

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

BROOKINGS DOHA CENTER

REVIVING THE STALLED RECONSTRUCTION OF GAZA

Doha, Qatar

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING

706 Duke Street, Suite 100

Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

PARTICIPANTS:

SULTAN BARAKAT, Moderator  
Director of Research  
Brookings Doha Center

OMAR SHABAN  
Director  
PalThink for Strategic Studies

NAGLAA ELHAG  
Head of Rehabilitation & International  
Development, Relief and International  
Development Department  
Qatar Red Crescent

\* \* \* \* \*

## P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. BARAKAT: Good evening, everyone. We are at the Brookings' Doha Center, and I have the honor of moderating today's policy debate on the issue of the reconstruction of Gaza.

As you know, since the war in July 2014, very little news is really coming out of what's going on in Gaza in terms of progress of reconstruction, and we are all aware of the fact that the population of Gaza is a very high density, now we're talking about 1.92 million people living in 362 square kilometer. That is the equivalent of squeezing five people per square meter to have to live together, assuming you can utilize the whole land within the Gaza Strip.

That, of course, is not the case, partly because Israel imposes a security zone which is roughly one kilometer wide along the border with the Gaza Strip, in addition to what they impose on the sea, which is something between 7 to 9 kilometers, where within that area, people are allowed to fish. Beyond that, nothing can happen.

Now, aside from the actual damage from the war, life as it is within that environment is difficult, is probably impossible to a lot of people, and could easily lead to yet another conflict if not addressed effectively and at the right time.

This is not speculation as much as a reflection on the near past. The war that we are dealing with, with its direct damage today, took place in 2014. Before that, there was an one week war in 2012, and before that, a 20 day war in 2008/2009.

The accumulated damage has led to the situation which I hope as a result of today we will be able to explore in much more detail and to understand exactly why is it despite the availability of the world as far as money donors are concerned, availability of the cash, to help the rebuilding of Gaza and to try to alleviate the human pain and suffering within the district, why things are not moving as well as they should.

To help us understand this very complex picture, we are really honored and pleased with

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

ourselves in a way that we were able to have Mr. Omar Shaban coming out from Gaza to join us today, and to share with us his insights.

Omar is the Founder and Director of PalThink, which I think stands for "Palestinian Think," which is known to us who are in the policy world as one of the most independent think tanks in Palestine, coming up with excellent policy recommendations, often trying to distance itself from all the factions, political factions within the Palestinian system.

He trained as a political economist, and he has founded many other civil society organizations in Palestine, including the Palestine Amnesty International Group, and the Asala Group, as well as various associations that encourage microfinance for women in particular, and he is also a member of the Institute of Good Governance.

So, really, we need to make the best out of this opportunity to have him with us here today, because this is a very unique opportunity.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

To help us also understand why it is difficult for international agents to progress reconstruction even when the cash is available, we also have with us a very distinguished speaker and practitioner, Mrs. Naglaa Elhag, from the Qatar Red Crescent Society, where she heads the Rehabilitation Department within the International Development Department.

Naglaa has very wide and long experiences in various conflict and disaster contexts around the world, and worked for the U.N. and various international NGOs before joining Red Crescent.

She holds an M.A. degree in politics and international development, and specializes in issues related to women and children education, food security, health, and other issues within the broader definition of "reconstruction" and "rehabilitation."

Thank you very much for both of you to join us today, and thank you to our audience to have made it. I know how the traffic is very difficult at this time of the day. We kept the door to the back open

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

for those who arrive late. I am very conscious that we only have 1.5 hours. By 7:00, we need to bring this to a conclusion.

The idea is we will start by giving Omar and Naglaa the opportunity to speak for about 7 to 10 minutes each, an opening statement, broadly defining the context, and then I'll come back with a couple of questions before we open it to the audience.

Tonight, we have very distinguished colleagues and friends in the audience who are here really because of their concern and their need to understand better what is going on in Gaza, and I think it would be fair to give them as much opportunity as possible.

So, with your permission, I'll start with Omar. If you can just give us the broader picture of what sort of progress is happening on the ground in terms of the reconstruction of Gaza.

MR. SHABAN: Good evening to you and to everybody. Let me express my happiness to be here. It's not easy to get out of Gaza and to be in Doha. I

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

hope I will meet your expectation and succeed to present the Gaza situation.

After almost two years of the Gaza reconstruction process, which was started in September, I can say that all there is from another war are there, the only thing that succeeded is just building some of the housing infrastructure. The coalition government did not work. We have a government that was formulated on June 2, 2014, after the reconciliation agreement, which was signed on the 23rd of April, the same year. Our government is not working in Gaza. We have Hamas de facto authority in Gaza give up the government, but on the ground, they are the ones who run the show.

The Israeli ceiling is still imposed, was added by an international (Inaudible) which delayed the flow of commodities into Gaza. According to the World Bank, what was published last week, only 40 percent of what has been committed in October 2014 was dispersed.

Just to give the audience just an idea, we

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING

706 Duke Street, Suite 100

Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190



are talking about 170,000 housing units that were damaged, 17,000 of them were totally damaged, they need total reconstruction, which is valued at \$780 million of losses in the housing sector, and we have \$58 million in electricity, \$34 million in water, \$266 million in agriculture, around \$150 million in economic, and around \$88 million in the municipal government, and of course, the health and schools.

So, there is little progress that could be justified by many reasons, one of them is lack of support, lack of financial support.

Israel prevented the flow of cement into Gaza two weeks ago. Up to last week, Gaza received half a million ton of cement, while the Gaza reconstruction was in need of 1.5 million tons of cement. So, almost two years to rebuild 40 percent of what has been destroyed, not to talk about the need that was created by normal growth, according to what was published in 2012, Gaza 2020, Gaza is in need of 100,000 housing units just to cope with the normal growth.

DOHA-2016/04/19

So, to add this to what was destroyed, there is a situation when it comes to the housing. Unemployment among youth, according to the World Bank that was issued a few months ago, one of the highest among the people, two-thirds of Gaza families are (Inaudible), and the crowd in the school is 50 per class, and there are social indicators about health, water, maternity, women, that are really very bad. We are going from bad to worse.

What I can say is very little progress, and in summary, the reconstruction process of the Palestinians and civil society tends to be a technical process, just talk about how many numbers, how many buildings, but they didn't achieve anything on the political and security issues.

Gaza reconstruction was supposed and was able to be a process of reconstruction of the whole political system. We have no democracy. Our political system expired in 2009. BLC, the parliament, is not working. The Governor Cuomo came to Gaza twice in the last two years. The Prime

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

Minister came to Gaza 30 hours each time, twice.

In Gaza, we feel that we are denied, we are declined. Yes, there is some attention here and there, but we live behind, and this is very dangerous for the youth, the youth will become more radical or indeed to be more radical.

We called for the international community to intervene at different levels, not only financially but politically, and bringing the Gaza issue again, and that is why I am very happy to be here at this seminar to highlight the Gaza issue. Thank you.

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much. It is a striking figure when you say only 40 percent of what's been placed, I assume, back, when that met in Egypt in August in 2014, only 40 percent has been dispersed to Gaza. That doesn't mean it's being spent or committed, it is just being shifted from one account into the other.

Now, I take it that is not uniform across the donors, so some donors would have done better than others. I have figures here, in Kuwait, and I don't

DOHA-2016/04/19

know if this is accurate or not, 0 percent has been dispersed at the moment. Saudi, 10 percent. Qatar, 15 percent, despite the very strong image that we have of Qatar being very active, and some Western donors have fulfilled greater percentages in terms of pledges.

So, with this, let me move to Naglaa. With whatever little money has been made available now, implementation is still difficult. Could you just highlight for us some of the main obstacles to operate within Gaza?

MS. ELHAG: Thank you, Sultan. Actually, when Sultan told me I have 7 minutes, I felt like he asked me to climb a mountain with high hills, 7 minutes for Gaza. I will try.

Well, I don't want to be negative, but I think if we really don't address the issue of Gaza at different levels, we will be sitting in the same setting in 2050, God forbid, but what we see from international agencies, very little or no progress, as Omar said, it is because simply we are not addressing

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

the problems. We are trying to find shortcuts.

We get the money, we get the cash, but we are confronted with blockage, lack of access, and destruction. We are actually in a sense rebuilding and destroying, so you keep rebuilding whatever we can with the little cash we have, but unfortunately what we do is being destroyed.

It is also coupled with lack of accountability. So, those who are responsible for destruction of what is being done, they are not held accountable, whether on the government level or on the civil society level, or on our counterparts on the ground.

It doesn't sound gloomy, but I think to address it properly we need to look at a political solution, how to end the blockade, access to us to help, the majority of our staff cannot even reach there, they are denied entry, and when we enter, we are limited to access with the Gaza population or civilians. That is one thing.

The second thing, whatever we bring there in

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

terms of material for reconstruction, it is very difficult in having it get into the right place because of all the procedures, and sometimes it is just the mood of the person we are dealing with.

I think we have failed the people in Gaza. We as the international community, we have failed them by not trying to find long-lasting solutions. We don't treat the wounds, we cover it with a bandage. Seven minutes?

MR. BARAKAT: No.

SPEAKER: I'll warn you, 3 minutes.

(Laughter)

MS. ELHAG: These are the things that we have been discussing on how to address it. It's not a matter of cash, but we need radical solutions. We need to facilitate the remove of the challenges we are facing, and that has to come on both sides. We need to put pressure from different levels, diplomatic conditionality, aid. If that does not happen, the blockage will remain.

All the countries that are putting money

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

into supporting the reconstruction of Gaza will go unnoticed, and right now there is a very low percentage, because the actual problem is not addressed. That's one thing.

We have a culture of impunity, and we know some people we are dealing with there, we have to deal with, and are interested in having the blockage and lack of access continue, and we don't question that, so allow me, Omar, to use the term, "warlords." We created warlords who are benefitting from this situation, and we are responsible for that as well, having impunity and not accountability.

The third thing, even let us say when we come back to access, now we have trouble of having people going through the border, the Rafah border, so they come to me and ask, well, we can't enter from the Israeli side, we want to enter from the Rafah border. Why Egypt is not opening the border? Is it about opening the border? No, again by changing the policy of Israel.

This is just a brief, and then we will see  
ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

how it goes.

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much. If I am allowed to press you a little bit on the Qatar Red Crescent.

MS. ELHAG: Yes.

MR. BARAKAT: It seems like since 2008, the Qatar Red Crescent has invested almost \$100 million.

MS. ELHAG: Yes, with no progress.

MR. BARAKAT: With little progress.

MS. ELHAG: Yes.

MR. BARAKAT: And that little progress is what led to the reconstruction of only 100 temporary housing units, is that right?

MS. ELHAG: Yes. We rebuilt and it was destroyed. So, we are in a circle.

MR. BARAKAT: Right, but now you are focusing on the health sector?

MS. ELHAG: We try. Actually, our main focus, because we can't do it all, we tried to do a little bit of food security, housing, shelter, but as I said, it is all within the challenge of



accessibility and the policy of reconstruction or the long-lasting reconstruction. We will continue to do this because we take it as a humanitarian burden.

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much. If we can switch a little bit towards where does the money actually go, despite the fact that it is only 40 percent of what is being pledged? What is the mechanism to gather that money and then disperse it into strategic reconstruction programs, et cetera? Who has control over this?

MR. SHABAN: In the last week of the war, they were thinking about the mechanism to reconstruct Gaza, and then Norway and Egypt has led the effort to help the donors, and the Israeli, as we know, were imposing a blockade in Gaza on Friday, June 14, 2007, after Hamas took over Gaza.

The international community was looking for a mechanism, and the U.N. came (Inaudible). We are very critical of this because the U.N. should not be a contractor. The U.N. developed a mechanism where they are monitoring every sack of cement. It is a very

sophisticated system. Just to make it easier for people to understand, all those in destroyed houses need to go to the Ministry, a list of their names.

These names are transmitted to the Israeli's through UNOPS, UNOPS is the commercial arm of the U.N., who take these names to the Israel's, the Israeli's approve it, this one is okay, this one is not okay, take 3 to 4 weeks, then these names are approved, given a coupon, and then the family go to a house, which is certified by the Israeli's.

They have a camera which is transmitting 24 hours, and this camera is connected to the electricity and connected to the generator, in case of electricity cuts, and also to the UBS. The generator may also not have fuel, so they have a mechanism.

This man goes there, man or woman, and takes what he deserves, let's say 20 ton of cement, and he takes this cement to build the house.

In the early days of the process when Mr. Ganjahmon came to Gaza on the 14th of October, just two days after Cairo, the Israeli company's visit was

DOHA-2016/04/19

600 ton of cement. It's very small, but it was like a big thing, that the U.N. wanted to show us they were bringing 600 tons. They stayed there for a couple of hours.

So, the U.N. internationalized the siege in Gaza. Now, the Israeli government can claim not any more siege in Gaza, it's the U.N., it's the GRM, Gaza reconstruction mechanism.

Instead of calling for the Palestinian political right, they become a body who monitored -- they have so much expertise in Gaza, driving with big cars, very big money, to monitor sacks of cement. You can imagine a car, \$200,000, with expertise, \$20,000 each, to monitor sacks of cement, and they make phone calls to their people.

Now, some of this cement is sold on the black market. We need to understand this mechanism, how it is implemented on the ground. This man's house was destroyed. He can take the ton of cement, \$150, but he can sell it on the spot for \$700, so he can make a profit on the spot, while under the Israeli

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

camera. These people are too poor, so they are in need of the cash much more.

So, the mechanism failed one week after, but nobody has said we are sorry. Now, we are in the middle between the Israeli and Egypt, Hamas, and the commercial community doesn't give money because some countries, we said we cannot disperse what we had agreed, because the government is working fully in Gaza and there is a truce for 10 years. People who have suffered, they don't have any stake in these conditions.

Going back to the question about donations, yes, there are some countries who did not do anything until now, waiting for this political condition to happen. Some countries like Kuwait, who promised to give \$200 million, it has been under the bed for the past couple of months, they have not dispersed any dollars. They are waiting for the list of names.

Unfortunately, there was some mistake either intentionally or not intentionally of these names.

The government of Kuwait - some of the people there

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

did not fit the criteria. The Qatar government, who promised \$1 million, they decided to sit and wait. They have the committee, Mr. Lament is there now in Gaza, signed a contract. I am not saying this because I'm here, but because some countries said we cannot let the people wait until the political condition happens.

We need to make a link between the humanitarian track and the political track. Some countries have said no, we should wait until President Abbas and his government come into Gaza. People found themselves in the middle of nowhere.

MR. BARAKAT: In terms of the role PA is playing in this, we talked earlier about one of the difficulties is the differences between the PA and Hamas, but they did come together in a joint government, and the agreement was signed.

You're saying that is not being effective? They are not really working as one unit?

MR. SHABAN: Simply speaking, they have an agreement from 2014, then the world erupted two weeks

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

later, and the coalition government did not have any time to work in Gaza. We as civil society, we have to be proud of that. There was no Hamas, there was no government, there was no presidency. Many civil society and health workers were killed during the war because they were trying to help people.

There are three Ministers from Gaza who joined the coalition government, now the government said Hamas did not allow us to work. That's what they said, but we don't ask what does it mean. (Speaking in Arab language) Hamas said okay, we give up government, we should integrate our 40,000 who were managing Gaza for the past 7 years, not all of them Hamas. By the end of the day, there are Palestinian citizens who were employed, and they were serving us in the past 8 years.

The coalition government said no, we cannot include you, we should ask those who are asked to sit at home for the past 9 years to work, and then we will select. Also, so the government is not working in Gaza, and the Hamas' movement, they are the ones who

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

are managing the daily lives of the people.

Some of the donors channel their money through the Minister of Finance. Even the reconstruction plan that was submitted to Cairo, it was not presented to us, never shared with us. The version of the Gaza reconstruction plan was revealed on the morning of the 12th of October 2014. We did not see it. The PA is interested to talk to the English speaking people, not us. We said as a civil society we should be part of the planning and the discussion.

We hear that Norway or Denmark has pledged \$10 million to the PA, but we didn't know how and where and what was spent.

Another problem is there is a link or a mix between the support, the donation to budget support, in Cairo, 48 percent of the budget was to Gaza, 52 was the budget for the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian Authority absorbed some of the overhead in managing Gaza. The funds become mixed. We don't know which is supposed to go to Gaza and which goes to

DOHA-2016/04/19

budget support. We don't have any access.

If you ask the Minister of Finance of the Palestinian Authority, you will not find enough information. We don't have access to monitor what's going on. I am not here to criticize, but for example, we ask the Minister of Finance to talk to us for the past two years, it never happened.

So, we are in a dark room, we are trying to understand what is going on. It is our daily lives. Of course, there is little effort going on. Some houses were built, but until now, according to the statement last week on the occasion of the donors' conference on the 15th of April, there were 17,000 families were homeless, around 17,000 individuals out of 23,000 who were displaced after the war. So, 23,000 to 17,000, around 7,000/8,000 were able to go back to their houses. Until now, 17,000 families are living in caravans or living in rented places, where they are given some allowances, but in the other sectors, agriculture, health, little effort.

MR. BARAKAT: Right. There has been a huge

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190



missed opportunity in terms of providing employment to the young people of Gaza. Construction is traditionally the sector that provides sort of wide and valid opportunities for employment.

You emphasized, Naglaa, in your opening statement, access as the problem. Now, from an Israeli perspective, they often speak about security, and the reason why cement is difficult to allow in is they fear it will be used in building tunnels and defense within Gaza and so on.

MS. ELHAG: Yes.

MR. BARAKAT: Now, they have destroyed all the tunnels, as far as we are aware, and Egypt flooded what has remained. Why do you think from the Egyptian perspective they still are restricting access of building materials and humanitarian items into Gaza, despite the fact that the physical demonstration of use of these materials has now stopped?

MS. ELHAG: It's interesting actually if you look at the progress, political progress inside Asia, or in Asia itself. You see there has been very much

DOHA-2016/04/19

linked to the opening of the border or allowing accessibility. This goes on and off with the Egyptians.

It is also the interest of the Egyptian government to maintain good diplomatic relations with Israel. We have been actually asking to allow some of the -- we have a program about medical studies. We are trying to bring a group of young doctors from Gaza to Katar and to Jordan.

We have approached -- we failed to get them through Gaza and Jerusalem to Jordan, and we have approached some of our contacts in Egypt to allow them, and simply we get the answer, it's out of our hands. It's linked to the security of the area, it is out of our hands.

It has to go -- and this is what I was discussing with Omar before the session, they have a special way of monitoring who enters -- actually, they decide who enters.

MR. BARAKAT: Who is "they?"

MS. ELHAG: The Israeli's. Even if it's

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

within the control of the Egyptian government, it is still for Israel to decide who enters. If you arrive at the border, it is still up to the Israeli's to decide if you are allowed to enter or not.

Actually, we had retained about 35 medical students coming to Qatar to join hospital for training that had to go back because they couldn't enter.

So, you can't separate it. It's a decision very much related to the political discourse inside Egypt, political development in Egypt, and the stance of the government.

MR. BARAKAT: Right. It seems to me it is in Israel's own security interests to release some of that -- to relieve the pressure of the Palestinians, because otherwise, they are pushing it for an explosion. From what I read, it seems the defense forces, the Israeli defense forces, they are much more pragmatic about this. They put forward much more practical solutions than the actual government. How do you see it?

MR. SHABAN: I'm not here to defend the  
ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

Israeli position but yes, there are some differences between the army and the politician. The army are more pragmatic because they pay the price, they don't want another war within Gaza. They don't love us, of course, but they know that Gaza cannot live as it is for another couple of months. So, they diffused the tension.

If you compare the situation indicated now with before the war, it is much better. For example, the average number of people who leave Gaza every day, around 1,200, compared to 200 people every day before the war. More trucks are coming into Gaza. There are now two crossing's, one in the Israeli/Palestinian --

MR. BARAKAT: In the corner.

MR. SHABAN: Yes, it is for the commodities. It has been expanded three times. The capacity was 200 trucks every day, and now it is 600 trucks every day. There is a crossing which is north between Gaza and Israel that is for the people and diplomats to come into Gaza. There is no border.

The other crossing's were closed, either

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

destroyed or closed. More product is coming in, and more people are allowed out, but there are still 1,500 or 1,500 after 1.9 million people, this is very little, and those allowed to be out, like myself, either have to be sick and seriously sick to be allowed to get out, or to be working with some international organization like myself. Because I had the permit, because I'm working as an advisor to some government in the reconciliation, or to be a businessman. I don't find 1,200 people every day, but anybody under 55 years old, it is extremely difficult for them to get out.

This is why it is crucial for the Palestinians. After the agreement on movement that was signed in 2005, where the European monitors -- this agreement between Israel, Egypt, and the Arabian Union, this agreement was allowed to operate.

When Hamas took over, Egypt didn't recognize Hamas government, so they opened the crossing in 2012 many days, 512,000 people were allowed in 2012. In 2015, last year, just 21 days, and this year, just 3

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

days, and average of 700 people every day out of 20,000 people who are on the waiting list.

Many of the Gaza people cannot go through Israel either because they are young or they don't have paper to be sponsored by somebody like myself and many others.

Egypt said I cannot open the crossing until Hamas give up the whole Gaza. Hamas said they cannot give up Rafah until the crossing's are integrated to the PA sector. The Arabian cannot come back to Rafah unless asked by the Israeli's.

Israel doesn't have a lot of presence in Rafah now, but they used to have a camera that had a transmission from Rafah to a room controlled, so they were able to see who was coming at that time.

I think the Israeli's are more flexible when it comes to Rafah because they opened it before. Hamas was there. I do believe as Naglaa said and as I said in the beginning, we need to look at the big picture, which is a political solution for Gaza. Otherwise, there will be another round of war next

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

month or next year.

We cannot find ourselves in this cycle of destruction, reconstruction. We need a political solution, the political situation should come through. The international community should support the reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah so we can restore Gaza, and then we could restore democracy because we need to refresh our political system. We need to let Gaza live as others and open the border.

To be in Gaza some 20 years ago was much better, in the Middle East. Gaza used to export so many good things. Many people don't understand all that. We used to export to Europe from Gaza. Gaza was extremely different. The siege made Gaza a humanitarian society. We used to be an economic, productive society.

MR. BARAKAT: If we were to take a broader regional view on what's going on, Egypt, obviously its position in relation to the Muslim Brotherhood is clear, the way it has reacted in Rafah in particular on the Egyptian side, destruction of the houses,

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

displacement of communities, et cetera, to create a security zone has also been a problem, and many observers think they missed the opportunity really of regenerating the economy through the reconstruction of Gaza, that you could have linked the two together in a more regional developmental program to offer opportunities to communities that are kind of isolated in their own way. They both are on the peripheries of what's happening in the centers.

At the same time, we have had this shift with the arrival of the new King in Saudi Arabia, King Salman, and he has kind of warmed up again or at least became more tolerant of the political movements.

Do you see this helping facilitate the reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah? In Doha, I understand they have already held two meetings, and they are talking about a third one. Are there signs that regionally governments and individuals are pushing for a reconciliation between the two?

MR. SHABAN: I don't want to exceed the 7 minutes, but I think I have exceeded it already. Just

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190



DOHA-2016/04/19

to make it short, there are more countries involved because they realize the it is not good, so Turkey, Qatar, Egypt, Israel, and the Palestine Authority, because they lost the peace track with Israel, so there are so many people -- sometimes they were playing in the kitchen but without making any food.

(Laughter) Gaza is too small but everybody is there.

I can tell you because I have some insight. There was progress on Hamas and Egypt and Hamas with the Palestine Authority. Hamas was in Egypt for the first time in the past 8 years. They were invited to come to Egypt. I think the Egyptians realized that to stabilize, they need to have some sort of understanding with Hamas. Hamas is also under pressure, and they realize they cannot be in bad shape with Egypt.

We as Palestinians from Gaza, I love Egypt, but we are Palestinian, we don't want to move to Sinai, it's Egypt, we want to be in Palestine. The problem is that the relation between Gaza and Egypt was seen as a security perspective. If you look at it

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

from developmental, Sinai could be a paradise, just for example.

We need to have a different perspective to that area. The Palestinians are good at agriculture. They can go into Sinai and help the people there.

I do believe there will be some progress, but Hamas and Egypt -- next week from Gaza to Egypt to continue discussion which is around some security issue, and I think there is a lot will be happening in Doha. I think President Abbas should come here to finalize some issues. Hamas is a key obstacle to that reconciliation.

Some international communities especially in Norway and Switzerland and some countries who are neutral, they have no problem in integrating Hamas. They were not Hamas. They were recruited by Hamas government, but they were not Hamas. They were Palestinians looking for jobs.

It's good for us, Palestinians, to bring them into the government, not to let them out, like what is happening now. What is happening now is the

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

whole reconstruction process is hovering, while Hamas and other factions are watching. It's not good. Let them bring them into the process where they can be part of constructive thinking, constructive work. They don't understand that, they believe Hamas is not good for our society, not good for the security, and we need to learn to live with each other. I don't share the Hamas' ideology, but they are part of my people, so we need to bring them in.

I think the key players like Turkey and others, they start to realize they have to have a more positive approach. I do expect some good news in the upcoming future.

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you. Last question to Naglaa before I open it to the audience. The international non-governmental organizations, who are the most active at the moment in Gaza? Do you think there is like the average representation that you find in any crisis or less engaged in Gaza compared to say Syria today in terms of focus?

MS. ELHAG: Well, I would say it's less,  
ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

relating again to the frustration of no stability, movement, security, restrictions. Again, we have other crises in other parts of the world that need attention. I do feel Hamas is not really a lost case but a hopeless case, politically, also. It will become an issue of just dragging and dragging for a long time.

What I see unfortunately from our side, if I may speak as "us," international agency, we are not equally engaging with all parties. I see some agencies have no contact policy with Hamas staff, because they may be associated with certain ideologies, so this is again enforcing --

MR. BARAKAT: They are present in Gaza, but they don't contact Hamas?

MS. ELHAG: Yes, even with the U.N., they have limited contact or no contact policy to some of the Hamas officials, which again it doesn't go parallel with the humanitarian principle.

Foreigners, it's very difficult to access as

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

foreigners, in particular, you are at the mercy of the person who is sitting at the borders, so we have to rely on local staff on the ground, and it's becoming an issue of management, which has also its own challenges.

Sometimes we feel, well, if we cannot access, then let us try a little bit from having big projects and rely on basic service and small support, which comes at the cost of the civilians there, but we have to weigh and balance, because after all, we are also accountable for the funds we get.

MR. BARAKAT: Great. Well, thank you, both. It has been a fantastic introduction into what is obviously a very complex situation. I will open now the floor for questions. I will take three questions at a time, and hopefully we will manage two or three rounds.

Please, if you can introduce yourself as you ask the question, and try and make it as concise as possible. Please?

QUESTIONER: Tom Brosnick, I am the Croatian  
ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

Ambassador in Doha. What I would be interested in to hear is what are the demographics in Gaza, and what are the trends, and what were the demographic movements over the last couple of years? Thanks.

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you. I'll take another one.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. I disagree with you when you say Egypt or Egyptian government, this military regime is controlling Egypt. This is the regime who is making all these heinous acts against Gaza. I think there is (Inaudible) among Abbas, Israel, and some other conspirators (Inaudible) we are making fish farms on 12 kilometers of water -- there was some talk about bar, 1,600 kilometers offered to Abbas (Inaudible). I don't know if you remember something like this.

The problem of Gaza will be solved only with the collapse of the military regime in Cairo, then the sufferings of Gaza will be mitigated. Thank you.

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you very much. We will take one more.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

QUESTIONER: My name is Eva Polano. I am the Ambassador of Sweden. I thank you very much for very interesting perspectives, but at the same time, so disappointing and so complex. I would just like to remind everybody that Sweden was the first EU country who recognized Palestine in October 2014, and now on the table, of course, together with the EU, we see the French initiative being discussed.

I think it is worth looking into, so I would like to hear your comments on that. Of course, with the lack of U.S. interest, U.S. focus, presence of President Obama, and we would like your perspectives on what we will have later on for Washington. I would like also to hear how you see who could be the partner here who could, as you said so rightly, Mr. Omar Shaban, look at the big picture and to have a really big and comprehensive political solution.

It was the French initiative that I was interested in and the U.S., lack of U.S. interest, and then I would also like to ask you about the Hamas relations with Egypt. It has been touched upon

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

already. There are signals that Hamas and Egypt are coming closer. I would like to ask you about how you see that a little bit more.

Of course, it is always interesting to hear about the Hamas and Fatah reconciliation, how you see that, because this is, of course, the cornerstone that we really need to see. Thank you.

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much. Naglaa, if you can start by addressing the issue of the demography in Gaza, and the way it has changed over the last few years.

MS. ELHAG: Thank you. Actually, again, the consequences of the situation when you see the movement from Gaza and onto Gaza has been restricted to a particular segment of the society. So, you see the youth there, under 35 years old, I think, they are not allowed to leave. I'm going to give a practical example of one of the projects we are doing there.

We are working with one of the hospitals, and mainly we have an agreement with the hospital administration to have a certain percentage of people

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190



DOHA-2016/04/19

coming from Gaza. The hospital was told by the Israeli military, because they demanded the list of people moving from Gaza for treatment, they wanted to check the age, were they under 35 years old or older, type of disease, how long they stay and are they staying there. It is all control of movement and trying to limit the movement of the young generation, again, they justify it by security.

What you see at the moment is a huge number of the population confined to a specific part of Gaza. They are not allowed to move. They are not allowed to leave. They are not allowed to even leave for family visit, for treatment, for whatever reason. They can apply for permit, sometimes it's granted, sometimes it is declined without specifying any reason for this.

Of course, this is all adding to the issue that the demography is the same, there is no change, although now Gaza is one of the highest densely populated part of Palestine. This is all reflected on the Israeli policy of blockades and restriction of access.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

MR. BARAKAT: Do you have an idea about the growth rate of the population in Gaza?

MS. ELHAG: Not figures.

MR. SHABAN: It is 4.7 percent, and the family members wait in Gaza, 6.7, one of the highest in the world. We have 5,000 newborns every month, 60,000 newborns every year. It will be at 1.1 in 2020, and Gaza will be 4 million people in 2050, if there is no other war.

MR. BARAKAT: All this siege is very counterproductive, you are keeping the young, they are reproducing more and more, there is nothing else to do.

MS. ELHAG: No electricity, so what can you do.

MR. BARAKAT: No electricity, no nothing. You are creating a bomb, really.

MR. SHABAN: A demographic bomb. I don't understand the question from the Ambassador to Croatia. Gaza is 1.1, as I said. Two-thirds of Gaza is refugees, like my family, from Israel. We have

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

eight refugee camps, one of this is Jabalia, which is 150,000 inhabitants in 7 kilometer square, very intense.

If you talk about two-thirds of Gaza are under 25 years old, and two-thirds of these people have never been outside, especially those who were born in the mid-1980s. I was lucky enough because I'm old, 52 years, so I was able to go to Israel and to see outside.

Can you imagine so many youth not interacting, they have their own image about you. The literacy rate in Gaza is one percent, we are close to Sweden. Our females, because we didn't have a political system, to go to the universities -- Syrian females used to be part of the political -- since 1920. We have prominent women who live -- of course, things are getting worse.

Gaza was open, I can tell you that some 15 years ago, there were some Israeli's, couple thousand that came to Gaza, stayed two days, enjoyed the fish, because we are good at making fish. I'm not

DOHA-2016/04/19

optimistic but I know how Gaza was good. Until now, we exported to the U.S. Our farmers are one of the best. This is why when they went to Sinai, they were helping them.

I'm not sure if I answered the question, but if you have any other questions. Should I go to the other?

MR. BARAKAT: Yes, on the issue of Egypt, I think we all understand in your remarks you were not addressing the Egyptian people but you were talking about the Egyptian regime, the government. We are in agreement on that.

Maybe a little bit more as to the change in policy. What would it take to get Egypt to change its policy towards Gaza today?

MR. SHABAN: I don't think the Egyptian people, the Egyptian government, are happy for the crisis the Gaza people live in. I'm not here to talk about a conspiracy. I'm just trying to talk about what I know. I think the Egyptians, like any other country, found themselves in the middle. They cannot

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

talk to Hamas, but at the same time, they know they need to open the crossing.

Of course, there were 1,200 tenants on a 15 kilometer link. I wrote something on this. It is amazing.

I think the Egyptians need to find a solution. Of course, they cannot open the crossing normally without the permission of the authority, and the authority makes use of Gaza to put on more conditions. I believe in legitimacy, but they have different and some wrong deal in Gaza, for the past 8 years. They want Hamas to squeeze or they are waiting for Hamas to collapse. Hamas will never collapse.

They need to look for a solution. I think the Egyptians want to open the crossing but they want political atmosphere where they can deal. Can you imagine the Egyptians here and Hamas here, and they don't talk to each other.

MR. BARAKAT: To follow up on her Excellency's question, from what you say, do you think Egypt is now warming up to Hamas a little bit or

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

accepting Hamas more, recognizing that it is part of society and you can't get rid of it?

MR. SHABAN: We appreciate very much the position of Sweden, there was a lot of recognition by the Palestinian people about your work and what you have done. I think they need to recognize the Palestine state after 20 years, 22 years of failure of peace talks. The policy should be challenged by you through official -- Oslo was in an agreement for five years, it was supposed to finish in mid-1999. We appreciate that very much, and we should encourage Greece, Italy, France to go there.

The French initiative, I met some French diplomats last week in Gaza, France has to do something because they have a special place in Palestine, related to Palestine. It is not Germany -- I am not here trying to discriminate between countries. France has something to play in the Mediterranean, but unfortunately, I think the French initiative is not supported enough by the U.S.

Our problem with the U.S. is they don't act

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

enough and they want others to act. This is where we need the American diplomats. I was in Brussels last week. I think the Europeans realize they need to act in a better way.

With regard to Egyptians, I wrote an article three years ago. I said to Hamas, this is what is going to happen. Hamas can hurt the Egyptians a lot in Sinai, because they know how to talk with them, they were there, they have some commercial relation. Sinai people were far away from Cairo. There are so many Palestinians inside Sinai who used to live there since 1967. Hamas can be -- this has been said many times, not by me, that we care about Egyptian security and we are more than happy to help. Which kind of help and to which degree I think is still under negotiation, but I do expect some progress.

The last question about Obama, we don't expect Obama to do something in the last year, and I am not here to make a prediction. I think the American administration decided to stay far away from the Palestinian. I think the Americans do not want to

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

intervene more, which is not good, and the Israeli to have a very right wing, they believe we can live with the Palestinian crisis, we don't need to solve it, and they believe that managing the problem is not solving it.

Somebody said to me, we are managing the problem. We are solving it through managing it. There is an unique opportunity for to have a new leadership, and at least we can focus on our own things, but I don't expect anything from the peace with Israel.

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you very much.

QUESTIONER: (Inaudible)

MR. BARAKAT: There has been heavy activity on that, but it is limited. Everybody claimed they wanted to help us, and some countries like Egypt, Egypt considered Gaza -- Turkey tried to help. Qatar is going to help. I think at the end of the day Egypt will be the one. The Egyptians allowed, just to be more optimistic, for Hamas to come to Gaza, for more consultation. At the end of the day, Egypt will be

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190



DOHA-2016/04/19

the one who negotiates an agreement. We as the Palestinians should not be part of the Arab division.

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you so much. I'll take another round of questions. Microphone.

QUESTIONER: (Inaudible) trained in Sweden. I was in Gaza, and I am handling all the projects on health in Gaza. I see the experience from there. I saw the population there. They are the most strong populations.

Do you think that the border and all these issues is making them weaker? No. They have become stronger. It is amazing that they built themselves from nothing. They have a good system in education, and a good system of health, although we have some focus on issues when we go and work at the rehabilitation hospitals, and this is a project there, I saw the donor, when they come to help them, they help them as they want, the donor, so they obligate them in a project that they don't need sometimes, but they cannot say no, because they are in demand always, so they said yes.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

I think we need people in Gaza to make a strategy of what is required for the population in Gaza, and make a link between the donors and obligate the donors to how to give such help there.

As I can see, we are talking about human rights and the populations, births, deaths, you forget there are so many disabled people there who are in need. Many of them are children, either become disabled from the health system that is not available there, so they are born with a disability, or from the war, in 2014, for example. These children, they try to do the best for them, but the donors, you need to obligate them.

I saw so many projects going to the easy service that can be implemented there, but nobody think about the complications, the complicated projects to be done in Gaza. This is a requirement between all of us who are here or maybe outside, they need to helped, to link all these donors to each other and make a strategy of how to help Gaza.

Nobody think about the cognitive disability,

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

what is the most complicated. This is are the issues. We tried to discuss with the Ministry of Health there, and we went to them several times. They need long-term care services to be available there. They are struggling with these things.

Education, they are good on education, but with reintegration, the children with disabilities in their homes, there is no such programs there for these children.

Please, I am a medical doctor, I specialize in rehab, and I think donors can do a lot of work. I discussed with the Swedish Ambassador that there is coming now a project between us and Sweden to help them, to improve services toward the children with disabilities. Coming soon.

MR. BARAKAT: I'll come back to you, but before that, I'll go to Naglaa. If you can just say a little bit about the donor driven agenda in Gaza, to what extent that is part of the problem today.

MS. ELHAG: Yes, thank you, we had the same discussion also with Hamad Medical Hospital.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

Actually, yes, you are right, and we agree, and I think we discussed it in another forum that it shouldn't be donor driven. It should be need driven. This is what we are trying to do.

We are trying to balance. Most of the funding we are having is coming from the Palestine case, whether we like it or not, it is politically motivated sometimes. We can't deny that. There are some government, some individuals, they have interests in supporting people in Gaza, and they come to us with donations, we want to do this, A, B, and C.

For accountability of that, we have to comply with the requests of the individual donors or government. What we are trying to do is invest in humans. We don't want to focus on bricks and sand. We want to invest in humans, and this is something we are also trying to do, invest in capacity building of medical workers and with the condition that they have to go back, they have to serve, they have to provide the service, with a time frame for this of at least 5 years, we need to see them going back home and working

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

in the same hospital. We are trying to do training between hospitals, between doctors, associations.

Yes, we agree on that, but it is a process. We cannot shift the paradigm of funding overnight, because as I said at the beginning, it is also related to political positioning.

MR. BARAKAT: Great, thank you so much.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. I wanted to address a question to Mr. Omar Shaban. I've been in Gaza in 1999 and 2000 as a priest there. I know the situation previously. I was astonished to see a new wall was to be built. The houses are destroyed. What is so urgent to be built -- I remember in Jabalia or other places, there is excellent cultural remains.

I know it is lack of democracy, lack of government presence, but it maintains the image of Gaza to the international community. Thank you very much.

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you. One other question in the corner there.

QUESTIONER: My name is Roth Garther. I am

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

working as a consultant for conflict sensitive programming, so Gaza is an interesting case. I am consulting with international development organizations.

Now, we have heard from several of you that the development of Gaza should be in the interest of security. I doubt that is in the mind of all people in the Israeli political system because to some extent the continuation of a security threat enables the government to be inactive. So, as long as this threat is there, we can't think about long-lasting political solutions.

You also mentioned what could influence the Israeli government to relieve the blockage of Gaza, and we are now talking about Turkey, about Sweden, the European Union, about Egypt, about Qatar, what about the civil society? You're representing the civil society. I know also within the Israeli society, there is a strong civil society that opposes the current political decisions, that might see a safe Gaza as a security benefit for the community.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

Now, what can the civil society do in order to influence the Israeli government? Are there any linkages between the Palestinian civil society and the Israeli civil society that you could build on?

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you very much. There was a third question here.

QUESTIONER: Justin Alexander.  
Historically, there was always a barrier to physical trade happening over Rafah because the Egyptian government was unwilling to take responsibility for Gaza, and they wanted the physical trade to go through Israel, back into disengagement, but in having truly free trade through Israel or by sea seems very remote, is there any chance in the context of these Hamas-Egypt talks Egypt would consider allowing trade imports to come through Rafah, not to be subject to trade control?

MR. BARAKAT: Great, thank you. Omar, if you could start.

MR. SHABAN: Thank you for what you have said, and I agree with you totally. When were you in

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

Gaza?

QUESTIONER: (Inaudible)

MR. SHABAN: Okay. Yes, there are so many places in Gaza. Gaza is one of the oldest cities on earth. There is one of the most beautiful churches in the world in Gaza, I have visited many, many times.

QUESTIONER: (Inaudible)

MR. SHABAN: Yes, excellent. We have lots of Palestinians who believe in Christianity. There was a delegate that came to Gaza three years ago, and they wanted to meet with the minority, and the Christians said we are not minorities, we are Palestinian. They are Palestinian, they are part of our struggle.

When it comes to the situation where people are poor, I hear about this, trying to build a big building in the middle of Gaza and they discovered this place was based on an old church, very close to the church.

Bringing attention to the people, to the children, to the democracy, I feel very bad about what

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190



DOHA-2016/04/19

has happened. We want reconciliation to be able to take care of other things, but unfortunately, there are some administrators who do not look at these things as important as we think. Of course, we could ask some international organizations while working in Gaza to make some consultation.

There is no civil society between Israel and Palestinians, it is not good, especially in Gaza. There was a little interaction. It is the question of what comes first. I can't talk to the Israeli's. We need to talk to them. You cannot pretend there is nothing there.

I agree with you that we need to talk in a different way. For example, I used to be the consultant for export from Gaza to Holland and Europe. There was some cooperation between Israeli business people and Palestinian business people and they went to the Supreme Court by themselves to open the crossing, to influence the Israeli government. At that time, Ehud Barak was the Prime Minister of Defense.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

I believe if business people talk to each other in a good way, they can influence the government because the economic interest should be empowered -- the problem that we are disconnected and the authorities don't give us enough room to be part of -- of course, we cannot make direct contact with the Israeli civil society, and civil society in Israel are in a more democratic position, they have better resources, they need to speak out. There are some Israeli organizations that deal with human rights, and they are helping, but we need more. It seems like the Israeli society has become more radical than before with the war, I think it was not against us, it is against the people. They don't want their people to see us.

When I go on my way to Jerusalem, are you from Gaza, yes, I'm from Gaza, really. They don't believe it, because of what happened 20 years ago. They need to find a way and they need to speak out. There is very little peace, if we want to understand how bad the situation is, we need to compare it to 20

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

years ago.

The competition between the Israeli political system some 15 years ago, it was about who was going to meet with the Palestinians. That was the competition. Some 10 years ago, the competition was who is going to be more tough on the Palestinians.

Now the competition between both, they will keep distance, so this very mentality -- we are there. They don't see this.

MR. BARAKAT: Thank you very much. I want to press you a little bit on the issue of the cultural heritage because I understand the pressures on you today, and clearly in terms of priorities and so on. To restrict development in sites that are important to you more than anybody else, more than the Israeli's, the history has got to be preserved within Gaza one way or the other.

I think we shouldn't deny that maybe there are private interests at play within Gaza. It's not an ideal society given the pressure that is on it and so on. It's complex why this is allowed to happen,

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

but hopefully the message will go out that these are important to all the people of Gaza for now and into the future.

With this, I'll bring it to a conclusion. I will not attempt to summarize all the very rich insights we have had, except to say that maybe there are a few points that are worth reflecting upon, and some of those came from our audience.

The need to work on a vision of the reconstruction and to clarify the priorities ideally in a way that allows you the ammunition to face the donors and also to encourage some donors to come forward with the rest of their commitments to Gaza.

Inclusiveness, and I was struck by the fact that some can operate in Gaza without having any contact with Hamas. It doesn't seem pragmatic.

MR. SHABAN: There are six American --

MS. ELHAG: Yes.

MR. BARAKAT: Inclusiveness, particularly in relation to the mechanism, I think the mechanism you described doesn't seem to be working particularly

DOHA-2016/04/19

well. If anything, it is bringing bad review to the United Nations as an impartial party. So it might be revisiting that whole mechanism and coming up with an alternative is something people can focus on. Of course, we heard a lot about the potential, the possible reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, so they can work towards a common objective of alleviating the suffering, including development in Gaza.

I think the point about the U.S. disinterest or lack of engagement at the moment, maybe this is an opportunity for you to come forward as an active partner, and potentially the Gaza people may give up at one stage and they may get on boats and sail across. I'm not encouraging that in any way.

(Laughter) I know the Israeli's won't allow the boats anyway. You can imagine the delayed response to Syria and what it led to, and now this is a situation that is very critical.

We chose this particular time to have this meeting because the summer is coming, and that's when

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

DOHA-2016/04/19

the nerves are even higher because of lack of electricity, sewer system, lack of water, heat, and I think the international community owe it to the people of Gaza and to the security of the region as a whole to be more active on this particular issue, particularly now given everyone is so focused on Daesh and what to do about Daesh, that they have forgotten the core issue that motivates a lot of the extremist movements in the region.

With that, I'd like to thank you all for your attendance. I must thank our colleagues who helped organize this, particularly Sharif, who is very good with all the details, and thank the interpreters who always do an excellent job, and finally, thank my two little boys who are sitting right at the back being very good, very quiet, for four hours this afternoon. (Laughter)

Thank you all very much. Please join us for a light dinner and drinks, and then we can have more time to talk to our speakers. Thank you so much.

\* \* \* \* \*

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

I, Carleton J. Anderson, III do hereby certify that the forgoing electronic file when originally transmitted was reduced to text at my direction; that said transcript is a true record of the proceedings therein referenced; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which these proceedings were taken; and, furthermore, that I am neither a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

Carleton J. Anderson, III

(Signature and Seal on File)

Notary Public in and for the Commonwealth of  
Virginia

Commission No. 351998

Expires: November 30, 2016

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190