



*WORKSHOP II: Palestinian-
Japanese Relations, toward a Joint
Vision for the Future*

**Report on the
Presentations and
discussion of the
Second Workshop of
the Joint Palestinian-
Japanese Working
Group**

March 2022

Prepared by Khalil Shikaki

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PCPSR's Publications of the Joint Working Group on Palestinian-Japanese Working Group

Background Reports prepared for the first workshop

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**

Dr. Abdel Nasser Makky, **Strengthening Japan's "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" Initiative: Japan and the Jordan Valley**

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

PCPSR, **Official PA-PLO Positions on Japanese-Palestinian Relations: recent statements on the Palestinian-Israeli Peace Process and Palestinian-Japanese Relations**

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**

Khalil Shikaki, **Palestinian Public Perception of Japan: Report on Results of a Public Opinion Poll among Palestinians, December 2021**

Background Report prepared for the Second workshop

Khalil Shikaki, **Japan and Palestine: Timeline of Main Developments and Turning Points in the last 50 years**

Reports on workshop's proceedings

PCPSR, **Report on the Presentations and discussion of the First Workshop of the Joint Palestinian-Japanese Working Group, January 2022**

PCPSR, **Report on the Presentations and discussion of the Second Workshop of the Joint Palestinian-Japanese Working Group, March 2022**

Other Publications

The Future of the Middle East Peace Process: Policy Recommendations produced by the Middle East Study Group, Headed by Dr. Ryoji Tateyama, Professor Emeritus, National Defense Academy of Japan, Organized by The Japanese Institute of International Affairs

Government of Japan, **Japan's assistance to the Palestinians**

Government of Japan, **JAIP: Jericho Agro-Industrial Park**

Report on the Presentations and discussion of the Second Workshop of the Joint Palestinian-Japanese Working Group

The second workshop of the Palestinian-Japanese Joint Working Group was held via zoom on 2 March 2022 with the participation of all 12 members. Unlike the first workshop, this one was open to the public and 18 participants joined the session for a total of 30. The workshop discussed the following six recommendations:

(1) The two-state framework and the Palestinian search for equal rights: while maintaining and defending the framework itself, Japan and Palestine should jointly call for equal treatment for Palestinians and Israeli Jews under one law as the best means to avoid a future dominated by an apartheid regime. *Presented by Professor Ryoji Tateyama and Mr. Raja Khalidi.*

(2) Enhancing the resilience of East Jerusalemites: Given the growing irrelevance of the two-state framework and the considerable constraints imposed by Israel on assistance provided to the Palestinians, there might be an opportunity for a greater role for Japan in assisting East Jerusalem. Furthermore, given the importance placed by Japanese NGOs on protecting Palestinian human rights, it is essential to help empowering these NGOs in supporting the socio-economic wellbeing of East Jerusalemites by supporting Palestinian civil society organizations in the occupied city. Japan can enhance and utilize existing schemes that should be directed to focus on current needs in areas of health, education, technology, culture and the media. *Presented by Dr. Ali Jarbawi and Dr. Nishikida.*

(3) Enhancing Gazan resilience: Japan and the PA should shift economic cooperation in the Gaza Strip so that it would focus on assisting the productive private sector and civil society. Substantially this could entail a focus on trade relations, training of medical personnel, joint high tech ventures and cooperation, fishery, and agriculture. *Presented by Professor Suzuki and Mr. Omar Shaban*

(4) Jordan Valley and Corridor for Peace and Prosperity: As the Jordan Valley comes under the threat of Israeli annexation, JICA's developmental work in that area gains a geo-strategic and political importance. In this context, a renewal and unification of JICA's developmental work in the Jordan Valley's local government units and its work in the Jericho's Agro-Industrial Park would have the advantage of strengthening the Corridor initiative. For the PA and Japan, the initiative should treat the entire area as one single territorial unit and should define its goal in geo-strategic and political terms: to strengthen the capacity of the PA and the area residents to stay and invest in the area as the most effective means of deterring an Israeli annexation. *Presented by Mr. Abe and Dr. Abdel Nasser Makky*

(5) Enhancing Japan-PA diplomatic relations: Japan should begin a gradual process of upgrading its diplomatic relations with the PA to a higher level and enter into negotiation with it aiming at developing a timeline that ends with a Japanese diplomatic recognition of the state of Palestine. *Presented by Dr. Khalil Shikaki and Mr. Kohei Tsuji.*

(6) Enhancing Cultural Exchanges and people to people contacts: Work with the media, artists, museums, universities, and youth groups to strengthen knowledge of the other's culture while in the meanwhile help strengthen Palestinian youths' psychological immune system. *Presented by Mr. Mohammad Daraghme'h' and Ms. Ohji.*

These recommendations have been proposed by the members of the joint group in response to a call for such ideas, in the presentations and discussions of the first workshop, and in the background reports prepared by the members of the joint group. The recommendations were discussed one after the other in the order presented above. Two members of the group presented each recommendation before the floor was opened for discussion. Speakers were asked to restrict their presentations to 3 minutes. The presentation of each recommendations was followed by a discussion among the group members that lasted for 10 to 15 minutes before the group turned to the next recommendation.

It should be pointed out that some of the group members, such as **Professor Tateyama** and **Ms. Ohji**, have shared with the group detailed written suggestions. Others, such as **Dr. Makky** and **Mr. Shaban** have provided detailed suggestions in their own background reports and presentations regarding two specific Palestinian geo-strategic areas, the Jordan Valley and the Gaza Strip. During the first workshop, almost all members have identified areas in Palestinian-Japanese relations that are in need of enhancement: **Mr. Abe** emphasized the need to reach out to the Japanese youth while making greater efforts to raise visibility for Japanese assistance, connecting the Palestinian and Japanese people in IT and agricultural industries, and promoting tourism and cultural exchange; **Mr. Daraghme'h** addressed the media and cultural scene and the need for greater cultural exchanges; **Dr. Nishikida** argued for a greater role for Japanese NGOs ; **Mr. Khalidi** explored Japan's role in enhancing Palestinian resilience; **Dr. Suzuki** emphasized the role of civil society and people to people contacts; in order to advance Palestinian-Japanese cooperation, **Dr. Jarbawi** argued for a dialogue on how to make that cooperation a direct bi-lateral Palestinian-Japanese cooperation without Israeli involvement and prior involvement and on how can make it more concentrated and efficient, spent where it is truly needed and can make a difference; while reminding us of the US role in shaping Palestinian-Japanese relations and the current lack of attention to the conflict, **Mr. Tsuji** argued that it would be useful for continued Japanese assistance if the aid is made more visible, with investment going to the high tech sector and that the Palestinians should directly reach out to the Japanese public; and **Dr. Shikaki** stressed the importance of strengthening the PA by upgrading Palestinian-Japanese diplomatic relationship.

The following summary describes the presentations and the discussion regarding each of the recommendations:

(1) The two-state framework and the Palestinian search for equal rights

Professor Ryoji Tateyama:

While it is true that the prospect for the two-state solution has been seriously eroded and the idea might no longer be feasible, it is necessary to maintain that framework for three reasons. First, it provides Japan and other donors with a legal and institutional structure to continue the assistance to the Palestinians. Second, Japan and the international community has supported this solution for a long time, and if it is disregarded, there are no other viable alternatives at this time. Third,

in 2012 the UNGA issued its resolution recognizing Palestine as an observer state, based on the two-state solution, thus providing it with the means to join international orgs such as ICC. Therefore, it is necessary to keep the hope of Palestinians in the future. In the meanwhile, Japan should also support equal rights for the Palestinians.

Mr. Raja Khalidi:

I do not disagree with the need to maintain the two-state framework, but we should also recognize that we have not moved in the past 30 years in that direction. It is the right solution to the conflict. However, Israel does not agree with this conclusion. But economic and social rights of the Palestinians are denied or subject to discrimination by Israel. Israel denies the national and all the other rights. Therefore, equal rights does not come at the expense of the national right and the two-state solution which we do not want to abandon. Japan should provide support without the linkage to that framework. Japan's support based on a rights-based approach is not a threat to anybody including Israel.

Discussion:

Khalil Shikaki: the reports on the system of apartheid need to be taken into account by the PA and Japan and to translate its implication into a focus on equal rights but without abandoning the two-state framework. The reality on the ground demands recognition. Japan and the PA should ask Israel to choose between two states or equal rights.

Mr. Kohei Tsuji: It might be politically difficult for Japan to continue to provide support based on a premise other than the two-state solution. One should explore how assistance might be different if the framework is the two states or equal rights.

Professor Tateyama: Japan and other donors can continue to support the Palestinians based on a premise other than the two-state solution. Japan can keep the conventional assistance based on the two-state solution but also recognize that the conflict can continue for a long time to come and therefore consider how to strengthen Palestinian resilience. As for seeking equal rights, unfortunately, the Amnesty report on Apartheid was not widely reported by the Japanese media. The Japanese people should know the fact and the reality of occupation.

Dr. Makky: The reality on the ground demonstrate that the two-state solution is losing its chance for implementation. Therefore, Japan should consider reviewing its aid not just based on the two-state solution.

Raja Khalidi: the two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Japan can continue to support the Palestinians by prioritizing projects that emphasize rights and resilience. Jerusalem is a good example of an area for support where the priority of the people is rights, rather state, or peace building. Any assistance for rights and resilience ultimately helps to keep alive the dwindling prospects for Palestinian independence and sovereignty.

Conclusion:

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) Enhancing the resilience of East Jerusalemites:

Dr. Ali Jarbawi:

We are discussing a political issue, not technical or humanitarian. The two-state solution should not be used as a justification of the assistance. The international community is not pressing Israel to move toward the implementation of that solution. The international community should use the example of the Ukraine crisis to address its own double standards. Five areas of support for Jerusalemites: “Legal” support for NGOs supporting families wanting to stay in their homes in Jerusalem; Education for schools that implement curriculum other than the Israeli one need support; Health institutions in East Jerusalem; Restoration of religious and historical sites and homes; Support for the youth in cultural projects by supporting groups like Yabous, Housh al fann, and social institutions like Borj al Laqlaq. Ultimately there is a need for political support by pressuring Israel.

Dr. Aiko Nishikida

Jerusalem is a significantly political issue, and it became even more sensitive after the last clash early in the summer 2022. While taking clear sides to change status quo will be a high hurdle for the Japanese government, aid for East Jerusalem can be a strategic choice. By supporting Japanese NGOs who can assist the Palestinian community, it is possible to enhance their resilience against occupation. The support can be conducted under the title of human security and hinder Israel’s efforts to change the reality on the ground in Jerusalem. In this way, support of the Palestinian people can be achieved without directly provoking Israel. Japan can make assistance in the areas outlined by Ali Jarbawi.

Discussion:

Khalil Shikaki: Japan should not shy away from taking a clear political position regarding East Jerusalem. Political solidarity by Japanese civil society is also needed, for example by joining demonstrations in solidarity with the residents of al Shaikh Jarrah.

Dr. Nishikida: Japan joined UNGA resolution in 2017 denouncing Trump administration for recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. However, even in that occasion, the Japanese government was hesitant and needed coordination to decide the vote. While civil solidarity may be quite possible, it might be less likely that Japan would take a stronger political decision regarding Jerusalem.

Conclusion:

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) Enhancing Gazan resilience:

Professor Hiroyuki Suzuki:

Dr. Hiroyuki Suzuki:

There is not a single consensus in the Japanese society on how to deal with the Gaza Strip. However, the Japanese civil society has paid much attention on the situation in the Gaza Strip, which had led to active operation by Japanese NGOs. The Japanese government has been raising three diplomatic principles on the Middle Eastern peace: political dialogue, confidence building, and economic support for the Palestinians. When it comes to Gaza, the first point is almost neglected and the third earns much priority. Although Japanese NGOs have operated some projects in Gaza, there is still huge room where JICA can contribute. It would be also reasonable for the Japanese government to work with Egypt in a framework to support Gaza society just like Japan's work in the West Bank where cooperation with Jordan is essential. It is also desirable to encourage jobs that can be done though internet.

Mr. Omar Shaban:

Work with civil society in Gaza is critical because it is key player and highly instrumental in supporting the Palestinians under Hamas' control. There is a need for Japan to expand its investment. The IT area is one area that can be promising. The software business in particular is promising. Japan can contribute to the management of the reconstruction process which is highly needed and Japan can be instrumental by bringing its experience in this area by training or workshops in the Gaza Strip. Japan should be a pioneer in this area.

Discussion:

Khalil Shikaki: a greater Egyptian role in the Gaza Strip would be controversial as the PA would be concerned about Hamas's political economy would be strengthened. It should not lead to the marginalization of Gaza-PA relations.

Ms. Ohji: what can be done to discourage radicalization, particularly among the youth in the Gaza Strip? What can Japan do to help in this area?

Omar Shaban: Radicalization in Gaza is a serious threat as all external groups exploit poverty to recruit and radicalize the youth. We need to give people hope, not just jobs. We need to communicate with the youth to feel that the others are concerned and to increase the options available to them. JICA intervention can be highly useful

Conclusion:

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) Jordan Valley and Corridor for Peace and Prosperity:

Mr. Toshiya Abe

JICA has been pursuing economic and social development in this area. How to create an investment environment that encourages investors from Japan and East Asia. Need access to other businesses other than agroindustry. Such areas such as environment friendly, recycling, and high tech industries need to be encouraged. Palestinians have a responsibility to abide by international standards regarding greater awareness regarding SDGs and climate change or CO2 emission. Tourism is also another area in which JICA can cooperate.

Beyond government to government, there is a need to diversify the relationship between the two sides by bringing businesses and people together. Agree with keeping the same level of assistance in the Gaza Strip as it is in the West Bank.

Dr. Abdel Nasser Makky

The strategic importance of the Jordan valley should not be under estimated. Focus should be similar to our focus on Jerusalem.

How to deal with the Jordan Valley as one single territorial unit that should be supported by the PA and the government of Japan. The PA should take the initiative to form a higher council for the Jordan Valley to bring all local councils tied to the prime minister's office. The investment should focus on agriculture, education and health.

As for the JAIP, Israel is clearly not playing a constructive role. To the contrary, it is creating obstacles, especially with regard to the access road to the Jordan River. Japan and the PA should reconsider Israel's participation in the Corridor project.

Discussion:

Khalil Shikaki: The annexation threat should compel the PA and Japan to double their efforts to strengthen resilience in this area. The PA has little or no resources to invest in the Jordan Valley and contribution from Japan is therefore critical, as it has been a pioneer in placing a great importance on this area. The goal should indeed be to help strengthen ability of the residents and businesses to stay in the area.

Dr. Nishikida: Can the corridor project protect that area against the new threats to the Jordan Valley as well?

Dr. Makky: In response to a question from Dr. Nishikida, the Corridor project came at a time when the area was neglected. This Japanese work forced the PA to invest politically and financially in that area and the work attracted Palestinian businesses to come to the area. Other donors also wanted to invest in that area.

Khalil Shikaki: the current focus on the business is in need of expansion. We need to work with local councils and small businesses to strengthen their capacity to remain in the area and not be forced to leave the area. Needless to say, protecting the Jordan valley contributes to the protection of the two-state solution.

Professor Tateyama: Agree with the importance of the corridor initiative but in addition to those projects, Japan has implemented other projects such as those in refugee camps. There is a need to evaluate the impact of the other JICA projects in the Jordan valley that have been expanded to other West Bank and Gaza areas such as the improvement of living conditions in the refugee

camps.

Conclusion:

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) Enhancing Japan-PA diplomatic relations:

Dr. Khalil Shikaki

For many years, at least since 2000, the PA has asked for Japan's recognition of its statehood. Last statement came from PA foreign minister Riad Malki late last year. In February 2018, Nabil Shaath, said Japan had pledged to support the Palestinian right to create an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital during the latest talks between the two countries. Shaath affirmed that Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono is collecting signatures of Japanese parliamentarians to demand the government to recognize the State of Palestine. Since 2000, Japan announced its position that it will recognize a Palestinian state if one is created through negotiations. But it considers statehood as a unilateral step: which means it thinks Palestine should become a state only when and if Israel agrees to it. Regardless of which party was in power, Japan's position on statehood has not changed. Did that position help or hinder the goal of a two-state solution? Was that decision to tie recognition to an agreement helpful? No, it was not. It has been counterproductive. While Israel created facts on the ground in violation of international law, Japan did not act at the diplomatic level in its bilateral relations to promote the two-state solution. Imagine today, if the West and the international community were to say that Ukraine's independence is dependent on Russia's approval!!! Japan and the PA should agree on a timetable that ends with Japan's recognition of Palestine as a state. It should then give Israel a target date by which it would be required to engage the PA in serious negotiations to implement the two state solution and allow the creation of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state in implementation of international law.

Mr. Kohei Tsuji

On the question of the recognition of Palestine as a state, Japanese government tend to be lockstep with other G7 countries. This is the case concerning the Ukrainian crisis in terms of imposing sanctions against Russia. Therefore, it might not be feasible to expect the Japanese government to take its own initiative to recognize a Palestinian state especially given that the Biden administration is not prioritizing the Israeli-Palestinian issue.

In the meanwhile, here is what Japan can do to help. The goals should be to go beyond "Victim Mentality, find ways to bypass hurdles of the Israeli occupation, and aim at sustainability and self-running. In this regard, I have four policy recommendations for the Japanese and the Palestinian sides: (1) Encouraging entrepreneurs such as start-up incubation Center, establish capital fund to recruit and reward best ideas. (2) Building connections with the private sectors, for example in programming, gaming etc., and relying on online training courses. (3) Focus on Palestinian assets by recruiting the Palestinian Diaspora and importing business connections. (4)

Finally, there is a need for Japan to make such efforts and successes visible by showcasing best practice.

Discussion:

Mr. Abe: agree with Mr. Tsuji on the victimhood mentality. To change the mindset of the youth, the media has a great responsibility. The Palestinian media should show the Palestinian positive side and the Japanese media should also focus on the more positive image of Palestine. Palestinians should recognize they are a member of the international community and have responsibilities to confront the global agenda.

Conclusion:

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) Enhancing Cultural Exchanges and people-to-people contacts:

Mr. Mohammad Daraghmeh

Trend in the ME to turn to the East, Japan, China, Singapore for investment and politics. Japan has been supportive of the Palestinian economic and social developments. The media cover these activities. Recommend greater contacts between the two sides. They should be Japanese-Palestinians rather than with Palestinians and Israelis. Separate programs would be recommended to encourage Palestinians to participate. Teaming Palestinian and Japanese journalists who can be hosted in Palestine and in Japan to work together to report on each others.

The Representative Office can host prominent Japanese writers; Palestinian intellectuals are likely to seek to meet them at the Mahmoud Darwish center and it is likely to be widely covered and help introduce Japanese culture and literature to the Palestinians. Screening translated movies would also be helpful. The failure of the US approach could open doors to others to contribute. A Japanese effort at this time would help stir discussion.

Ms. Tomoko Ohji.

Our goal should be to enhance the Palestinian youths' immune system and thereby increase their psychological resilience. They have been exposed, as Mr. Shaban said to various pressures. We should seek to stimulate their sense of belonging to their community, to nurture their individual identity. Psychological research shows that a well-matured identity can serve as a springboard for fighting against social and economic challenges an individual may face in life. One successful example for this process, as Professor Tateyama has said, is the refugee camp improvement project, conducted by JICA, which offers not only visible / physical resources, but also opportunities to enhance identity and a sense of belonging for all youth within the framework of the community. By designing an infrastructure, a system, or service for the community to use on its own, young individuals can feel their voices are being heard and respected and allow themselves to reimagine their future in a practical and positive manner. Such a process may even help generate new business ideas and entrepreneurship. Japan should

therefore extend this type of project beyond refugee camps, and deploy it in other areas in Palestine, to strengthen their psychological immune system. This kind of project can be done in East Jerusalem using a different scheme and platform. The Wadi Hilweh information center, which is run by an NPO that receives grants from UNICEF and the Japanese government, is a good example, where such a project functions as a safety net to provide not only legal and physical supports for families suffering from occupation-related problems, but also role models that children can respect and identify with. As part of this project, a Palestinian man who learned Aikido (Japanese martial art) in Japan is teaching children how to harness this activity to personal growth, optimizing the confluence of hearts, minds, and physical energy. These kinds of projects should also be deployed in Gaza.

Discussion:

Saher (JICA, Gaza): My experience working for JICA has been that the key to success is stability. All other matters, including development, follow.

Conclusion:

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 bring 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.

The **Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research** explored Palestinian-Japanese relations by establishing a joint Palestinian-Japanese working group made up of experts and academics to engage 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 initiative sought to examine *Japan's role in the Middle the Middle East by focusing on Japanese-Palestinian Relation through a Joint Japanese-Palestinian second track policy workshops and consultation.*

The dialogue took place in two online workshops to discuss the current relationship and explore ideas and policies for the future. In addition, the effort included the preparation and publication of various background reports and working papers addressing some aspects of the current relationship. PCPSR also issued two reports summarizing the presentations and discussion of the two workshops as well as the recommendations of the second workshop.

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