

# The Palestine Network

## Draft Concept

### Introduction

Palestinians have known immigration and expatriatism since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, refugedom after the Nakba in 1948 and the Naksa in 1967, to the point that the Palestinians who live beyond the borders of Palestine are estimated to be twice as many as those in the homeland.

Despite the fact that the majority of those who left Palestine enjoyed little resources, they have been playing key-roles in the development of their host communities at many levels while remaining strongly connected to their homeland and kin.

The support (political, financial and other) that the expatriate Palestinians have given to their people back home has been an essential contributor to helping the people back home remain steadfast on their land despite the occupation, maintain acceptable living conditions, and to develop their society as they build their future democratic state. As a matter of fact, the ***Palestinian Liberation Organization, PLO*** – the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people – was established mostly by expatriate Palestinians.

The Palestinian expatriate communities played a major role in promoting the Palestinian cause internationally; leveraging international support for it, and through their activism under the banner of the PLO they established it as a Just Cause worldwide. Today, the vast majority of the world demands the end of Israeli occupation and the establishment of an independent democratic Palestine.

Yet, in this day and age of high technology and communications that turned the world into a global village, there lacks an effective communications system that allows Palestinians in the Diaspora the ability to voice their opinion to the leadership, listen to the leadership on current issues, work together at the level of their own communities, on the regional and international levels. Such an organized system would afford the Palestinians effective engagement as well as vertical and horizontal support channels in order to achieve our national goals and realize our people's vision of the Democratic Palestine.

Thus, the ***Palestine Network*** is conceived.

The ***Palestine Network*** is:

- Independent and non-partisan.
- Volunteer based; dependent on expatriate Palestinians who contribute their effort, knowledge, know-how and resources to support their national goals.
- Democratic and non-discriminatory; its leadership is elected.
- Dynamic and interactive; members will be connected to their chapters and to the whole network through a powerful yet user friendly online community.
- Modern and adaptive; suggested systems are based on successful current models of social networks.

- 100% Palestinian membership and leadership (please refer to the membership section), whereas non-Palestinians will have parallel structures within the network.

#### WHO IS BEHIND THIS IDEA?

The ***Palestine Network*** is the idea of Palestinian expatriates and members of the leadership who believe in the vision of a Democratic Palestine as established by the **Palestine National Charter** and who recognize the challenges faced by our people, as communicated by our expatriates from all over the world, and are active in resolving these challenges.

#### WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PLO?

The PLO, recognizing the need for all Palestinians to work together to achieve the **Palestine National Project**, is facilitating the realization of this project by committing its resources and empowering the ***Palestine Network*** with the mechanisms, tools and vehicles it needs to achieve its goals.

#### WHO RUNS THE NETWORK?

The ***Palestine Network*** is a democratic organization that once is organized will be able to run itself through a representative system that keeps decision making powers in the hands of its members. Through Palestinian chapters wherever there are Palestinian expatriate communities, members will be active on the local, regional and international levels. They will also elect their leadership bodies and establish an effective working relationship with the leadership of the Palestinian people as well as civil society organizations.

#### HOW AND WHEN WILL THIS NETWORK BE UP AND RUNNING?

The ***Palestine Network*** is being established in two phases as follows:

##### **I. Pre-Launch Phase:**

1. A Task Force was established of Dr. Rafiq Husseini, Dr. Ghassan Khatib, Mr. Issa Kassissieh and Mr. Ramzi Khoury as the initial committee to see to the realization of this project.
2. Several activities were conducted to establish the needs of the project and receive feedback from expatriates from all over the world.
3. The Task Force charged Ramzi Khoury to be the Executive Director of this project, and in turn he established a temporary office and a team of individuals as the pre-launch secretariat charged with implementing the pre-launch phase. A plan was designed based on the two phases, the first to be completed by end of 2009.
4. The pre-launch secretariat is currently:
  - a. Communicating the project to the expatriate communities to bring the interested individuals on board.

- b. Building the tools necessary to implement the project including a comprehensive online community hardware/software solution that will allow the network to communicate effectively.
- c. Writing the draft communications, by-laws, rules and regulations that will later be adjusted, passed and adopted by representatives of the network at large.
- d. Establishing a list of interested community leaders who want to build chapters of the network in their communities and who will be the founding members of the network.
- e. Setting up MODEL CHAPTERS in several regions of the world that will play the role of founding members and help launch the network.
- f. Organizing an international conference in Palestine to be held in January, 2010 where community representatives who wish to organize chapters in their communities will study, adjust and pass the charter, by-laws, rules and regulations of the network, set the policy of the network and elect a Higher Committee that will lead the Network through the secretariat. This conference is dubbed "The Founding Conference." The Higher Committee thereafter monitors and directs the secretariat through an online communications system and meets once every three months in order to resolve obstacles and make necessary decisions face-to-face.

## **II. Launch Phase:**

- 1. Conference members return to their communities and organize chapters based on the charter, by-laws, rules and regulations adopted at the conference.
- 2. The Secretariat implements the plans approved by the Higher Committee and the network becomes functional.
- 3. Programs are designed and implemented to achieve the goals of the network.
- 4. The Network is expanded.
- 5. The International Conference is held in January of 2011 representing the chapters organized in 2010 and because it is the first truly representative conference of the network membership all over the world it will be dubbed "the First International Conference" and thereafter will be held once every two years.

## Vision (Draft)

An independent democratic Palestinian State – for the Palestinian people – in accordance with the *Palestinian National Charter* which is the charter of *Palestine Liberation Organization - PLO*.

## Mission (Draft)

To create a platform that would bring together an active network of expatriate Palestinians from all over the world who adopt the *Palestinian National Charter*, and who wish to be actively engaged in ending the occupation and building the State of Palestine based on the values of democracy and human rights.

## Goals (Draft)

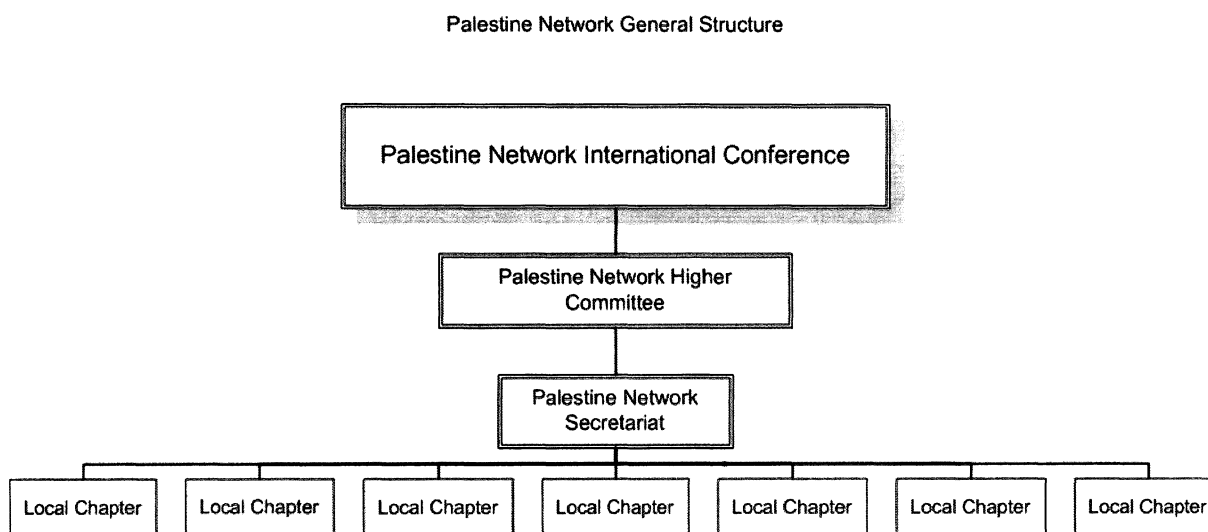
- I. To network, engage and activate the Palestinian communities in the Diaspora to contribute to ending the occupation and the realization of the *Palestinian National Project*.
- II. To contribute to building the Palestinian state through the transfer of knowledge, know-how, technology and capacity building.
- III. To create effective two-way interaction and cooperation channels between the Palestinian Diaspora and the Palestinian leadership in Palestine on the political, social, cultural, scientific and civil society levels.
- IV. To unify the diverse efforts of the Palestinian communities in the Diaspora towards achieving our national goals; for in unity we can achieve much more.
- V. To furnish the Palestinian expatriate communities with the tools, mechanisms, vehicles and materials needed for them to be effective in their own communities.
- VI. To maintain the connection between the Palestinian communities in the Diaspora and their societies back in Palestine.
- VII. To actively engage with the pro-Palestine groups and individuals to unify efforts and actions in the localities.
- VIII. To raise public awareness and clarify misconceptions about the Palestinian cause in these localities.

## Membership (Draft)

The *Palestine Network* is open to all Palestinians (whether born to a Palestinian father and/or mother, or a spouse of one) who share and accept the common goal and vision of establishing a democratic Palestinian state in accordance with the *Palestinian National Charter* which stipulates the principles of social justice of Palestinians regardless of race, religion, color or gender and is also based on the democratic system of government that is based on freedom to form parties and freedoms of expression and press.

## Structure (Draft)

The *Palestine Network* is based on the membership of individuals in chapters that are active in their localities led by an elected leadership through a full-time executive secretariat that manages the dynamic and interactive network and supports it at the chapter level. The network is empowered by an advanced "online community" communications system that supports vertical and horizontal communications within the network and which is designed to minimize obstacles and maximize productivity. Chapter leadership is elected to manage its functions in a manner that takes into account local reality and what is needed in that specific locality. The Structure of the organization is therefore as follows:



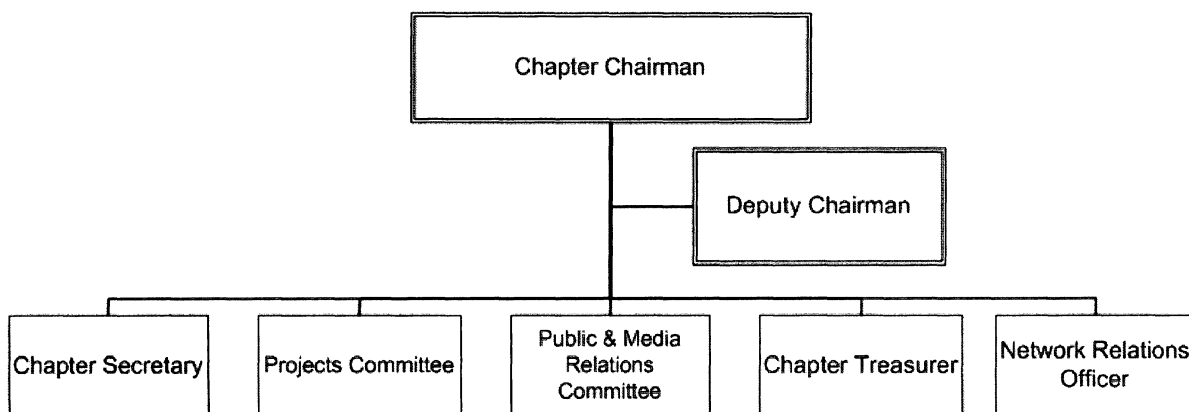
**The Palestine Network International Conference:** The most powerful body within the network representing the collective membership of the network through a democratic representative system. The conference is the source of all organizational legislation and is responsible to set mandatory policies through a democratic vote system. The initial conference will be dubbed the "Founding Conference" to be followed by the "First Conference" within a year and thereafter the Conference is held once every two years.

**The Higher Committee:** The leadership of the *Palestine Network* that is elected by the PNIC and charged to direct and monitor the work of the secretariat and ensure the implementation of the resolutions passed at the conference. In addition to setting the executive policies, the Higher Committee will undertake several other tasks including resolving conflicts within the network that the secretariat is involved in or cannot resolve through its mandate. The Higher Committee meets on a quarterly basis (once every three months) at the offices of the secretariat.

Meanwhile, and until the election of the first Higher Committee in the establishing conference, the *Palestine Network* is being run by a taskforce consisting of: the Palestinian Presidency, the Palestinian Government, and the PLO's Negotiations Affairs Department.

**The Secretariat:** The body of full time employees in the network charged with creating and then expanding it, managing it, supporting it and producing the projects and supporting mechanisms, tools and materials it needs to be effective. The secretariat launches and dismantles chapters and implements all other bylaws of the network and reports to the Higher Committee on all work done as well as seek its directives on vague issues at every meeting of the Higher Committee.

Palestine Network Chapter Executive Committee Structure



**Chapters:** Any 25 or more Palestinians living in a locality in the Diaspora and who adopt the *Palestinian National Charter* and are members of the network can apply to organize a chapter in that locality. Every chapter enjoys an elected "Executive Committee" that will manage it in accordance with the charter and bylaws of the *Palestine Network*. Chapters implement PN projects and may also design and implement their own projects designated to their own locality. Based on the model of international organizations of social networks such as Rotary Clubs or Kiwanis International, it is suggested that chapters meet in a hotel, restaurant, cafe or other venue of their choice on a specific hour and day of every week.

**Individual Members:** Any Palestinian in the Diaspora who adopts the *Palestinian National Charter* and accepts the vision and mission of the *Palestine Network* can become a member of the online community and engage at their own capacity within the Network. Individual members however are not represented at the conference and are encouraged to form a chapter along with other individual members in their locality.

**Friends of Palestine:** Each chapter is required to engage the non-Palestinians who support our cause, based on our vision and mission, and who live in the chapter's locality. Such supporters are

called *Friends of Palestine* and every *Palestine Network* chapter is encouraged to help organize a parallel body under the name "*Friends of Palestine chapter*" and which will work closely with the *Palestine Network* Chapter. Friends of Palestine chapters can join the online community and be active in all projects and programs of the network and will make use of the tools, mechanisms and materials produced by the *Palestine Network*. Friends of Palestine Chapters will be represented as observant members at the *Palestine Network International Conference* where they can voice their opinion, but not vote. Representatives of *The Friends of Palestine Network* will hold meetings on the sidelines of the *Palestine Network International Conference*.

### Suggested Preamble of the Palestine Network (Draft)

We the men and women of the *Palestine Network* adopt the charter of the *Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)*, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and commit to work together to liberate Palestine from occupation and build the state that our people aspire.

Therefore we believe that:

- The "Palestinian identity is a genuine, essential, and inherent characteristic; it is transmitted from parents to children and that any one born to a Palestinian father (*or mother or married to one*\*) -whether inside or outside Palestine –is a Palestinian."<sup>[1]</sup>
- In the state of Palestine the people "will be safe guarded their political and religious convictions and their human dignity by means of a parliamentary democratic system of governance in the state itself based on freedom of expression and freedom to form parties."<sup>[1]</sup>
- "The state of Palestine proclaims its commitment to the principles and purpose of the United Nations, and to the Universal declaration of Human rights."<sup>[1]</sup>
- "Governance in the state will be based on principles of social justice, equality and non-discrimination in public rights of men or women, on grounds of race, religion, color or sex, under the aegis of a constitution which ensures the rule of law and an independent judiciary." <sup>[1]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Palestinian National Charter, *July 10-17, 1968*.

\* *not present in the original text of the Charter*