As you can all imagine, these are very trying times in the Middle East for both Israelis and Palestinians. A very intense two week visit to New York and Washington was soon followed by a regional Athens Dialogue that Co-Editor Ziad AbuZayyad and I have just returned from.

The Athens Dialogue was devoted to Establishing a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone, with 37 participants from Israel, Palestine, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Bahrain, Yemen, Turkey, Greece and some relevant internationals. Most of the participants were from civil society, though some were also currently serving diplomats. The dialogue began on the same day of the targeted killing of Hamas military head Ahmad Jabari, which started the current round of heavy hostilities.

In order to understand the perspective from Gaza, please read the following message that was sent to us by our editorial board member Ali Abu Shahla:

The View from Gaza by Ali Abu Shahla 2012-11-20

At the same time that the war began, on November 14-15, 250 Israeli and Palestinian members of the Palestinian-Israeli Peace NGO Forum met at the at the annual bilateral Peace NGO meeting in Jericho, and issued the very important attached joint statement in support of the Palestinian application to the UN for non-member state status, and calling for an immediate end to the hostilities.

Since Ziad and I were at the Athens Dialogue, the PIJ, which participates in both the Israeli and the Palestinian side of the Peace NGO Forum, was represented by Apo Sahagian, an Armenian born in the Old City, who defines himself as a Jerusalemite, with empathy for both Israelis and Palestinians. Apo is fluent in Hebrew, Arabic, Armenian and English, and you can see his dark vision in the following blog post, written under the influence of the current events:

The Sad Ending of Palestine/Israel by Apo Sahagian 2012-11-19

Before we left for Athens, we held a very stimulating brainstorming session in conjunction with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Representative Office to the Palestinians (German Social Democratic Party) on Putting Jerusalem Back on the Political Map, with the participation of Israelis Dr. Meir Margalit, a member of the Jerusalem Municipal Council, Dr. Menachem Klein, an adviser to Ehud Barak on Jerusalem at Camp David 2000, Hagit Ofran, Head of the Peace Now Settlement Watch Project, and former Amb. to South Africa Ilan Barouch, now political adviser to Meretz Chair Zehava Galon, and Palestinians, former PLO Amb. to France and Palestinian minister Hind Khouri, Palestinian Peace NGO Chair Saman Khoury, Dr. Omar Yousef, Associate Prof.
and Dir. of Jerusalem Studies at Al Quds U., Prof. Munther Dajani, Head of the Political Science Dept. at Al Quds U., Ziad, myself and Dir. of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (Foundation in German) Ingrid Ross.

Obviously, we hope that a cease-fire will be brokered as soon as possible.

Hillel Schenker

Co-Editor

Palestine-Israel Journal

POBox 19839, Jerusalem
972-2-6282115
www.pij.org