



## Palestinian Municipalities have in the Past Caused the Failure of the "Villages' League" Scheme and were, and Still, the Protectors of the National Project

### **APLA Stresses not to Deal Directly with the Occupation State**

#### **Local Authorities will not Allow Anyone to think of considering them as a Substitute for the Legitimate and National Framework**

#### **Municipalities will not abdicate their Responsibilities within the Framework of Palestinian Legitimacy**

The Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) affirmed the commitment of all municipalities and village councils to the decisions of the Palestinian leadership to dissociate itself from all agreements signed with Israel and the United States of America, and that the Israeli entity is to assume responsibilities as an occupying state in accordance with the provisions of international law, which came in response to Israeli plans to annex and impose sovereignty over parts of the Palestinian state. APLA, including all the Palestinian local authorities, stresses its commitment not to engage with any Israeli party and any initiatives and/or political and/or economic solutions that seek to undermine the role of the Palestinian Authority. APLA affirms its commitment to the prudent decisions taken by the Palestinian leadership to protect our national project.

The decision of the Palestinian leadership to dissociate itself from all agreements with the occupying state and America is the first practical step towards achieving national independence and represents an important step towards the liberation of the occupying power and dependence on it. Submission to the occupier is a betrayal of the aspirations of our Palestinian people. Therefore, the Palestinian municipal and village councils will not accept any form of direct interaction with the occupation authorities or their instruments, nor will they be a tool to pass the plans aimed at undermining the aspirations of our people for freedom, independence and the establishment of an independent state with east Jerusalem as its capital.

Palestinian local authorities will remain an integral part of the Palestinian national structure, and will not allow anyone to think of considering them to be a substitute for the legitimate and national framework under which they belong. They will continue to shoulder their national responsibilities, continuing to struggle as they did when they brought on the failure of the "Villages' League" project in the 1970s and have been a protector of the PLO project and program over the past decades.

The next phase is sensitive and dangerous; its title is to maintain civil peace, and the struggle in it is, concurrently, both individual and collective. Every one of us must take responsibility for Palestine, so APLA calls on all citizens to give priority to the supreme national interest over any narrow interests and to respect the rule of law, in order to surround all the weak individuals who may depart from the national line in harmony with the plans of occupation to eat away our land and eliminate our cause. National immunity begins with the individual and then the group, so that we have a safe homeland from any targeting of our future and our aspirations for a free and independent living.

APLA, with all its authorities, has launched a broad international mobilization campaign with all partners and friends in the free world, in order to expose the occupation plans to annex parts of the Palestinian state and imposing coercive sovereignty over them, in flagrant contravention of all international laws and the human rights system; violated by the occupying state with organized daily terrorism, systematic killings, confiscation of land, demolition of homes, evacuation of population and daily arrests.





## APLA Executive Committee Meeting with the Prime Minister

**Shtayyeh: "Our Current Biggest Challenge is to prevent the Israeli Annexation"**

**Hadid: "We Started a Wide-Scale International Campaign to Expose the Occupation's Plans"**

Prime Minister Dr. Mohammad Shtayyeh stated: "We are undergoing one of the most difficult circumstances regarding our Palestinian case so far. We are facing an existential threat to our entire political project as a whole, and our current biggest challenge is to prevent the Israeli annexation of the Jordan Valley and areas of the Palestinian State". He stressed the importance of creating a state of harmony between the government and the local authorities, through revising all cases relevant to their work, which would eventually be in the best interest of the country and the citizen. This was stated during a meeting of the executive board of APLA at the Prime Minister's Office in Ramallah, with Dr. Shtayyeh, Minister of Local Government, Eng. Majdi Al-Saleh, and the president of APLA, Eng. Mousa Hadid.



Dr. Shtayyeh discussed with APLA a number of important issues; mainly seeking ways to address the obstacles facing local authorities, and looking for appropriate solutions to overcome them. He announced that the Ministry of Finance will disburse part of the dues to the local authorities on a monthly basis, thus advised them to draw up plans to conclude their due debts.

Dr. Shtayyeh appreciated the supporting position of APLA regarding the decisions of the Palestinian leadership by declaring that the local authorities utterly reject any form of communication with the occupying authorities and their apparatuses. He expressed his pleasure of the unprecedented effort local authorities have exerted in their rapid response to the unlimited needs that emerged in the wake of the declaration of a state of emergency after the spread of the "Corona" virus, while acting with utmost responsibility and national commitment to their citizens.

On his part, APLA's president, Eng. Mousa Hadid reiterated the position of local authorities and their commitment to the decisions of the Palestinian leadership, which came in response to the Israelis' plans, he said: "Local authorities will not allow anyone to think of them as being a substitute for the legitimate and national framework under which they belong, rather they will continue to assume their national responsibilities and roles, and will continue to struggle just as they did when they succeeded in dwindling the "Villages' League" project in the 1970s of the past century and were the protectors of the Palestine Liberation Organization project and program over the past decades." Eng. Hadid announced that APLA has launched a broad international campaign with all its partners and friends in the world, in order to expose the occupying authorities' plans of annexing parts of the Palestinian territories and imposing their coercive sovereignty over them.

Eng. Hadid also described the efforts of local authorities over the past months and captured their response to the needs of the Palestinian people since the beginning of the crisis. He stated: "Our local authorities have not failed to employ all their capabilities and equipment to support the ministries of competence, governors, medical teams and emergency committees despite the scarcity of potentials and growing needs." In this regard, Eng. Hadid highlighted the most prominent challenges and obstacles local authorities face.

The Executive Committee of APLA has called for the need to strengthen the powers of the Local Government Units which could be achieved through amending the law of local authorities, the law of the courts of local authorities and the law of Planning and Construction. Through this, local authorities will be ensured to be given greater capacity that would promote the implementation of rules and regulations. The executive committee also stressed the need to strengthen partnerships between all local authorities and the security apparatus in law enforcement.

The Executive committee also called for the need to look for a speedy solution, that includes scheduling all due debts owed by local authorities. In this regard, it was agreed to form a joint committee to be comprised of the Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Finance and the Palestinian Association of Local Authorities to study the due debts of local authorities and agree on a mechanism to schedule them on binding grounds for all parties.





#### **During APLA Executive Committee Meeting with the Minister of Local Government:**

#### **Local Authorities are Partners of the Leadership in facing the Annexation Plans**

APLA confirmed its commitment and the commitment of local authorities to the decisions of the Palestinian leadership in response to Israeli plans to annex and impose sovereignty over the Palestinian territories; this was during APLA Executive Committee meeting with His Excellency the Minister of Local Government Eng. Majdi Al-Saleh, with the participation of APLA President Eng. Musa Hadid, APLA Executive Committee members, Executive Director Eng. Abdallah Anati, Deputy of the Ministry of Local Government Dr. Tawfik al-Budairi and Advisor to the Minister Walid Abu Halawa. The Minister of Local Government Eng. Al-Saleh stressed the importance of the strategic partnership that brings together the Ministry of Local Government and APLA, saying that the Ministry of Local Government is a partner and representative of local authorities in the Palestinian government. He added, "You are the representative of the Palestinian people, and we count on you," pointing to the seriousness of the next phase at all levels, especially the political levels that will bring local authorities more complex responsibilities.

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The President of APLA, Eng. Musa Hadid, stressed that the next stage obliges us to strengthen the internal unity of "leadership, institutions and people", stressing the importance of preparing the grassroots to support official authorities, which begins through local authorities as the body closest to citizens. Mr. Hadid said, "The local authorities that were able to rebuild what was destroyed by the occupation within few years after the incursion of 2002 are able to be a real partner in the battle for resilience and construction."

APLA Executive Committee had held a meeting prior to the meeting with the Minister of Local Government in the presence of its full members. The Executive Committee issued a press statement during the meeting to confirm APLA's commitment to not engage with any Israeli entity, indicating the position of local authorities on any Israeli attempts to communicate directly with them.

APLA Executive Committee has formed a special committee to develop APLA's vision of the role of local authorities in managing this crisis in accordance with four main principles to ensure that the unified address of local authorities is APLA, the need to abide by the decisions of the Palestinian leadership, maintain the level of services provided to citizens, and open a direct and permanent channel of communication with the political level to be a point of contact with the local level.

The Executive Committee decided to launch a broad international mobilization campaign with all partners and friends in the world, in order to expose the occupation plans to annex parts of the Palestinian territories and imposing coercive sovereignty over them, in flagrant contravention of all international laws and the human rights system; violated by the occupying state, systematic killings, confiscation of land, house demolitions, evacuation of residents and daily arrests.





## "Covid-19" Virus Doubles the Work and responsibilities of the Local Authorities

As typically the case is with local authorities; i.e. Municipalities, Village Councils and Joint Service Councils in fulfilling their duties towards the citizens, they immediately responded to the President's decision and the directives of the Prime Minister. APLA contacted the different local authorities to check their readiness in handling the emergency state we are undergoing, and has conducted a quick survey to assess the needs of these authorities in order to enable them to respond effectively to the current situation and better plan for the post-emergency phase. APLA issued a position paper about the impact of the "Coronavirus" pandemic on Palestinian local authorities and how they dealt with this pandemic and the challenges they faced and their most important needs and requirements. APLA determined the priority interventions to be worked on in post-Coronavirus, most importantly:

1. providing emergency operational budgets for the local authorities. Allocate part of the public budget to local authorities in Palestine
2. Accelerate the development and activation of the transferal mechanism between the government and the local authorities, address problems associated to the debt accumulation of local authorities "net lending"
3. Provide support to Local Government Units, especially in the field of disaster management and response
4. Strive to find creative solutions to solve the solid waste and medical waste problems
5. Continue to amend the laws and legislations system that regulate the local government sector
6. To direct funding towards local economic development projects and partnership projects between the private sector and the local authorities
7. Develop the dependence on technological means: in the provision of services and communication between citizens and local authorities
8. Launch community outreach programs and awareness campaigns targeting key and priority issues related to the work of local authorities

APLA has monitored distinguished initiatives the local authorities had implemented since the beginning of the crisis, which showed that the local authorities were able to step in and handle this emerging situation with utmost responsibility and national commitment to their citizens; local authorities never ceased to offer all their capacities, potentials and equipment to support the relevant ministries, governors, medical teams and emergency committees, despite the shortage in resources and the growing needs.

Local authorities intensified the efforts to collect waste and preserve the public Hygiene, Sanitizing public areas and institutions, they played a leading role in providing assistance and support to citizens at various levels, and social responsibility was indeed on their agenda under this emergency situation through formation of the emergency and volunteer teams who providing Awareness Counselling and Support for Citizens, in addition to the resilience and challenge in the So – called Area "C".

As part of APLAs' plan to provide support and assistance to local authorities in order to better manage their work under the emergency phase and to ensure the continued delivery of basic services to citizens, a number of proposals regarding mechanism of action of local authorities have been presented to ensure the safety of all staffs working in the field, APLA has worked with the government to follow the local authorities' various needs, and has also coordinate with the donors to supply the Local Authorities with preventative equipment and materials to protect their front-line workers.

APLA also followed up the updates of the local authorities around the clock, disseminated the news as much as possible so as to shed light on the achievements and efforts of the teams working day and night for the well-being of our country and its citizen on the other hand. In the same context, APLA broadcasted several messages of support to the different local authorities through its intervallic and widely circulated media productions.







## APLA Signs Cooperation Agreement with its Lithuanian Counterpart

The Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) has concluded a cooperation agreement with its Lithuanian counterpart at APLA headquarters in Ramallah, aiming at strengthening cooperation between the two associations and consolidating partnerships between the Palestinian Local Authorities and their Lithuanian counterparts. APLA's President Eng. Mousa Hadid and the President of the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania (ALAL), Mr. Mindaugas Sinkevičius, signed the agreement in the presence of APLA's Executive Committee members, APLA Executive Director, Eng. Abdallah Anati, the Director of the Lithuanian Association, Ms. Roma Zakitin, and representatives and Mayors of the Lithuanian and Palestinian Local Authorities.

Under the agreement, the two associations shall promote the development of partnerships between Palestinian and Lithuanian Local Authorities in the fields of economy, culture, education, sports, development cooperation, improving public administration, environmental protection, climate change, urban development, energy management and regulations, community services, regulation of local transport and all other aspects of common interest to the two countries.



## APLA Holds an Official Visit to Tulkarem and Qalqilya Governorates

The Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) conducted an official visit to Tulkarem and Qalqilya governorates. In the presence of APLA's President Eng. Mousa Hadid, the Mayor of Northern Asira, Mr. Hazem Yassin – a member of the Administrative Committee, the Executive Director of APLA, Eng. Abdallah Anati, and APLA executive staff. Meetings were organized with Local Authorities of both governorates to learn more about their needs and to introduce them to the roles and activities of APLA in the preparation process of the General Assembly's meeting scheduled to be held in the second quarter of this year.

APLA's President Eng. Mousa Hadid stressed the need to maintain direct communication with the Local Authorities, particularly Village Councils, and the need to continue to empower them and strengthen their roles in providing the best services to citizens while improving their quality. Mayors of Local Authorities defined their needs and challenges that prevent them from undertaking their job to the fullest and expressed their hope in the role APLA shall fulfill in the present and future timeframe.

In this regard, Eng. Anati outlined the interventions related to working with Village Councils as set out in APLA's strategic plan, particularly the first strategic objective which explicates the organizational structure of APLA's executive office, including the special unit APLA is working on establishing. This unit is called the Technical and Legal Support Unit, which will increase communication and networking with all Village Councils in order for APLA to be able to perform its role properly. He also presented APLA's approaches relating to updating and developing rules, laws, and policies on local governance, including the report on mandates and capacities of Local Authorities, particularly Village Councils.







## APLA participates in the Central Conference of "Local Economic Development: Reality, Ambition and Determinants"

During his participation in the "Local Economic Development: "Reality, Ambition and Determinants" conference, APLA Executive Committee member Mayor of Qalqilya, Dr. Hashim Al Masri, reviewed the role of APLA in attaining local economic development through supporting the initiatives launched by the Local Government Units in the field of development, job creation, and capacity building of these Local Government Units to promote small-scale industries and start-ups in the local development strategies it adopts, while taking into account the local resources, needs and markets, and encouraging and facilitating partnerships between Local Government Units, Public Institutions, Private Sector, and Civil Society, and between these bodies and international partners.

Dr. Al-Masri confirmed that APLA is working on preparing, amending, reviewing and updating the various laws, policies, and regulations related to the Local Government sector and the process of Economic Development to develop and align them with the requirements of local economic development, thus creating a legislative and legal structure that regulates and supports the development process.



## APLA Holds the Second Meeting of the Palestinian City Managers Network

The Association of Palestinian Local Authorities convened a meeting of the Palestinian City Managers Network to discuss the Network's 2020 Action Plan and to approve some organizational aspects and matters of the Network's function.

APLA Executive Director Eng. Abdallah Anati opened the meeting with a detailed presentation on the 2020 Action Plan, the proposed "by-laws", the Network's Code of Ethics and the proposed translation project to be carried out in partnership with the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). The attendees discussed the mechanisms for organizing the work of the Network and the Code of Ethics governing its members. It was agreed that a special meeting would be held to decide on some of the issues raised during the Network meeting and to approve them after arriving to a consensus.







## APLA Executive Committee Conducts its Meeting

APLA affirmed its support for the Palestinian leadership in its rejection of the alleged "Deal of the Century". It avowed its stand by the leadership in its efforts to rebuff "the deal" and not to deal with it. APLA also renewed its commitment and the commitment of the Palestinian Local Authorities not to engage in any political or economic initiatives or solutions that shall undermine the rights and aspirations of our people to have their own independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

On another note, the Executive Committee endorsed the administrative report of APLA for the year 2019, last year's financial report and the report of the Financial Committee. The Executive Committee also approved the Association's budget for 2020, which was prepared to ensure the unremitting implementation of APLA's strategic plan focusing on the association's role in representing the Local Authorities and in continuing the joint efforts with the Ministry of Local Government and other partners in reviewing, amending, and developing a set of regulations and laws governing the work of the Local Authorities.

The Executive Committee also decided to start preparing for the meeting of APLA's General Assembly during the second quarter of this year and endorsed the preliminary program for the meeting, which included meetings of the Local Authorities in the different governorates. The Executive Committee stressed the need for all Local Authorities to have paid their due fees to APLA prior to the General Assembly's meeting.

The Executive Committee approved a number of programs and activities for the current year; notably the operational plans of the "Technical Hub" program that is being implemented in partnership and funded by GIZ, and an action plan for the translation into Arabic of the local government documents' projects that are available at the International City/ County Management Association – ICMA.

The Executive Committee has approved to initiate the development of a training program for Local Authorities on the localization and adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, and has approved the final version of the plan to establish and activate the Technical and Legal Support Unit for Local Authorities as a core department of APLA, which aims to provide various types of support the member Local Authorities. In addition, the Executive Committee has approved the draft plan for the preparation of APLA's Media Strategy, which is being developed in partnership with the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG).





## Launching Village Councils Technical hub to Exchange Expertise in the Central Region

APLA in partnership with GIZ's Local Governance Reform Program (LGRDP), has launched the Village Councils Hub to exchange expertise between village councils mayors in the central area of the West Bank. This aims at identifying topics of priority for Village Councils to exchange expertise on. Workshops will be implemented to exchange knowledge, including hosting experts on specific topics throughout the hub's operation in order to benefit Village Councils, exchange expertise and improve cooperation and networking between them.

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## APLA Launches Technical Hub for Village Councils in the Southern Region

APLA Vice president Mayor of Hebron, Mr. Tayseer Abu Sneh, launched the Village Councils Hub to exchange expertise between Local Authorities Mayors in the southern area of the West Bank by welcoming the participating Local Authorities. He explained the main role of the association, which strives to represent the Local Authorities while defending their collective interests in order to strengthen their powers and enable them to fulfill their roles and duties.

Executive Director of APLA, Eng. Abdallah Anati, clarified that this hub mainly targets Village Councils in the West Bank as a whole. However, a mechanism has been identified to work with these councils based on regions in the first phase in order to facilitate access to the maximum number of Village Councils. The hub was firstly launched in the north, then the center and today it's being launched in the south. Mr. Abdallah stressed the importance of maintaining direct communication between Village Councils and the necessity of continuing to empower them and promote their roles in the provision of the best services for the public, as well as improve the quality of such services.

