



## The Plan of the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities

### In the Reality of the Palestinian Leadership's Decisions to Dissociate Itself from all the Agreements Signed with Israel and the United States of America

#### A Brief History:

The establishment of municipalities in Palestine dates back to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Ottoman era. The Municipality of Jerusalem was established in 1863, the Municipality of Nablus in 1868, the Municipality of Haifa in 1873, and the Municipality of Nazareth in 1875. All under the edicts of the Sultan, until they were later regulated under the Municipalities Law of 1877.

It is clear that the municipal councils in Palestine at that time were performing much more functions than the municipalities in the subsequent periods, with municipalities carrying out work carried out currently by the public security services, civil status, education, health, agriculture, transportation, development and social welfare. This law at that time gave municipalities multifaceted executive powers and broad service functions.

In the Jordanian era, local government was modernized and reorganized through the Municipalities Law No. (17) of 1954 and the Municipalities Law No. (29) of 1955, but there was no qualitative shift from Ottoman laws.

Under the Israeli occupation, Jordanian laws were adopted mainly, but the totality of the mandatory military orders emptied these laws of the concept of local administration, turning them into a tool to promote the occupation of the land and the restriction of the Palestinian population, by withdrawing the powers of the councils of local authorities to the central authority, represented by military officers of the Israeli Ministry of Defense. Thus, turning local government into a tool for the extension of the central authority, and using it as a means of control.

Nevertheless, the role of Palestinian local authorities has emerged as an inclusive national framework (beyond their role as a local service provider) since 1976, when the national electoral blocs, which represented the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the legitimate and sole representative of the Palestinian people, won on all the councils of local authorities where the elections took place, at a time when the presence of the PLO on Palestinian territory was prohibited, thus embodying a national political and social reality as an active arm of the PLO. Since then, the councils of Palestinian local authorities have taken on a comprehensive development role for all aspects of life.

As a result of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian National Authority has assumed responsibility for local government since 1994. However, the continued Israeli occupation's procrastination in fulfilling the obligations of the Oslo Accords, retaining so-called areas C, the reoccupation of Palestinian communities and the construction of the apartheid wall have had the greatest impact on the performance of local authorities. Nevertheless, these authorities have proved that they were deep rooted and important, especially in local development, service provision and involvement in vital projects, which have earned them the ability to sustain, and this was reflected in the crises and blockades that targeted the



central authority, especially in 2002, where these authorities deservedly represented the central authority in the responsibilities of services, and social, regulatory, development and other responsibilities.

### **Background to the Plan:**

In May 2020, the Palestinian leadership announced its decision to dissociate itself from all agreements signed with Israel and the United States of America, and that the Israeli occupation assume its responsibilities as an occupying authority in accordance with the provisions of international law, a decision that was in response to U.S.-Israeli settlement plans to annex and impose sovereignty over parts of the Palestinian territories.

The Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) confirmed in the same month its commitment and the commitment of all municipalities and village councils to the prudent decisions taken by the Palestinian leadership to protect our national project, stressing APLA's commitment, and that of all local Palestinian authorities, not to engage with any Israeli entity, and any political and/or economic initiatives and solutions that seek to undermine the role of the Palestinian Authority and eat away its powers.

APLA stressed that the Palestinian local authorities will remain an integral part of the Palestinian national fabric, and will not allow anyone to think of being a substitute for the legitimate and national framework under which they belong, but will continue to shoulder their national responsibilities, continuing to struggle, as they did when they represented the PLO on Palestinian territory since 1976, and they brought on the failure of the "Villages' League" project in the 1970s, sponsored community affairs during the 2002 incursion and reoccupation of the West Bank and has been a protector of the PLO project and program over the past decades.

APLA believes that the next stage is sensitive and dangerous, the title of which is the maintenance of civil peace, and the struggle in it is individual and collective. Every citizen must assume his/her responsibility towards Palestine. APLA calls on all citizens to let supreme national interest prevails over any narrow interests, respect for the rule of law. National immunity begins with the individual and then the community, so that we may have a safe homeland from any targeting of our future and our aspirations for a free and independent life.

### **Basic Principles:**

1. Full commitment of APLA and local authorities to the positions and decisions of the Palestinian leadership.
2. APLA constitutes the unified address of Palestinian local authorities.
3. Maintaining the level of services provided to citizens.
4. The existence of a direct and permanent channel of communication between the level of local government represented by APLA and the political level.

### **Key Issues (Challenges):**

1. The blockade and restriction of the Palestinian National Authority by the Israeli occupation state and behind it, the United State and some of its associations, which



- will hinder the ability of the Palestinian National Authority to deliver its services to citizens of all places of their existence.
2. The financial blockade of the Palestinian Authority.
  3. Separation on land between Palestinian cities, villages, towns and refugee camps and the whereabouts of Palestinian citizens.
  4. Disrupting the ability of national institutions to provide basic services and needs to citizens.
  5. Violation of basic human rights: (right to self-determination and return of refugees, right of movement, right to property, right of housing, right to access and exploitation of natural resources).
  6. Violation of international conventions and covenants: the Geneva Convention regarding the consideration of East Jerusalem as the capital of the State of Palestine, violation of the right of return of Palestinian refugees, and violation of UN General Assembly resolutions to stop settlement.
  7. Committing war crimes of deportation and forced transfer within or outside the territory, in accordance with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
  8. Perpetuating colonialism and not granting independence to the colonized Palestinian people in accordance with international legitimacy.
  9. To enshrine the structure of racial discrimination against Palestinians on their national and ethnic background.

### **The Role of Palestinian Local Authorities:**

Local Authorities form the backbone of the public administration and basic services sector in Palestine and play an indispensable and essential role in building the Palestinian state, promoting and translating the Palestinian national project on the ground. Local government authorities are the first point of contact, often the focal point between communities and the Palestinian government. The law gave them responsibility for the provision of 27 basic services, including the provision and management of water, wastewater, solid waste and electricity services, street and city planning and the regulation of public markets. In addition, the law gave local authorities the power to take all precautions and measures to maintain public health and prevent spread of epidemics among people, and to taking precautions to cope with natural disasters and relief for the afflicted, all in cooperation and coordination with all relevant governmental and civil authorities.

It is certain that the Palestinian local authorities will be affected by the occupation plans aimed at grabbing the territory of the State of Palestine and annexing it to the occupying state. Palestinian local authorities stand, as the first meeting and contact point with citizens, in the position in charge for continuing to provide basic services to citizens, strengthening national and community immunity and holding on to the land, maintaining civil peace and the rule of law. As expected, the occupying power will seek to restrict citizens in various aspects of life, which will hinder the ability of local authorities to maintain and upgrade the level of services.



### The Components of the Plan:

1. The Palestinian leadership, through the Palestinian government, is the reference to the decisions and actions of local authorities. APLA is the collective body and representative of all Palestinian local authorities.
2. The existence of a unified Palestinian international political discourse that confronts the policy of imposing a fait accompli and the American-Israeli force, by arming itself with the force of international law and by resolutions of international legitimacy in support of the Palestinian position.
3. Unifying the home front and the national unity by setting economic and political objectives in order to get out of the current dual political and health crisis and its economic and social repercussions.
4. Local authorities are based on preserving the social fabric and civil peace, promoting the original values of the community, translating the concept of belonging to the homeland and the land and upholding it.
5. Local authorities are actively promoting and practicing the concept of integration with the community's spectrum and activities and political and social organizations led by these authorities. Partnering with the private sector in providing services, partnering with the non-governmental sector and civil society organizations to promote and empower the home front, and mobilize advocacy at the international level.
6. The formation of a unified legal committee whose tasks are to monitor and document violations that will result from annexation schemes, and to lobby and advocate in building legal cases to lodge at international courts.
7. Create projects that serve the agricultural and industrial productive sectors with the aim of providing jobs for those who have lost or would lose their jobs and seek self-sufficiency in Palestinian cities and villages.
8. Unifying efforts towards a boycott in all its economic and academic aspects and not only the political aspects of the Israeli side, supporting the Palestinian national product, and activating peaceful grassroots resistance.
9. Expanding the powers of local authorities and enabling them to provide services to citizens in all the borders of the territory of the State of Palestine and developing the environment necessary to activate the integration of local authorities in the neighboring areas. The central authority is to transfer and delegate to some of its functions and powers to local authorities in a disciplined and integrated manner. Providing the necessary budgets to local service delivery authorities on behalf of the central government. The provision of support from the security services, particularly the police, to enforce laws.

### The Plan's Activities and Mechanisms for Dealing with the Expected Israeli Actions:

1. Water:  
Israel will seek to reduce water rations for various Palestinian cities and towns and will send direct messages to local authorities regarding the payment of water bills directly to the Israeli side.  
Local authorities are obliged not to deal directly with the occupation in this file. Local authorities shall forward any correspondence or communication received from the occupation about water directly to the Palestinian Water Authority and the West Bank Water Department. Local authorities shall also provide all information about water



quantities and distribution schedules to citizens on a permanent basis, and to inform citizens of Israeli practices in this file.

In the long term, local authorities shall start to prepare their mechanisms and plans to expand water self-sufficiency, by increasing the number of rainwater collection wells among citizens, and serious thinking about going to wastewater treatment for irrigation.

2. Electricity:

As in the water file, electricity will be a means of pressure and blackmail from the Israeli occupation. The power supply to the territory of the State of Palestine will be reduced, and electricity may be cut off on some cities, villages and towns. Local authorities are obliged not to communicate directly with the occupation regarding electricity, and to forward any correspondence received directly to the Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority. APLA and the Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority shall develop a mechanism for processing the bills owed to the Israeli side.

3. Local Economy:

The public treasury and the treasury of the local authorities will be adversely affected by the current conditions, and the economic conditions of citizens will be negatively affected. Local authorities, in collaboration with chambers of commerce, employers and farmers' unions, are working on local plans (at the village, town and city level) based mainly on agricultural production with the aim of achieving self-sufficiency. Local authorities support the needs of farmers within the limits of their responsibilities and powers, the Palestinian government strengthens support for farmers, provides the requirements for the construction of farm roads in different areas and prepares to enter into a clash with the occupying power. This work shall be at the level of all the territories of the State of Palestine, which will create a state of engagement with the occupation in the matter of land control and resource management. This issue is at the heart of the conflict between the Palestinians and the occupying power, and the opening of an all-out front in various areas means strengthening our rights and cutting off the roads of the occupation to broaden its greed. The implementation of local economic development plans in the municipalities in partnership with the relevant authorities are also immediately initiated, and the targeting is extended to communities adjacent to municipalities.

4. Civil Peace and Social Fabric:

The occupation will ignite strife and problems in the various Palestinian areas, with the aim of creating chaos and insecurity and institutional chaos in Palestinian cities, villages, towns and refugee camps. Local authorities are the elected national institutions that reflect the will of citizens. National committees are will be formed under the umbrella of local authorities and with the participation of the community, with the aim of countering any attempts to provoke strife or conflict. Local authorities by virtue of their expression of the will of the citizens constitute a safety valve that will be the first and preferred refuge for citizens to deal with any events or actions that may provoke sedition among citizens. Local authorities are best able to fill any



administrative or security vacuum in the event of escalating events and can block the roads in front of any factional or partisan blocs that may appear on the scene as an actor in the management of the social file. Local authorities are fully partnering with the community's spectra and activities and political and social organizations and with the support and full partnership with the security agencies to form a cell or community safety network that works to create a national immunity starting with the individual and then the community through:

- a. Promoting authentic values in the community.
- b. Preserving the social fabric and civil peace,
- c. Emphasize on the concept of belonging to the homeland and the land, upholding it, and defending it.
- d. Individual and collective struggle and let supreme national interest prevail over any narrow interests.
- e. Respect the rule of law and face any encroachments by citizens on public property.
- f. Besieging, controlling and pursuing all the weak-spirited who may deviate from the national line, in harmony with the occupation's plans to grab our land and terminate our cause.

5. Exposing the Crimes and Practices of Occupation:

APLA is preparing a communication and public relations plan dedicated to exposing the practices of the occupation in this file and showing the occupation measures aimed at restricting citizens. This plan targets citizens in the territories of the State of Palestine, friends and partners from different countries of the world. APLA circulates the plan to local Palestinian authorities, providing them with the tools, information and messages needed to implement the plan. Local authorities are also developing and adapting APLA's plan to their reality. APLA shall send media messages of different content to all sister institutions and cities. Palestinian local authorities have a large network of international relations through partnership and twinning relations between Palestinian cities and their counterparts from around the world. The Palestinian government also provides APLA with information regarding Israeli practices and their consequences in order to be used in the process of communication with sister cities around the world.

APLA, in accordance with the priorities of local authorities and in coordination with the Ministry of Local Government, is also working to intensify the correspondence with all international donor institutions and bodies to raise funding for supporting infrastructure projects and local economic development projects.

6. Responsibilities and Powers:

The current phase puts all components of Palestinian society in the face of additional responsibilities, challenges and burdens. Local authorities will be the spearhead in providing service to citizens and facilitating their living conditions. Local authorities need more powers to be able to fulfil their duties towards citizens. APLA will work in cooperation with the Ministry of Local Government and other government institutions to conduct a rapid and comprehensive review and survey of the legal and administrative system governing the work of local authorities, particularly the Local Authorities Law No. 1 of 1997. A temporary expansion of the powers of local authorities (in partnership with local community groups and activities and political



and social organizations) is conducted to reach the closest limits to the area of powers of a neighboring local authority. New burdens and responsibilities require the ability of local authorities to respond promptly and directly within the legal framework governing their work. They also require work to complete any pending files or cases with the judiciary, and to speed up the judicial proceedings of local authorities to prevent any infringements or irregularities, whether they are aimed at the public right, or personal property.

7. Financial Stability of Local Authorities:

There is no doubt that the next phase will have negative financial implications for all institutions and members of the Palestinian society. Local authorities will be significantly affected financially, owing to lower revenues and increased expenses resulting from increased burdens, and the expected Israeli obstacles and practices that will target local authorities. The financial and administrative stability of local authorities is a key pillar for the continued provision of services to citizens. Local authorities are working to maximize their revenues and find additional sources of income. Work must be done immediately to complete the assigning of the power of the property tax collection to local authorities directly, and to start allocating part of the state budget directly to the local authorities. A clear mechanism shall be developed to calculate the allocations of each local authority and the mechanisms of its transfer and where to be spent.

8. Other Life Issues:

Local authorities are committed to the Palestinian leadership's decision to deal with the occupation. Local authorities are obliged not to deal directly with the occupation, and to forward any issues that may arise to the competent authorities of the Palestinian government, such as the issue of movement and transport of goods, health, medicine, etc.