



**THE ROLE OF THE PALESTINIAN
CENTER FOR MICROPROJECTS DEVELOPMENT " PCMD"
IN SUPPORTING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN JERUSALEM**

***PAPER PRESENTED TO THE CONFERENCE
"EDUCATION, TRAINING & CO-OPERATION
EXCHANGES & PROJECTS WITH PALESTINE"***

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BY

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Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen.

In the name of the Palestinian people and on behalf of Mr. Faisal Husseini, Member of the Executive Committee of PLO in-charge of the Jerusalem File, and the president of the Arab Studies Society in Jerusalem, I would like to express my deep thanks and gratitude for inviting me to attend this important and respected conference on "*Education, Training and Co-operation: exchanges and projects with Palestine* "

For Palestinians, the road to peace has not been an easy one but rather a painful adjustment to possible realities and new situations. Peace for the Palestinian people can only be fully achieved when they regain and exercise their full rights and sovereignty over their own land. This will only happen when all issues pertaining to peace process are resolved.

Peace, therefore, can be maintained and strengthened when the Palestinian people are given the chance to run and manage their own lives and affairs in a manner that is conducive to the development and progress of their own state. A prerequisite for such development is the presence of an atmosphere of peace and freedom that follow their potentials to develop peacefully.

Racist Israeli policies continued to operate in Occupied Jerusalem. Examples of problems that Occupied Jerusalem and its Palestinian residents face include the following:

- checkpoints around Jerusalem prevent Palestinian from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from entering the City even for prayers and visiting holy sites.
- Confiscation of hundreds of acres of lands for building new illegal settlements or expanding existing ones.
- The housing problem in Jerusalem deteriorated and reached an alarming level as a result of Israeli policies and restrictions that limit building areas owned by Palestinians at a time when the Palestinian population is expanding.
- The unfair taxation system imposed on Palestinian residents and institutions in Jerusalem remained in effect. Poor and underdeveloped Palestinian neighborhoods continued to pay same amount of property taxes as high as developed modern Jewish neighborhoods in West Jerusalem. In return, development, welfare, and municipal services available for the Palestinian population in East Jerusalem remain extremely limited.
- Palestinian Jerusalemites continued to suffer from the arbitrary and discriminatory Israeli policy of the withdrawing their identity cards and denying them the right of residency in Jerusalem if they live, even temporarily, outside the borders of Jerusalem.
- Family reunification is another serious problem that Palestinian Jerusalemites face. To be able to live in Jerusalem, you must hold Jerusalem ID. Spouses, children or relatives of Jerusalemites have to apply for family reunification if they are to live in the City. Family reunification is becoming an impossible task.

Development in East Jerusalem has significantly been prevented by the Israeli practices since 1967. The position of the International Community, including the European Union, regarding East Jerusalem, has clearly been made and is based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 which considers East Jerusalem as an occupied Palestinian Territory.

Jerusalem is an important city for Muslims, Christian, and Jews alike. No one party should claim sovereignty over the city and ignore the rights of others. A political solution for the issue of Jerusalem is feasible only when the rights of all concerned can be safeguarded. Jerusalem can be the blazing sun of the Middle East and remain the symbol of hope, love, and cooperation. It can also become the black hole which swallows achievements of the peace process and be the source of instability, tension, and hostility. Unilateral action taken by Israel, such as the closure of Jerusalem, withdrawal of IDs taken from Palestinian Jerusalemites to force them out of Jerusalem, expansion of settlement activities in the city, and the opening of the tunnel in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, contradict with the signed agreements and will only escalate tension and make compromises more difficult. We believe that the ideal solution is for Jerusalem to be an open capital for two states with free access for all.

We Palestinians would like to see soon the day when Jerusalem so special to our hearts and dreams, to our history culture and civilization will become the warm sun of the Middle East. The symbol of progress, development spiritual enchantment and peaceful coexistence.

I would like now to introduce to you the center I am representing, the Palestinian Center for Micro Projects Development (PCMD)

PCMD was established with the support of EU in Jerusalem on the first of January 1995 headed by Mr. Faisal Husseine. The center aims at contributing to the social and economic development of the Palestinian society. PCMD has set its objective of supporting local development initiatives that respond to priority needs within the Palestinian community. Microprojects that put emphasis on the community participation, the developmental role of women, and have a positive impact on the social, economic, and environmental aspects of people's lives.

PCMD proved to be successful in its program; and has funded and supported since its establishment 150 projects of which 90 projects are in Jerusalem and the rest are in West Bank and Gaza Strip. Most of the projects were in education directly or indirectly including, training of teachers, establishing libraries, computer labs, renovation of schools, playgrounds, and science labs and awareness campaigns. In early 1997, the European Union signed another agreement with PCMD within its MEDA- Democracy program. The aim of the MEDA-Democracy program is to

contribute to the development and strengthening of the Palestinian civil society by supporting projects dealing with democracy and human rights.

At PCMD, we realize that a lot more support is needed to associations and NGOs in Jerusalem, as well as other areas, to respond to the needs of people. In order to achieve its goals, PCMD pursues objectivity, equal opportunity, professionalism, and efficiency. PCMD relies on the experience acquired in assessing, selecting, and processing projects for funding, monitoring and evaluating them. As a result, PCMD has acquired credibility for its work within a relatively short time.

We hope that other parties will follow the suit of the EU and the Swiss Government in helping Palestinian NGOs by providing assistance through PCMD. We are willing to work with them to serve our community, and to bring about changes for the better. But without their financial backing, we will not be able to perform our duties. We believe that PCMD can be the vehicle through which funding can be provided, and the mechanism needed at this crucial stage of Palestinian infrastructure building. Do not hesitate and let us all make a difference and create new facts on the ground on the path to peace, development, and stability.