

**Perspectives beyond war and crisis II**  
**Food Aid, Poverty Administration and Development Policy**  
**in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict**  
**Vienna, September 29-30, 2009**  
**Conference summary report**

So far billions of USD have been spent as donor assistance to the Palestinian people. Yet the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories today is more catastrophic than ever. Knowing this, we have to question the effectiveness of donor assistance in this area.

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness – a document which was signed in 2005 by more than a hundred official donors agencies and developing countries to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development by shifting the balance of power away from donors in order to create a fairer and more effective development partnership based on mutual accountability between donors and partner countries - demands also from civil society to hold their governments accountable to their development strategies and policies. This was the purpose of the conference – holding our governments accountable to what they practice in the occupied Palestinian territories.



**Magda Seewald**

**September 29, 2009**



**Leila Farsakh**

**Revisiting the Palestinian Economy after 40 years of Israeli Occupation: Present Realities and Future Challenges (Opening lecture - summary)**

**Leila Farsakh**

Referring to the latest UNCTAD report, which describes the year 2008 as the worst year so far for the Palestinian economy, Leila Farsakh argued that the economic record of the Oslo years<sup>1</sup> has not been development or de-development, but pauperization<sup>2</sup>. This catastrophic economic situation has been sown by the economic structure set in place in 1993.

<sup>1</sup> The Oslo Peace process starting with 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Pauperization: a term first coined by the late Palestinian economist Yusef Sayigh in 1987.

Farsakh's central argument was that Oslo did not bring about "partial decolonization", as some have argued, but rather sewed a new form of colonial domination, founded on three key pillars:

1. the prioritization of Israel's security consideration over Palestinian economic needs and rights
2. the establishment of a Palestinian authority with limited autonomy but huge economic responsibilities
3. the participation of the international community as lender of first and last resort which is inadvertently subsidizing, rather than ending, the Israeli occupation

Prior to Oslo the Palestinian economy was very much depended to Israel's. As Leila Farsakh explained that the Oslo peace process promised to reduce this dependency by establishing the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and redefining the nature of trade relations with Israel through the Economic Protocol. Therefore a special custom union agreement was established by which Israel remained the main trading partner, but the PNA was allowed to trade with a number of countries and it also allowed the Palestinian economy to receive the customs revenues. According to Leila Farsakh the Oslo agreements also opened the Palestinian economy for injections of international aid in sectors that most needed it, which was restricted before. However the Oslo process brought neither growth nor development. Farsakh described the Palestinian economic performance since Oslo as follows:

- growth became erratic and downward slopping
- a change in the structure of economic growth in the Occupied Territories: An expanding banking and service sector, but a weak agricultural sector and no leading industrial sector
- rising inequalities between skilled and unskilled labor, also forced by the influx of international aid by demanding highly paid international staff
- growing economic fragmentation and a steady separation of the West Bank from Gaza Strip, largely as a result of the Israeli closures and territorial policies

Arguing that the international community played a central role in contributing to the perpetuation of a colonial structure of domination that led to pauperization by institutionalization of Israeli security concerns as the key determinant of Palestinian growth, Leila Farsakh raised the question of the extent to which the cost of the occupation has been subcontracted to the international community.

In her recommendations she pointed out that it is necessary to hold Israel accountable to its obligations to end the occupation.

**The speech was followed by a viable discussion:**

Referring to the demand of holding Israel accountable to international law, questions were raised on how to put pressure on Israel and why it is treated differently in comparison to other nations. Dr. Farsakh stressed the strong relationship between power and diplomacy. Contrary to popular western opinion, colonialism did not cease to exist in the 1970's and 1980's. By means of marketing and media certain words (colonialism) were superseded, though certain policies (colonialism) remain. Along with the war in Iraq, Dr. Farsakh noticed the development of a new world order which she termed Neocolonialism. Accordingly, Farsakh pronounced in favor of international law based language. She pleaded for a variety of means such as political as well as civil pressure. In the latter case Leila Farsakh mentioned the call for a worldwide boycott of products fabricated in Israel. Since the international community seems not able or willing to adopt means of pressure (e. g. stop of settlement) yet, the Palestinian national movement has to reach for the minds of civil society. In this context she compared the Palestinian national movement with the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. As it took a long time to overcome racial segregation there, the Palestinian people too have to be attuned to long-winded struggle for freedom and peace.

Another question focused on Israeli concepts of peace like Nethanyahu's concept of "economic peace". Leila Farsakh stressed that this concept implies some alleviations for parts of the Palestinian people while keeping the structure of domination untouched. Here, Dr. Farsakh reminded the audience of Sharon's strategy of "unilateral peace". The plan and implementation of "Disengagement" from Gaza enunciated total separation between Israel on the one hand and Gaza and the West Bank on the other, while those two areas should be connected to Egypt - respectively to Jordan. In this manner the Israeli government would delegate responsibility to the Arab states without losing control of the Palestinian territories. In this context she termed the Oslo process as the greatest success of the Zionist movement since the establishment of the state of Israel. Although the Israeli recognition of the Palestinians as a people can be classed as a historical moment, this process would have meant in effect the creation of a Palestinian state without being a state in the full sense of

the word. Although the Oslo process failed Israel profited economically by this process. By then Israeli trade was limited to the USA, EU and the Occupied Territories. At the first onset of the process a wide range of countries, e. g. China, India, Indonesia, etc., abolished restrictions to trade with Israel.

Finally the debate focused on two-state-solution vs. one-state solution. Considering a possible point of no return for a two-state-solution Dr. Farsakh admitted the plan to be seriously weakened. Though Javier Solana on behalf of the EU put pressure on both sides (especially Israel), demanding a final solution within two years, many questions such as economic, territorial and democratic bases of a planned Palestinian state are unsettled yet. In fact, since the Oslo process Gaza turned into a prison and West Bank into a foster economy. Unless the USA and the EU put pressure on Israel the situation will become worse. As Leila Farsakh points out, lethargy will increase in the Palestinian territories and will spread on the Arab states. Particularly with regard to the Arab states the dissent between government and “the street” how to cope with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will become more and more difficult to handle with.

Focusing on a possible one-state-solution Dr. Farsakh reminded the audience of the lengthy process making a two-state-solution conceivable. In the 1970’s it was impossible to express the idea of a Palestinian state. Nowadays a Israeli-Palestinian state seems unthinkable to most of the people on both sides of the conflict. Leila Farsakh estimates that it will take at least another 20 years to sink in this idea as a realistic option.

Dr. Farsakh ended her remarks urging to change policy towards Israel by holding the government accountable for his policy. The fear of being accused to be anti-semitic through passing legitimate criticism on certain policies must be put down. As the international community criticises Chavez or Iran for their policies, Israel has to be confronted in the same way.

### **September 30, 2009**

Unfortunately the vidc had to announce on the second day of the conference that two of the panelist, Maysoon Al-Ramahi and Rami Sublaban, were not allowed to leave the Occupied Palestinian Territories by the Israeli Authorities. The vidc is very sorry about this not only because the audience has missed their



important speeches but especially for these two persons to undergo such treatments only because they wanted to share their thoughts with us.

### Perspectives beyond Food Aid and Poverty Administration?



**Gerhard Pulfer, Helmut Krieger**

### On the Role of International Institutions and Development Agencies in the Occupied Palestinian Territories

#### Gerhard Pulfer (presentation summary)

In his presentation *'Donor politics in Palestine – Oscillating between institution building and handouts'*

Gerhard Pulfer focused on three subjects: the history of donor engagement in the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT), the types of donor aid, and the impact and achievements of the international donor community.

He divided the history of donor engagement in the OPT into seven distinct phases:

1. initial build-up of Palestinian institutions starting in 1994
2. formulation of the first Palestinian development plan and thus Palestinian National Authority (PNA) guidance of development starting in 1998
3. eruption of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada in September 2000, destruction of infrastructure, and almost collapse of many PNA functions
4. recovery and initiation of donor driven reform process starting in 2003 with the Roadmap
5. following President Arafat's death, election of President Abbas and focus on Gaza withdrawal starting in November 2004
6. donors' boycott of the Palestinian government after the election victory of Hamas' 'Change and Reform' party starting in March 2006
7. full donor support for the Palestinian government under Prime Minister Fayyad in the West Bank and humanitarian aid in Gaza starting in June 2007

By explaining these distinct phases, Gerhard Pulfer stressed that aid to Palestine is highly volatile, subject to political considerations – be it within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, within the context of Palestinian party politics, or within the Middle East in general –, and depends overall on the convergence of PNA interests with leading donors' interests. Thus the different types of donor aid in the OPT (humanitarian aid and recovery, budget

support, and programme and project support) have both positive and negative impacts and achievements. As positive ones he mentioned donor mobilization to provide support for the PNA's recurrent operations through budget support, continued humanitarian support and recovery financing to alleviate a humanitarian disaster in the OPT, programme and project support to build up Palestinian National Authority institutions, and recent strong alignment with PNA priorities as expressed in the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan due to political support for Prime Minister Fayyad. According to Pulfer, negative impacts and achievements are donor driven reforms during certain periods of time, which lacked backing on the counterpart side, as well as a lack of continuity in institution-building due to political considerations, and a lack of consistency in development approaches due to dependence on political environment (e.g. support to Prime Minister versus President over the past six years).

In his concluding remarks Gerhard Pulfer emphasized again that the effectiveness of aid in building strong and legitimate institutions depends overall on the convergence of PNA interests with leading donors' interests. At times when donor interests and PNA interests did not converge, aid has been shifting away from long-term institution-building requirements towards short-term and non-sustainable humanitarian needs. He explained that in such circumstances the results of previous development investments are not only suspended, but effectively reversed. Development thus risks shifting towards de-development, as national institutions are weakened and sustainable service delivery is jeopardized.

### **Leila Farsakh's comment on Gerhard Pulfer's presentation**

Leila Farsakh argued that the objective of Oslo, was state building, therefore the most important sectors for the international community were security and the public sector, which led to the creation of a police state.



**G.Pulfer, H. Krieger, L. Farsakh**

However the structure for a "viable" state to survive without donor support were not changed (tax system...). In her opinion the error of Oslo was to try to create a Palestinian state without answering the political question of the conflict.

### **Gaza:**

Leila Farsakh explained that prior to the fragmentation between Gaza strip and the West Bank Gaza contributed 1/3 to the budget of the PA. Today this has stopped due to the closure on Gaza. Gerhard Pulfer added that despite the split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip today the Ramallah-based Palestinian National Authority continues to pay the wages of civil servants hired before June 2007 in Gaza.

### ***Solan's proposal for the declaration of a Palestinian state:***

According to Leila Farsakh this proposal is very dangerous because the international community would accept a Bantustan like the ones existed in South Africa. However, she argued, we should have learned from history that Bantustans are not viable. Yet the international community never gave a definition what the expression "viable state" means.

These comments were followed by a discussion that focused on the establishment of a Palestinian state in consideration of capacity and willingness of the USA as a global power and Israel in determining what type of state to be, how viable, just and possible. Security was a dominant concern.

Then the discussion turned to focus on the question of the three preconditions to re-connect with Hamas. It was repeatedly mentioned that the EU boycott policy was decided in the capitals as a political question with less consideration to what is happening on the ground.

Another note highlighted was related to the definitions, firstly between to end/ to manage the occupation and secondly, between terrorism/ resistance of Occupation. The role of the PNA, the model of South Africa and the new direction under Obama were also of note.



**Samia Botmeh**

### **Samia Botmeh (presentation summary)**

In her presentation '*Gender differentials in the Palestinian labour market and the role of the international community. A critical assessment*' Samia Botmeh started with remarks on the issue of context when it comes to development in the OPT. She emphasized the importance of diagnosing and addressing reality on the ground within its context, i.e. occupation, and argued that

the manner with which the international community perceives and deals with Israel's occupation is to ignore the structural relationship of dominance between the Israelis, as occupiers, and the Palestinians, as occupied. Instead the international community chooses to deal only with the repercussions of this occupation. By illustrating this point through a labour market example from a gendered perspective she stressed that as long as the international community does not act responsibly through pushing for a political resolution by implementing international law, which should bring about an end of Israel's occupation, the Palestinians will remain engaged in a vicious circle of survival, and the international community will remain engaged in aiding this survival process.

Samia Botmeh highlighted the impact of Israel's policies, particularly movement restrictions within the West Bank and the siege on Gaza on labour market outcomes for men and women by analysing the male and female labour market participation rates from 1996 to 2007, as well as the male and female unemployment rates, the informalization of the labour market along gender lines, and the average daily wages for women and men in the OPT from 1996 to 2008. Furthermore she emphasized that the overall destruction of economic life in the OPT, particularly the rise in discouraged workers, high unemployment rates, further informalization of the labour market, decline of the share of employment in the productive sector, and the decline in men's wages have strained the typically strong social support networks. Gender relations have been altered with a visible rise in domestic violence as well as a rise in women's mobility whereby they were pushed outside their homes to seek support, formal and informal.

Concerning the role of international organizations in the OPT, she focused on microfinance services for women and employment generation schemes for men. She argued that women felt that micro-credit is economically non-viable due to its main criterion for a good borrower – the ability and regularity of repayment. Creditors' policies do not reflect or accommodate the political and economic insecurities and instability of the Palestinian market. In addition, policies are not gender sensitive, nor do they reflect gender-specific concerns. Hence women have used micro-credit as an erratic survival mechanism to provide for essential needs of the households as no other alternatives are available. Employment generation schemes for men also have minimal contribution to the community in terms of value added, do not generate forms of productive employment, and projects are usually



highly disrupted by Israel's closures and siege. More importantly, since such projects are recognized by their participants as unproductive, those taking part usually feel a sense of humiliation. This has had grave repercussions for society.

Thus in her concluding remarks Samia Botmeh emphasized that interventions in the form of food aid, micro-credit, employment generation schemes, amongst others, on a large scale are economically non-viable, create a culture of dependency and undermine individual's capacity to be creative and productive. Without a political solution and the end of the occupation, the long term damaging effects of interventions by the international donor community can therefore be devastating.

The significant question of the following discussion was whether to continue international aid or to stop it. The answer revolved around the importance to carry on aid but also to refer to the political question as it is made in the capitals but also as reflected on the ground. By investing in infrastructure such as hospitals, the international donor community does not reflect the situation on the ground, Samia Botmeh argued, since the obstacles for birth delivery of Palestinian women in a safe environment are check points and Israeli controls, that prevents the women to reach the hospitals. However intervention policy is limited to protesting politely the USA, the EU and the Arab countries.

### **Palestinian Civil Society beyond International Development Policy?**



**Maysoon Al-Ramahi**

#### **Maysoon Al-Ramahi from Al-Khansa Women Association**

Due to the fact that Maysoon Al-Ramahi was denied to leave the Palestinian Occupied Territories by the Israeli Authority she forwarded a audio file with a short message to the conference audience.

#### **Afaf Aqel Hamayel from Society In'ash al-Usra (presentation summary)**

The Society of In'ash al-Usra was established in 1965 by a group of women volunteers with the objective to empower the Palestinian women by upgrading their educational status and consequently their financial status. Afaf Hamayel explained that the society also provides

high quality care and education for pre-school children and offers humanitarian aid. Finally it studies and preserves the Palestinian folklore culture and heritage. She emphasized that after 1967 and with the beginning Israeli occupation In'ash al-Usra took its responsibility within the Palestinian society particularly in the absence of a national Palestinian state to address the tremendous economic, social and financial hardships faced by the Palestinian people.



**Afaf Aqel Hamayel**

Afaf Aqel Hamayel presented the current projects in place of In'ash al-Usra:

- humanitarian aid projects for families displaced by the Israeli occupation with a special focus on children
- projects targeting the advancement of Palestinian women in launching several educational and vocational programs
- projects for the preservation of Palestinian folklore, culture and heritage by running a Palestinian Folklore and Heritage Center, publishing books on the Palestinian culture and hosting a museum
- future projects are a day care centre for elderly people as well as the expansion to the existing women hostel

Referring on donor engagement in the Palestinian Territories Hamayel pointed out that donor money is necessary for the survival of the Palestinian people however it did not bring them closer to their goal of liberation and self-determination. Using aid as collective punishment, as some donors did as an answer of the internal Palestinian political crisis, has led, according to Afaf Aqel Hamayel, to a general sense of frustration about the extent of international donors. Combined with the imposing of procurement rules that require a disproportionate percentage of the aid money to be spent in donor's countries to acquire consulting services has brought the Society of In'ash al-Usra to the conclusion to reduce its dependence on outside donors by expanding their income generating projects, as Afaf Aqel Hamayel explained. However in the absence of a constant income from the Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs, she stressed that financial support from both within the occupied territories and from abroad continue to be a cornerstone to the survival of the society.

### **Ghassan Amayra from Welfare Association (presentation summary)**

Ghassan Amayra presented the Welfare Association, a philanthropic, non-profit foundation, which was established in Geneva in 1983 to support the Palestinian society in sustainable development by strengthening local organizations and assisting them in improving their services to communities in the West Bank, Gaza, Galilee and Naqab as well as Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.



**Ghassan Amayra**

According to Ghassan Amayra the Welfare Association reaches more than four million Palestinian beneficiaries with its support through different program tracks such as culture and identity, education programs, human resource development and capacity building, socio-economic development, special relief programs/Humanitarian Assistance, children and youth, the poor, students, and individuals with special needs, etc.

By explaining the funding of the Welfare Association he mentioned that, the organization has established an Endowment Fund of over \$70 million through earmarked donations from members and the community and manages donor funds from governments, international and multinational agencies and international NGOs, earmarked for specific programs: World Bank/ EU/ Austria/ Italy/Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development/ Kuwait Fund/ Canada/ Switzerland/ and Ford Foundation among others.

In his presentation Ghassan Amayra highlighted the critical role donor support has had for the Palestinian economy in general, and to institution building and budget support in particular. However the support of the international community has been to a large extent influenced by the political situation on the ground and the flow of donor aid was and still is subject to the prevalence of political instability. He pointed out that the agenda of some donors is influenced by the Israeli political agenda, and he gave three different examples: first, excluding East Jerusalem- the future capital of Palestine from donor's support, where more than half million Palestinians living in critical conditions. Second, imposing conditions on donor's support – some donor's support is subject to partnerships between Palestinian and Israeli organizations, and this a new kind of donor's support given to the Israeli organizations on the account of support that should fully provided to the Palestinian people.

Third, some major donors have no interest to support the Palestinian agriculture sector for hidden agendas. He argued that humanitarian aid is not the solution for building a viable state and that less attention was given to the private sector, which should be the engine of growth especially in addressing the biggest challenge, the high unemployment rate. Therefore in his opinion, the allocation of international aid should be directed to productive sectors and the “trade not aid” model should be followed. Finally an effective coordination among the donors, among the NGOs and between donors and NGOs to channel the aid is crucial.

**Both statements were followed by a discussion:**

In the beginning of the debate, there was a strong focus on the Austrian, European and rest of the international donor community. Different questions were posed around the issue of how donors should respond to the politics of the Israeli government when it comes to infrastructure destroyed in the course of a military campaign, the blocking of international trade between the West Bank (WB) and the EU and the violations of basic human rights in general. It was also noted, that a certain policy of the Israeli government, described as “economy instead of peace” has become evident in the recent years.

Consensus on the podium was reached concerning the statement that politicized aid (as seen in the boycott of the Gaza Strip after the Hamas had won the elections) would be harmful in the short term, with people dying due to the lack of primary provisions, and in the long term because the people in Gaza would not blame their local government but rather Israel and the international community for their misery. Another important point in the debate was that the international community on the other hand should do more to put pressure on Israel if basic human rights and international law were violated.

A second widely discussed topic was the alleged corruption of the Palestinian Authorities (PA). The guests on the podium and some individuals in the audience agreed that the accusations toward the PA were mostly made up of prejudices and propaganda of the Israeli media. The existent level of corruption was said to be comparable to states, where this is not considered a major problem.

## Final Discussion: What is to be done? (summary)

**Discussant: Samia Botmeh, Afaf Aqel Hamayel and Gerhard Pulfer**

**Chair: Helmut Krieger**

Civil society organizations have always played a special role in the OPTs because instead of being in opposition to the political establishment, they used to *be* the political establishment. Politics in the OPTs came from these NGOs, strongly rooted in society that over time transformed into official representations. Today, more and more organizations are co-opted by the agenda of Internationals or Israeli politics.



**S.Botmeh, A.A. Hamayel, H. Krieger**

In this context, the problem of un-proportionally high wages paid to local employees by international organizations is a problem. This causes the most educated and active people to work for Internationals, co-opting and depoliticizing them. This “fragmentation of resistance”, leads to a situation where some NGOs are trying to change the situation, whilst others are merely trying to find ways and means to cope with it.

Other participants argued that this was merely a professionalization of the NGO business and no intentional mechanism by Internationals meant to weaken the Palestinian civil society.

The question of religion and radical Islam was also one of the topics covered in the discussion. The different Islamic NGOs that exist in the OPTs were less affected by the co-option discussed above. This, in combination with many extremely frustrated people seeking support and consolation in religion, was one of the reasons for the rise of Hamas. The participants of the discussion made clear, that by far not all religious groups are affiliated with Hamas. The view that the international community played a certain role in the divide between Hamas and Fatah was expressed.



**H. Krieger, G. Pulfer**

Food Aid was discussed as a development concept. In general, the dominant opinion on the panel was that regular Food Aid (if distributed over a longer period of time), devastates the productive sector and dehumanizes the beneficiaries. Food Aid was said not to be the answer to anything, as long as the overall

political situation in the WB and Gaza remained unchanged. The people in Gaza are of course drastically affected by the blockage by Israel, which hinders goods to enter the region. This causes a severe humanitarian crisis, already mentioned above.

It was said further that the Palestinian peoples had lost faith in foreign governments to help them politically and put pressure on Israel. This was why the changed strategy was to reach out to other grassroots organizations across the world, which can speak for the Palestinians and put pressure on their own governments.

A thought that was repeatedly brought forth throughout the discussion, was that all efforts to develop the Palestinian Territories and the region would remain fruitless under the current political situation. The seen inflation of the security sector was not at all dealing with the root causes of instability and violence.

All participants agreed that an end of the occupation of the WB was a substantial prerequisite for peace, stability and development in the region.

## Speakers

**Ghassan Amayra** works for the Welfare Association, a Palestinian private, non-profit foundation established in Geneva in 1983 to support Palestinian society in sustainable development. Ghassan Amayra is Programme Manager of the Youth Employment Service (YES). Prior to this he was for two years Director of the Youth Entrepreneurs Palestine (YEP). He holds a MBA degree from Birzeit University and finished his second Master's degree in International Law and Economics at the World Trade Institute for the University of Berne, Neuchâtel and Fribourg in Switzerland. In his work he deals mainly with economic policies and economic relations under the European Neighborhood Policy.

**Samia Botmeh** is director of the Center for Development Studies at Birzeit University. Currently she is a PhD candidate at the economics department at School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, where she writes her thesis on "Gender differentials in labour markets outcomes in the Occupied Palestinian Territory". She holds a MA in economic development and policy analysis from University of Nottingham, UK and a BA in economic from University of Leicester, UK. From 2006 to 2007 Samia Botmeh was senior researcher and finally acting director of research at the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute in Ramallah. She lectured at the Women Studies Institute and the Economics

Department of Birzeit University as well as at the University of Bethlehem. Her main research topics are economy and gender.

**Leila Farsakh** is an assistant professor in political science at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She is the author of *Palestinian Labor Migration to Israel: Labour, Land and Occupation*, (Routledge, fall 2005) and editor of *Commemorating the Naksa, Evoking the Nakba*, (Electronic Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, in Spring 2008). She has also published on questions related to Palestinian labor flows, the Oslo Process and international migration in a wide range of journals, including the *Middle East Journal*, the *European Journal of Development Research*, *Journal of Palestine Studies* and *Le Monde Diplomatique*. In 2001 she won the Peace and Justice Award from the Cambridge Peace Commission, in Cambridge-Massachusetts.

Dr. Farsakh holds a PhD from the University of London (2003), an M.Phil from the University of Cambridge, UK (1990), and a BA from the University of Exeter in the UK (1989). She has worked with a number of international organizations, including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris (1993-1996) and the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute in Ramallah (1998-1999). Between 2003 and 2004 she undertook a post-doctoral research fellowship at the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University. Since 2008 she is also a senior research fellow at the Center for Development Studies at Birzeit University, in the West Bank.

**Afaf Aqel Hamayel** is a board member of the Society of In'ash al-Uusra, a Palestinian women's organization, which was founded in 1965 by a group of women with the aim of empowering Palestinian women and offering various services. From 2005 to 2007 Afaf Aqel Hamayel was director of education of Ramallah and Al-Bireh district. She holds a BA in History from American University Beirut and worked for many years in different positions in the educational sector.

**Helmut Krieger**, social scientist, is a lecturer in the field of International Relations at the Institute of Political Science and the Project International Development at the University of Vienna. Main research areas: Israeli-Palestinian conflict, political Islam, and postcolonial theory.

**Gerhard Pulfer** is Governance Strategy Group Coordinator within the Palestinian Ministry of Planning. The Governance Strategy Group is one of four Strategy Groups within the local aid coordination structure. As the coordinator for this Strategy Group and the related Sector Working Groups his primary focus is on rule of law and security sector reform as well as public administration & civil service reform, accountability and transparency, and other related issues. After having worked for UNDP in Gaza from 2000 to 2003 Gerhard Pulfer joined the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), where he was responsible for programs in the Middle East and Asia till 2007. He holds a PhD from University of Vienna; he wrote his dissertation on donor engagement in fragile states and situations with Palestine as a case study.

**Maysoon Al-Ramahi** is chairwomen of Al-Khansa Women Association, which she established in 1997. Al-Khansa is an Islamic women's association, which stresses women's rights and participation from an Islamic perspective and offers various income-generating activities for women. After she graduated in Chemistry at Birzeit University in 1983 Maysoon Al-Ramahi taught in Dubai for nine years. In 1996 she established the women's organization Al Huda, from which she resigned in 1997 to establish Al-Khansa. The activist published several articles mainly to women and Islam. In 2007 she established with her association the Moh'd bin Rashed school.

**Magda Seewald** works as a project coordinator at the vidc mainly on gender and conflict since 2005. She graduated in political science at the Vienna University.

**Rami Sublaban** is assistant project manager at the Palestinian office of the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), the agency for international development cooperation of the Turkish government. Prior he worked in different positions in the tourist sector in Jerusalem and in Turkey, where he also graduated from Gazi University.

*financed by*

**Austrian**  
 **Development Cooperation**