."

According to Hamdan, Hamas's other priorities are to reform the security services, to create effective judicial oversight over the security agencies and, above all, to make parliament accountable for and the instrument of control of all Palestinian institutions and ministries. Hamas has not perpetrated any direct attack in Israel since late 2003; its military wing has focused instead on targets within the occupied territories. For over a year, Hamas has observed a unilateral de-escalation, or *tadiya*. The suicide attack in Tel Aviv in April that led to the death of 11 Israelis was mounted by Islamic Jihad in response to an earlier killing of several of its leaders.

In a response that was widely criticised, Hamas spokesmen refused to condemn Islamic Jihad, repelling any tentative European feelers towards engagement. But Hamas wanted to signal clearly that it would not be Israel's policeman in the territories. It had learned from Fatah's experience that to publicly condemn such attacks was to invite US and Israeli pressure to arrest members of Islamic Jihad, something it was not ready to do given the risk of being outflanked by more militant groups. Hamas also knows that if it begins to arrest Palestinians, Israel will send lists of further Palestinians to be arrested. These lists, which were sent to Arafat as soon as he took office in 1993, proved deeply corrosive to Fatah's credibility and legitimacy. The language used by Hamas, however, was not well chosen. Israel may have understood the signal, but externally it was damaging.


Hamas and Fatah represent two very different traditions of Muslim thinking.

(continued on page 4)

Fatah has looked to the international community to help balance the asymmetrical relationship with Israel, whereas Hamas's Islamist approach relies on the inner resources of its constituency for the fortitude to persevere. But contrary to the popular view, Hamas does not believe in imposing Sharia law on Palestinians, or anyone else. This has been said publicly. It does not seek a "top-down" Islamic state that imposes norms of Islamic behaviour but has no real Muslims living in it. It prefers the goal of a state peopled by believing Muslims who's freely chosen priorities colour society from below.

If Muslims judge Hamas to have been successful, this approach will change the face of Islamism. It will do more than any other initiative to swing the pendulum away from the revolutionary groups that aim to radicalise and to impose strict Islamic structures. And the commitment to reform will appeal to public opinion throughout the region. It is this that represents the revolutionary nature of the Hamas electoral victory and explains the antagonism of leaders like Mubarak of Egypt and King Abdullah of Jordan, who can see the implications only too clearly.

It seems likely that Hamas will continue to refuse to recognise Israel, at least until the final shape of an agreement is clear, but it will be pragmatic in signalling that it seeks a state on land occupied in 1967 and is not pursuing any destruction of Israel. Marwan Barghouti, a Fatah leader, and Sheik Natche of Hamas, both in jail in Israel, have signed a joint statement indicating that a future Palestinian state would be based on the lands occupied in 1967 only.

Western policies are in difficulties throughout the Middle East. The west responds to this situation by largely refusing to talk with the fastest growing current in the Middle East, the Islamists. But the EU should heed the words of Efraim Halevy, former adviser to Ariel Sharon and a former Mossad head. He recently criticised Israel for insisting that Hamas first recognise the Jewish state as a precondition for any discussion. Halevy argued rather that Israel should recognise Hamas first. He predicted that in so doing, "we will be seeing things we have not seen before"—an apparent allusion to talks between Israel and Hamas. That would be a good start. 

Iraq Notes (continued from page 1)

-- Jawad al-Maliki: the current Prime Minister's real name, Iraqis say, is Nuri Kamil al-Ali, a member of the Shiite coalition and the number two man in the Iranian-backed Dawa Party. The Dawa Party is notorious for its first act of terrorism -- the bombing of an American facility in Kuwait in 1983. Al-Maliki is apparently of Iranian origins, though his family emigrated to Iraq in 1920, settling in al-Sadda village, which is 59 kilometres south of Baghdad.

-- Ibrahim al Jaafari: the immediate past Prime Minister's family name is said to be Ashayqar, a family that is originally of Pakistani origins. His grandfather emigrated from Pakistan at about the same time as Maliki's family. Jaafari's father was granted Iraqi citizenship, though he continued to maintain Pakistani citizenship for himself and his children. Ibrahim's sister, who lives in Babylon province, still does not have Iraqi citizenship and recently -- four months ago -- renewed her residency in Iraq as a foreigner. Jaafari is the leader of the Iranian-backed Dawa Party but lost in his bid for another term as the nation's premier.

-- Bayan Jabr: Iraqi nationals say that Jabr's real name is Baqir Solagh Shishtazali. Shishtazali is the current Iraqi Minister of the Interior, though he may not continue in that position, according to our most recent report. Jabr is of Iranian origin: his father emigrated to Iraq from Iran and took up residence in the Kadhimiya district of Baghdad. Baghdadis believe that Jabr is a member of the Iranian-backed Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), but that he has kept his affiliation quiet. SCIRI's Badr Militia dominates the Iraqi Interior Ministry's security forces.

-- Mawafiq Al-Rubayee: Iraqi nationals say that al-Rubayee's real name is Kareem Shahpoor. As the current government's national security advisor, al-Rubayee is in a powerful position. He is originally from Iran, from Shahpoor -- where his family took its name. Al-Rubayee is one of the tens of thousands of Iranians deported by Saddam Hussein from Iraq in 1979.

-- Abdel-Aziz Al-Hakeem: Known as Abdel Aziz al-Hakeem Tabatabaee, Hakim is the head of the Iranian-backed Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq and its Badr Militia. His grandfather Mahdi migrated from the Iranian city of Tabataba to Najaf. Abdel-Aziz practiced herbal medicine in his young years, and so was given the label "al-Hakeem" -- "doctor". Abdel-Aziz's father, Muhsin, became a religious leader in Najaf but maintained his Iranian citizenship. Baghdadis quietly claim that Abdel-Aziz retains his Iranian citizenship, and his nephew Ammar, who is a spokesman for SCIRI, is reportedly wanted for conscription in the Iranian Army. Last year Ammar had written to former Iranian President Khatemi, to grant him special permission to be excused from Iranian military service.

-- Ali Al-Dabbagh: Iraqi's claim that Ali al-Dabbagh's real name is Ali al-Bayajoon. In either case, he is the spokesman for powerful Iranian-backed cleric Ali Sistani and member of the Shiite coalition. His grandfather immigrated to Iraq from Iran and settled in Najaf.

-- Ali Al-Adeeb: Iraqis claim that Ali al-Adeeb's real name is Ali al-Zand, or simply Ali Zand. Al-Adeeb is a member of the Dawa Party and rumour on the Baghdad street is that he still holds Iranian citizenship. (continued on page 5)

-- Hussein Shahrستاني: Shahrستاني is an influential member of the Shiite coalition. His father is Iranian and comes from the Iranian province of Shahrستان. Some members of Hussein's family speak fluent Farsi, which is certainly not a crime -- but are having a difficult time fitting into Iraqi society because they do not speak Arabic. Shahrستاني was a nuclear scientist in Iraq who fled to Iran just prior to the Iran-Iraq war. In 2005, Shahrستاني was accused by former Iraqi Defence Minister Hazem Shaalan of illegally working on the Iranian nuclear program.

-- Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani: Ali Sistani is one of the top religious authorities in Shiism and the most influential religious figure of Najaf. Sistani is from the Iranian province of Sistan, which borders Pakistan. Prime Minister Jaafari offered the Iranian cleric Iraqi citizenship, but Sistani refused it saying "I was born as an Iranian and will die an Iranian". Sistani still does not speak Arabic fluently and uses translators in discussion with officials whose Arabic is fluent. Sistani refuses to do any television or radio interviews in order to avoid appearing to Iraqi audiences as non-Iraqi.

The influence of Iran in Iraq is now certain -- though to what degree Iran's reputed surrogates will shape the future of the country in line with Iranian thinking is not known. For as many Iranian-born or Iranian influenced Iraqi nationals (or outright surrogates) as there are, there are other original Iranian nationals who have come to Iraq by choice. Then too, despite the rumours, there are real divisions within the reputedly pro-Iranian community in Iraq, as well as differences between Iranian surrogates and officials of the Islamic Republic.

Even so, there is growing resentment among Iraqi nationals (and not just those who are Sunnis), that Iran's meddling conduct will not only exacerbate sectarian tensions in the country, but also revive the virulent anti-Iranian hatreds of the Saddam era. Certainly this now seems possible, as Shia militias under the control of Iran have nearly a free hand in the country. Still, the Sunni heartland of the country, and the Sunni neighbourhoods of Baghdad, feel most deeply the pain of Iranian influence -- and resent it deeply.


A Sunni businessman and influential Sunni tribal leader from western Iraq put this resentment into words several months ago, during an interview in Amman: "I look around my country and I find that it is unrecognizable. Saddam was bad, so now he is gone. And who do we get: my country is crawling not just with Americans and Brits, but with Wahhabis, with al-Qaeda, with Shia militias, with alienated Baathists, with Zarqawists, and now with Iranians. And who do we have to blame for this? Our liberators. So here is what we have to say to them: thanks a *lot!*"

A Premature Celebration

In spite of his extensive efforts to form a National Unity Government in Iraq, Nori Al Maliki, the new Prime Minister, managed only to shape a sectarian structure that is so weak that it may last only a short time. While Washington and London were celebrating the creation of the government, it was already showing its first cracks. Most observers in Baghdad believe that the new cabinet has no real chance to carry out the government's programme -- aimed at overcoming terrorism, reining in the militias, ending corruption, and taking practical steps to rebuild a shattered economy.

In an exclusive interview with one of our reporters in the Iraqi capital, our correspondent was able to interview the new Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister -- who was also chosen to run the nation's Defence Ministry. Minister Salam al-Zobaei sounded optimistic in his assessment of the new government's success, but he did not hide his fears that "this government can do little immediately to resolve the really deep problems caused by corruption -- corruption that is deeply rooted in all sectors and that was prominent in the last three governments".

Minister al-Zobaei believes that "those who occupy their ministerial posts know that their time in office will be short, because the government is so shaky". As a result, he says, "I would expect that these people will neglect their duties and turn their attention to gain personal achievement and wealth". The minister reported that this is not unusual, as "many people who have held cabinet posts in the past became millionaires overnight, and did nothing for the interests of the Iraqi people". He added: "I am very afraid that this is what might happen now, unless we really stabilize this government".

Minister al-Zobaei -- a Sunni and a relative to Harith Al Dari, the Secretary General of the Iraqi Muslim Scholars Association, or "MUC", admitted that the political differences between and among Iraq's leading politicians are "quite serious", and that these tensions might be deepened by the fact that the new government contains so many of these disparate personalities. Al-Zobaei also admitted that the most prominent Sunni political parties in the country could do little to end the savage daily sectarian killings that are plaguing the nation, "because they control just small groups of the resistance". In this -- his first ever interview -- al-Zobaei, an articulate man with a photogenic smile, said that he would attempt to provide "a balance in the Iraqi Army between all sects and amongst all the nations of the Iraqi mosaic." He added that over the course of the last three years -- "among the most difficult in Iraqi history -- there "was no balance in the military and political parties of all stripes, whether Sunni or Shiite or Kurds, tried to send as many of their supporters as they could into the army's ranks". This situation, al-Zobaei noted, "brought a lot of instability into the army, and made it answerable to a number of other constituencies and not to the government first. This meant there was more than one loyalty in the military establishment, and this has to be changed". 

CONFLICTS FORUM BOARD OF ADVISORS

LORD ALDERDICE Key negotiator of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement; Lord Alderdice was appointed as one of the four International Monitors to the Good Friday Agreement by the British Government in 2004.

GEOFFREY ARONSON Executive Director of the Washington, D.C.-based Foundation for Middle East Peace; He is a widely published authority on the region and is the foremost authority on the settlements issue in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

MILT BEARDEN Former CIA Chief in Pakistan and Former Chief of the CIA's Soviet/East European Division; Recipient of the Donovan Award and the Distinguished Intelligence Medal.

TOM CLARK Chairman on the Board of the JAC Trust; He is a well-known political advocate and activist whose broad experience in the peace community includes organising reconciliation programmes in conflict and post-conflict societies.

GRAHAM FULLER A career officer in the U.S. intelligence services, Mr. Fuller is one of the world's leading experts on political Islam and a noted author.

ROBERT MALLEY Former Special Assistant to President Clinton for Arab-Israeli Affairs and Director for Near East and South Asian Affairs on the National Security Council staff; Currently Middle East and North Africa Program Director at the International Crisis Group.

ROBERT O. MULLER Founder and Chairman of the Board of Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, co-Founder of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, co-recipient of 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

ISMAIL PATEL Director of Friends of Al-Aqsa, Leicester, UK; He is a noted commentator on the status of the Muslim community in Great Britain.

GABRIELLE RIFKIND Human Security Consultant to the Oxford Research Group and Director of the Oxford Process; Group Analyst and specialist in conflict resolution; Founder of the Middle East Policy Initiative Forum (MEPIF), London.


DR. AZZAM TAMIMI Director of the Institute of Islamic Political Thought (IIPT), London; Former Director of the Islamic Movement Parliamentary Office, Amman, Jordan. 



Photo Courtesy: Cal Perry