

“People Without a Country”: Palestinians Seen ‘Stateless’ in Kushner’s Economic Plan: Analyst

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A senior author and analyst based in Sweden said Palestinians are regarded “as a people without a country” in the economic plan raised by US President Donald Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, in a recent conference in Bahrain.

“I have examined carefully the Jared Kushner/White House document Peace to Prosperity – The Economic Plan: A New Vision for the Palestinian People,” Hussein Askary said in an interview with Tasnim.

“The document refers to the ‘Palestinian people’, but there is no mention even once to the term ‘state’, nor ‘Palestinian Authority’. There is no mention of ‘Palestine’ (although this is easy to understand given who wrote it). So, the ‘Palestinian people’ here are regarded as a people without a country,” he stated.

Askary is an Iraqi-born Swedish citizen. He is the Southwest Asia Coordinator of the International Schiller Institute. Askary has worked as an economic and strategic analyst on Southwest Asia and North and East Africa for the Washington-based weekly magazine Executive Intelligence Review since 1996. He is the co-author of several books on the New Silk Road strategy and its impact on the world economy. His latest book-length special report “Extending the New Silk Road to West Asia and Africa” was published in November 2017. He has spoken on these matters in international conferences and seminars in Sweden, Denmark, Germany, France, Egypt, Sudan, Iran, Japan, and China. In 2018, he wrote an 80-page study on the reconstruction of Yemen and China’s Belt and Road Initiative.

The following is the full text of the interview:

Tasnim: Bahrain hosted the so-called “Peace to Prosperity” conference to discuss what the US has described as the economic part of President Donald Trump’s “deal of the century”, a plan which aims to consign the Palestinian cause to oblivion. The Palestinian leadership boycotted the meeting in Manama on June 25 and 26, leading critics to question the credibility of the event. In your opinion, what goals are the US and Israel pursuing by holding the conference? Would they reach their goals?

Askary: I have examined carefully the Jared Kushner/White House document “Peace to Prosperity – The Economic Plan: A New Vision for the Palestinian People.” If the reader of this proposal is an alien who has just landed from Mars and has no idea what has happened on this planet in the past 75 years, he or she might find some of the ideas useful; infrastructure, education, healthcare, manufacturing, agriculture, etc. But that is not the

reality. The document refers to the “Palestinian people”, but there is no mention even once to the term “state”, nor “Palestinian Authority”. There is no mention of “Palestine” (although this is easy to understand given who wrote it). So, the “Palestinian people” here are regarded as a people without a country. They just happen to inhabit an area called the West Bank and Gaza. The “Palestinian people”, whose pictures in this document are glowing with happiness and optimism, will be enjoying their lives under the benevolent shadow of the Israeli army’s guns. The term “occupation” is mentioned only to mean vocational practice, not military occupation. So, the whole thing is an unserious attempt to dilute and eliminate the Palestinian issue. The danger is that President Donald Trump and many Americans and Europeans might think this is a great offer.

If you look at the “financing” part of this proposal, it shows clearly that the authors never have in mind a Palestinian government or state. “Capital raised through this international effort will be placed into a new fund administered by an established multilateral development bank,” the document says. It is a “fund” which will be created through donations by mainly the US and the (Persian) Gulf countries, like all other failed donation operations in Bosnia, Lebanon, Afghanistan, etc. And, it will be administered not by the representatives of the “Palestinian people” but by a foreign agency (most probably the World Bank). This means no sovereignty and no independence for the “Palestinian people”.

Tasnim: Some analysts say that the Trump administration’s focus on an economic plan, led by his son-in-law Jared Kushner, is a strategic mistake that could stymie the peace negotiations even before they begin. What is your assessment of the US approach to the conflict and the future of the plan? Is it practical at all?

Askary: I am a strong believer in the concept promoted by the late American political prisoner and economist Lyndon LaRouche that there could be no peace without economic development. But what is being presented here is intended to fail not to succeed. Remember that these are the same ideas proposed during the Oslo Peace process two decades ago. Kushner is presenting this plan in Bahrain in a conference downgraded to workshop because it was already boycotted by the Palestinian Authority and denounced by all Palestinian political groups. Kushner himself says that he is presenting this economic part of the “Deal of the Century” because the political part is so disputed. The Palestinians, and I agree with them, say this economic plan is blackmail to force them to accept the political part. But Kushner already knows what the Palestinian answer will be. If they refuse, then they will look like bigots who are biting the hand which is trying to feed their people. And if everything collapses and more violence is practiced against the Palestinian people by Benjamin Netanyahu’s extremist government, then the US could say that the Palestinians should blame no one but themselves. The British (the instigators of this whole problem from start) and the right-wing Israelis will stretch this conflict as far as it goes to keep the region unstable and prone to conflicts. Besides, the Likud extremists’ philosophy is that “Jordan is Palestine”, which means all Palestinians will probably wake up one morning to find themselves in Jordan. So, there is no intention, at least from the Israeli right wing, to reach peace.

According to my sources in the US, Trump personally might not harbor similar ideology like the Likud or Zionist lobby, but he has accepted the Likud regime uncritically and listens to people like billionaire Sheldon Adelson on how to deal with the Middle East. For the moment, he is focused on Iran where he is surrounded by war hawks like John Bolton and Mike Pompeo who preach the whole Netanyahu’s line that ‘Iran is the source of terrorism in

the region’.

I am optimistic, though, that if a genuine dialog between Trump and Russia’s President Vladimir Putin and China’s Xi Jinping takes place soon (on the sidelines of the coming G-20 Summit), it can bring some rationality to the situation, because the whole world can be affected by a large military conflict in the Persian Gulf. This will affect the Palestinian issue too.

Tasnim: Last Friday, Israeli forces once again opened fire on Palestinians taking part in the peaceful “Great March of Return” protests, along the separation fence between the besieged Gaza Strip and occupied territories, injuring at least 79 peaceful protesters. According to media reports, more than 270 people, including 52 children, have been killed since the demonstrations began in March 2018. Most of the dead and the thousands wounded were unarmed civilians against whom Israel was using excessive force. Why has the international community, particularly the Western mainstream media, made a muted response to the Tel Aviv regime’s crimes against Palestinians so far?

Askary: There are two reasons for this indifference in the Western mainstream media to the suffering of the Palestinian people at the hands of the Israeli army: 1. They are busy, upon orders of the political and economic forces that own them, demonizing Russia, China and their allies, like Iran and Syria, and whoever in the West would dare to show friendliness or promote closer and friendly relations with Russia and China. The Transatlantic imperial forces are upset because their system of control over the world economy is collapsing, and that of Russia, China, and their allies and friends is thriving along the New Silk Road. 2. Many of the large media outlets are owned or controlled by powerful economic interests that are friendly to or are part of the so-called Zionist lobby, who attempt to suppress any information about the suffering of the Palestinian people or Yemen for example.

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