Press Release

“Corridor for Peace and Prosperity”: The Middle East Peace and Japan’s role in confidence building measures

Workshops on
Palestinian-Japanese Relations:
Toward a Joint Vision for the Future

December 20 21-March 20222

A joint Palestinian-Japanese Working Group of academics and experts recommends policy changes to strengthen future Palestinian-Japanese relations with a special focus on reinforcing the resilience of Palestinians in East Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and the Jordan Valley

Ramallah, 28 March 2022: A joint Palestinian-Japanese Working Group formed by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research explored Palestinian-Japanese relations and made several policy recommendations to the two countries to strengthen their future relations. The group, see below for names and affiliation, which worked for four months and met in two online workshops, was made of 12 academics and experts, 6 from each side. The members engaged in a dialogue on the various facets of the relationship with the aim of proposing a joint vision on how to strengthen and advance that relationship in a manner that helps it meet the challenges of the future. This effort led to the publication of nine reports and working papers addressing various aspects of the current relationship, including one that summarized the findings and recommendations of the working group.

The dialogue took place in two online workshops. The goal of the dialogue has been to explore ways to strengthen the relationship between the two sides in the political and economic realms in order to expand the space for joint efforts to enhance Palestinian state building and promote progress toward ending the Israeli occupation and ensuring a future for the Palestinian people in
which they can enjoy sovereignty, security, dignity, and equality. It sought to search for ways to strengthen the Palestinian side and its public institutions through local, regional and Palestinian-Israeli efforts and initiatives. Finally, it aimed at searching for effective means of strengthening Palestinian society and economy and their socio-economic infrastructure through initiatives aimed at civil society and its scientific and technological environment, and at opening of doors for the private sector for greater exports.

The first workshop, which took place on 26 January 2022, started with the members’ assessment of the current conditions in the Middle East and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and their forecast for the future. It examined the objectives and goals of the Japanese assistance to the PA and asked if they should maintained. It also reviewed Japan’s diplomatic role in the conflict and asked if it should it be widened. Similarly, it assessed whether future relationship between Japan and Palestine should be re-organized and wondered if the current PA split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip affects Japan-PA relations. The group examined the hopes and reality of the “Corridor of Peace and Prosperity” initiative, which constitutes the core pillar of Japan’s role in its relationship with Palestine and Israel and wondered if that initiative should be expanded and strengthened. Finally, the group explored how Palestinians see Japan and its people and how the Palestinian media covers Japan, its policies and culture.

The second workshop, which took place on 2 March, focused on specific policy choices, exploring the pros and cons of recommendations that have been proposed by the members of the joint group. These recommendations address six packages of issues: (1) The debate around the two-state framework and the Palestinian search for equal rights; (2) Enhancing the resilience of East Jerusalemites; (3) Enhancing Gazan resilience; (4) Jordan Velley and "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity;” (5) Enhancing Japan-PA diplomatic relations; and finally, (6) enhancing cultural exchanges and people to people contacts.

**Policy conclusions**

The Second workshop concluded with the following policy statements:

1) Most members of the group shared the view that the two-state framework should be maintained and that equal rights for Palestinians should be advocated. The discussion highlighted variations in views regarding the implications of this position on the nature and purpose of Japan’s assistance to the PA. It is obvious that more work is needed on how to tailor aid projects so that they can help achieve the two goals together, Palestinian statehood and equal rights.

2) Reliance on Japanese NGOs working hand in hand with Palestinian civil society and NGOs is an effective tool to bypass Israeli restrictions on possible assistance to Palestinians in East Jerusalem. Recommended areas of focus include health, education, youth, culture, and legal aid.

3) The group favors greater Japanese investment in the Gaza Strip in areas that can strengthen the resilience of Gazans and confront the challenge of radicalization. Civil society and the
business community are seen as potential partners in development. Focus on training and IT is recommended. While being sensitive to West Bank-Gaza Strip relations, a regional dimension to Japan’s assistance is seen as potentially effective in providing sustainability of Japan’s developmental work in that area.

4) Japan’s Corridor of Peace and Prosperity initiative is seen as an effective development mechanism that has been successful in promoting economic investment in the Jordan Valley and thereby help the Palestinians protect that area against right wing annexationist trends in Israel. The continuation and strengthening of this initiative should be encouraged.

5) Upgrading Palestinian-Japanese diplomatic relations to the level of state-to-state, while desirable, is not seen as feasible due to Japan’s own reluctance to lead bold diplomatic initiatives at the international scene that are not within the consensus of its major allies, like the G7. In the meanwhile, Japan can and should take steps that could help the PA state building efforts.

6) The group agrees that enhancing the social and cultural relationship between the Palestinian and the Japanese people can be effective in addressing the lack of knowledge about each other. Exchange programs, particularly those that being journalists, intellectuals, and civil society leaders together and focus on visibility and media coverage represent a good approach to address this need. Youth-based cultural exchange programs and those that promote openness, critical thinking, and assumption of one’s own responsibility are also seen as effective people-to-people activities that can enhance young individuals’ psychological immune system and emotional resilience.

Members of the Joint Palestinian-Japanese Working Group:

**Palestinian participants**

1) **Mr. Mohammad Daraghmeh**, Asharq news bureau chief – Palestine; formerly with the
2) **Dr. Ali Jarbawi**, Birzeit University, Professor and director of Ibrahim Abu Lughod Institute Of International Studies, Birzeit University, formerly minister of planning and minister of higher education
4) **Dr. Abdel Nasir Makky**, formerly with JICA, worked at Birzeit and al Quds universities and currently supervise MA thesis on local government at Birzeit
5) **Associated Press**
6) **Mr. Omar Sha’ban**, founder and Director, Palthink, Gaza Strip
7) **Dr. Khalil Shikaki**, Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR) and professor of political science

**Japanese participants**

1) **Dr. SUZUKI, Hiroyuki**, Project Associate Professor, The University of Tokyo
2) **Dr. Aiko Nishikida**, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law Department of Political Science, Keio University
3) **Ms. Tomoko Ohji**, Editor & Senior Staff Writer, Mainichi newspaper
4) **Dr. Tateyama, Ryoji**, Professor Emeritus, National Defense Academy of Japan
5) **Mr. ABE Toshiya**, Chief Representative of JICA Palestine Office
List of reports/publications

Reports prepared for the first workshop:

1. Mohammad Daraghmeh, *Japan As Seen by the Palestinian Media: How the Palestinian Press and Social Media View Japanese Culture, Literature, Technology, Economy, and Palestinian-Japanese Relations*
   
   [https://pcpsr.org/en/node/875](https://pcpsr.org/en/node/875)
   [https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/891](https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/891)

2. Dr. Abdel Nasser Makky, *Strengthening Japan’s “Corridor for Peace and Prosperity” Initiative: Japan and the Jordan Valley*
   
   [https://pcpsr.org/en/node/886](https://pcpsr.org/en/node/886)
   [https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/892](https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/892)

3. PCPSR, *Japan in the Middle East, 2017-2021: The Palestinian-Israeli Peace Process and Palestinian-Japanese Relations (excerpts from Japan’s MOFA Bluebook)*
   

   
   [https://pcpsr.org/en/node/887](https://pcpsr.org/en/node/887)

5. Omar Sha’ban, *Japan’s Developmental Role in the Gaza Strip: The Constraints of the “Split” and the Promising Potential in Partnering with Civil Society and the Productive Sector*
   
   [https://pcpsr.org/en/node/888](https://pcpsr.org/en/node/888)
   [https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/894](https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/894)

   

Report prepared for the Second workshop:

7. Khalil Shikaki, *Japan and Palestine: Timeline of Main Developments and Turning Points in the last 50 years*
   
   [https://pcpsr.org/en/node/884](https://pcpsr.org/en/node/884)
   [https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/897](https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/897)

Reports on workshop’s proceedings:

   
   [https://pcpsr.org/en/node/885](https://pcpsr.org/en/node/885)
   [https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/895](https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/895)
   https://pcpsr.org/en/node/900
   https://pcpsr.org/ar/node/901

*Other Publications*

   https://pcpsr.org/en/node/890

*Documents provided by JICA:*

1. Government of Japan, *Japan’s assistance to the Palestinians*
   https://pcpsr.org/en/node/889
2. Government of Japan, *JAIP: Jericho Agro-Industrial Park*
   https://pcpsr.org/en/node/881