

### The Warmth of Palestine

The circle is the best thing in the world. With a circle, it is of no import where it begins or where it ends, who comes first or who is last. What really matters is that it keeps on rolling...and as Palestinians we have many circles that we are satisfied with. Things may appear to be random and not well managed, but it works well for us.

In recent days, at the height of the snow storm, with temperatures hitting a record of minus four degrees Centigrade, we witnessed individuals acting with resolve, diligence and gallantry, and institutions that shouldered their duty to serve human beings. They left their homes to rescue someone who had got stuck, to warm up someone who was cold, and to save a patient. Their warm hearts kept us warm and kept Palestine -- its Gaza Strip, its West Bank, its shore and all its contours -- as warm as possible; warm because there are people who care and because the genius of the circle suits us.

Thanks are extended to the institutions of our country and to all those who took the effort and trouble to keep the circle of life rolling. We hope that our other circles in health, education, planning and construction will also roll.

*Editor in Chief*

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# The International Criminal Court ... Israel faces the Palestinian Authority Bogeyman

**Rahma Hajja**

In a meeting of the Palestinian leadership held on the 31st of December 2014, President Mahmoud Abbas asked: "Are you ready for the consequences of joining the International Criminal Court?" Everyone replied in the affirmative.

And thus, the "battle" started once the PLO failed, on the 30th of December 2014, to win approval for an Arab-Palestinian draft resolution to set a timetable for an end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the establishment of a Palestinian state on the territories occupied in 1967. Voting in favor of the proposed resolution in the UN Security Council did not pass the required threshold. Even if it had done, the American veto was on standby.

Israel launched a counter attack, starting with a freeze on the tax revenues of USD 127 million levied on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, which represents about half of the Palestinian budget. This was opposed by the United States because it "stirs up tensions".

### ?What is Israel afraid of

What is Israel afraid of that makes it attack international initiatives by Palestinians? Antoine Shalhat, Director of The Israeli Scene Supplement - Al-Mashad at the Palestinian Forum for Israeli Studies (MADAR), told Al-Hal that Palestine's application to join the International Criminal Court "opens the way for filing litigation against Israel related to wars and military operations conducted against Palestinians, whether in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip. Naturally, this Court holds world politicians accountable for alleged war crimes, especially when several official reports issued by international organizations have

condemned Israeli practices against Palestinians as war crimes, and it could result in continuous prosecution of Israeli political and military leaders."

As clarified by Shalhat, the accession of Palestine to international organizations, to take place at a later stage according to an announcement by President Abbas, represents international recognition of Palestine as a state that enjoys rights and sovereignty. This is rejected by Israel, in spite of Israeli claims that it supports the establishment of a Palestinian state via negotiations, also thwarted by Israel.

### Is the Palestinian Authority ready?

So Israel opened fire and the Palestinian Authority declared its readiness. But is the PA really ready? Are these declarations no more than "hash tags" intended to influence public opinion nationally and internationally? Does the statement by Saeb Erakat, member of the PLO Executive Committee, holding Israel responsible as an occupation force constitute a threat to dismantle the Palestinian Authority as some observers have interpreted?

In response to these questions, Fatah Executive Committee member Mohammad Shtayyeh told Al-Hal: "The Palestinian people are prepared. This 'luxury' occupation cannot stay forever and everything has a price." He stressed, "The Palestinian people need freedom and dignity by ending the occupation; therefore we as a people, the PA and employees should be prepared to pay the price."

Shtayyeh clarified: "If necessary, we will reformulate the relationship with Israel from A to Z. There are three aspects: the political, which is closed; the economic, which is running in one direction as Israel exports USD 4.1 billion in commodities

and services to Palestinians versus no more than USD 350 million in imports permitted from Palestinians; and finally, the security aspect, which is being revised by the Palestinian leadership at present."

### People will pay the price

Samira Halayqa, a member of Parliament representing the Hamas Change and Reform Bloc believes, "The Palestinian Authority is not prepared to face the Israeli response, and does not have the right to respond in the first place." She added: "The PA has taken this step and was aware of the consequences beforehand. Countries that support Israel are greater in number than those who support the PA. Therefore, the people will pay the price of these actions." Halayqa told Al-Hal: "The PA should not limit its options of halting security coordination with Israel, of accession to international organizations, or of applying to the International Criminal Court or halting negotiations, but should keep the options open for the people."

### Dismantling

#### the Palestinian Authority

Political analyst and writer Rafiq Awad told Al-Hal: "The resilience of the Palestinian Authority to Israeli economic, security and political attacks is linked to popular support and PLO adherence to its position, as well as the impetus of an Arab safety net." He trusts that the Palestinian people can attempt to change their social life through solidarity and domestic economic programs. He did not rule out that the PA may dismantle itself, emphasizing: "The people are capable of creating a thousand Authorities that will be in the hands of the people, and not of Israel." Zahira Kamal, general secretary



of the Palestinian Democratic Union party, told Al-Hal: "As a people we should not fear Israeli actions and the international community should shoulder its responsibilities regarding the potential consequences." She ruled out the option of dismantling the PA on the grounds that the PA is "an achievement of the Palestinian people and their struggle that Israel attempts to undermine." Shtayyeh regards the freezing of tax revenues as a "temporary" step. He added: "We have been through this in the past. It is a collective punishment that Israel cannot sustain for a long time. Israel is trying to defend itself by attacking and we are prepared for that. On another level, it is in Israel's interests to retain the Palestinian Authority in such a situation, i.e. an authority without authority. Under this umbrella, Israel continues the confiscation of land and the building of settlements and is not interested in dismantling the PA." On the other measures that can

be also undertaken by Israel in its counter attack, Shalhat says: "Israel talks about other measures, including putting pressure on countries that provide aid to the PA in an attempt to stop their assistance. Although Israel has not announced that it will undertake military retribution, there are expectations that it will pursue a campaign of pressure or pursue wanted individuals as a means to destroy the sovereignty of the Palestinian Authority. I have no idea how things may develop, but Israel has a tendency to engage in appalling practices against the Palestinians, especially at present with the forthcoming general election. It has always been the case in every election that Israeli parties compete with each other in their extremism against Palestinians." Shtayyeh stressed: "Israel is an enemy state and we can expect anything and everything. The question is how prepared we are to pay the price of ending the occupation."

Achievers

Aref Hijawi

Hey failures! Welcome. Let me tell you about achievers. Mr. Failure, do you want to be successful? Then go read books on self-improvement if you want. You may also want to read my article as it can save you the effort.

Achievers are like Apollo 11 and Saturn 5, which took the first man to step on the moon. Apollo 11 is a spaceship that weighs 50 tons, while Saturn is the rocket that lifted Apollo from earth, enabled its flight, and was disposed of rapidly after takeoff. This Saturn weighed 3000 tons. Apollo is the vehicle housing all the technology, but it would not have been possible to get to the moon if it was not for the Saturn rocket, which weighed 60 times more than Apollo.

An achiever needs both: Apollo and Saturn. He needs skills and relationships. A person may possess vision, skills, may even be a genius, yet be unable to fly. He needs the relationships that prompt him to act and create an impact. For instance, Herzl, the father of Zionism, had a vision that he recorded in a small notebook and he had an extensive network of relationships. [Jamal] Abdel Nasser had a vision that was a mixture of Egyptian nationalism, socialist thought and industrialization. He also possessed the rocket. He was a leader who valued organization and mastered secrecy, and his tool was the army. The rocket of Al-Mutanabi, the genius Arab poet, was to plead to the princes of his era in a relentless pursuit from one country to another until he became famous.

There was once an opportunist TV broadcaster who I happened to know. He had groveled and fawned to those in charge. He used to protect his presence on screen with a large rocket of relationships, and he remained for a while, but he was never an achiever because he did not possess true skills and journalistic talent. I have also watched a singer who had a great voice and beautiful sentiments, but hated to have to chase after composers and poets. She hated travelling and preferred family life. She possessed Apollo, but not the rocket. Today, she has abandoned singing and works in an office.

Success requires skill and initiative. Those who lack one of those cannot fly.

Some creative people are ashamed of knocking on doors. They are correct in this since it is not appropriate to do so at the beginning; it is better to wait until a person gains skills. But ultimately, an individual should reveal themselves known so we can see them.

## Israeli Regional Expansion in Gas...Boycott [Campaign] Prepares for a Wave of Protests

Iliya Gharbieh

The date of January 5th marked the first anniversary of the initial sealing of an agreement between the Palestine Electric Company (PEC) and Delek Drilling - Noble Energy, an Israeli-American alliance. This agreement was signed in the official presence of the Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority (PENRA). According to the agreement, the Israelis will provide the Palestine Power Generation Co. (PPGC) with its needs for natural gas to fuel a future power plant in Jenin for a period of 20 years at a value exceeding USD 1.2 billion. Opinions differ with regard to this issue; many believe that the agreement gives Israel the right to continue its theft of Palestinian natural resources and unfettered control over these resources since the time frame of the agreement is 20 years! This is also an indication that the Palestinian Authority will not be able to establish an independent Palestinian state during this period and will increase economic dependence on the Israeli occupation. Some believe that this agreement serves Israeli attempts to impose an economic rather than a political resolution on the Palestinians.

**The Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority (PENRA): the government is not party to the agreement**

The Coalition for Accountability and Integrity (AMAN) held a meeting to discuss the agreement and Mr. Omar Kittaneh, the head of PENRA, confirmed that, "The government is not party to the agreement. Its role was to create the environment for sealing the agreement between the two companies." He pointed out that, "The idea emerged alongside the gas explorations at a time when the situation was conducive to optimism. The reality proved different and a power generating plant was built, but the gas was not provided for it to operate. It was assumed that the owners or the government would provide the gas, as in international practice. The dilemma facing the Palestinian government started when the owners set a condition stipulating that the government should provide the gas and if it did not, which was actually the case, the government would be obliged to compensate the company and commit to the payment of the quantity of gas consumption agreed upon. Therefore, when the gas was not provided, the government was forced to supply the fuel at a high price. Thus, the company needs USD one million a day to operate the power station."

**Expert Haitham Daraghme: "The agreement is useless"**

Dr. Haitham Daraghme, an expert in administrative and financial strategic planning, emphasized to Al-Hal that, "The agreement is useless and no serious follow up was undertaken by the Palestinian government. The company wanted to ensure a high percentage of profit and all their actions were media propaganda since there is



Mahmoud Nawajaa



Haitham Daraghme

no Palestinian sovereignty over the gas that exists in their areas. Many experts have talked about drilling and the use of the gas as a major inflow to the Palestinian economy, but nothing has been realized."

Daraghme recalled government statements about Palestine becoming a producer and exporter of gas by 2014 following a number of meetings with British Gas, the concessionaire for the development of the gas field, explored in 1998 in the Gaza Strip and inaugurated by the late President Yasser Arafat. The Prime Minister, Rami Hamdallah, predicted that the net profit would amount to USD 150 million annually. Daraghme said, "Such statements are greatly exaggerated and the annual profit referred to does not really mean much when compared to the quantities of gas available in the Gaza field. The agreements concluded previously with the British drilling company stipulated that the company would have control of 90% of the gas versus only 10% for Palestinians. This is unfair and must be invalidated, and the agreements should be reconsidered."

The government owns Gaza Marine, a natural gas field located about 36 km from the shores of the Gaza Strip. Since the field was discovered in 1998, not as much as one cubic meter has been extracted.

**Popular campaigns against conclusion of a final agreement**

Last year, the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) National Committee started to mobilize Palestinian parliamentary groups, national and international legal and human rights institutions, PMs, and political and economic figures to put pressure on the government to prevent the signing of a final agreement.

Mahmoud Nawajaa, the general coordinator of the Palestinian BDS National Committee pointed out that, "In the first months of this year there will be a broad popular movement against the government and a number of private sector institutions responsible for concluding an initial agreement, in the wake of 2013, to import natural gas from the Israeli occupation worth USD 1.2 billion, for a period of twenty years. This opened the door for the governments of Jordan and Egypt to

proceed with similar agreements to import Israeli gas."

Nawajaa highlighted that the proceeds from Israeli gas sales to Jordan and Egypt, according to Israeli government statements, will be used for education and "security". In other words, the profits Israel will make from these deals with the Arab world will support the Israeli occupation army. Moreover, the extraction of gas from Leviathan, Israel's largest gas reservoir, needs an investment of USD 6.5 billion. If Israel wants to export to countries other than Egypt and Jordan, alternative markets in Europe and Asia involve huge additional costs that render it commercially unfeasible.

**Boycotts by Jordan**

Following popular protests against the Jordanian-Israeli gas agreement, voices in the Jordanian government hinted that, "They will not be more Palestinian than the Palestinians themselves." That was after the Palestinian private sector had signed a similar agreement in the presence of the Palestinian government. According to a statement of boycott by Jordan, the National Electric Power Company (NEPCO), entirely owned by the Jordanian government, signed a letter of intent with Noble Energy, an American company that represents a majority of Zionist companies, to buy the gas that is under Israeli control, the proceeds of which go to the occupation government. Under this agreement, worth USD 15 billion, NEPCO will be provided with 300 million cubic feet of gas daily for a period of 15 years for the purpose of generating electricity.

An activist in the boycott movement, Nisreen Al-Haj Ahmad, stressed the "need to continue the efforts of the campaign in collaboration with all parties who oppose normalization with Israel until the government realizes that by insisting on proceeding with the gas agreement, it is standing against the interests and desires of the overwhelming majority of the Jordanian people. Palestinians need to put popular pressure on the Palestinian leadership to prevent themselves from being dragged into regional Zionist gas projects that will give the Jordanian and other Arab governments a pretext to proceed with normalization with the Israeli government."

## Winner of First Place in the Arab World

### “Taq Taq Taqieh” ... A program that meets the demands of the child audience

✎ *Mahmoud Issa*

“Taq Taq Taqieh” - these words resonate with every Arab child throughout his happy childhood memories. The words have now been revived as the title of the best-known children’s program in the Arab world. The idea and script for this program, which is broadcast on the Palestinian channel, belong to Palestinian poet Wadah Zaqtan, who has been working for a long time in programs for children, including Sesame Street.

The “Taq Taq Taqieh” program, supervised by Zaqtan, directed by Awni Eshteivi, and presented by Nadia Qaraqra and a group of children, won the award for the best children’s program in the Arab world in the Cairo Radio and Television Mondial in 2014. Al-Hal met with some of those in charge of the program to investigate the secrets behind its success in a field where other programs are unable to get off the ground due to media and professional problems. Director Awni Eshteivi explained that the program was selected on the basis of ideas versus resources. Thus, the idea of the “Taq Taq Taqieh” program was matched to the resources of the Palestinian channel, resources which are limited compared with other Arab channels. He pointed out

that lack of resources is not necessarily an excuse for failing to create a unique and creative TV production.

Explaining the concept and identity of the program, Eshteivi said: “The idea and approach of the program are different than other children’s programs, as well as the absence of any political content, which prevails in other Palestinian TV programs.” According to Eshteivi, this is a departure from the norm, which audiences find boring, to an area of light entertainment for ordinary people. The presenter of the program, Nadia Qaraqra, believes that the program was selected as best program in the Arab world because it differs from the usual children’s programs. This difference is in the content; the program is based on the handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and each episode attempts to explain a particular right for children.

The program treats all children as talented and the ultimate goal is to teach in a flexible and cheerful way that is never dull and boring. It looks for what a child wants, achieving a balance between the information needed by a child and supplying sufficient information.

Al-Hal sensed that the other difference in “Taq Taq Taqieh” is its work team, which comprises

a number of children who contribute to the preparation and implementation of the program. There is one child in the camera crew, another child is the assistant director, and a third child takes calls related to the program and transfers them to the director.

With regard to this small crew of professionals, Eshteivi says: “At the beginning of my experience working with children’s programs, I thought they would need months to engage with the work and understand its nature, but I was surprised how fast they learned and grasped the work in a few days.”

Batool Abu Karsh, a child who works with the program team and answers calls from the public for transfer to the program director, says that it is a pleasure to work with the team in a wonderful environment, although she feels the pressure of work sometimes when there are many calls.

Television programs involving children are usually the most difficult because of the problem of dealing with children. Qaraqra confirms that it is not easy job to deal with children since all children are considered gifted. Therein lies the challenge to find the specific area in which this child can be creative and how to present this on TV without ruining the children’s talents.

Batool’s description is no different than that of any professional journalist who complains of pressure at work and her words conveyed the authenticity of her feelings to Al-Hal.

Working with children requires a lot of patience and flexibility, but Qaraqra noted that there is no such thing as pretense in the program. She explained that her love of children led to her selection as a presenter for the program and enables her to develop herself and the program. She treats a child as a person just like her in order to enable the child to express their abilities and talents; this is her secret to nurturing children’s talents.

The other difference in this program is the rule that the child is the audience, the child is the one who has the problem and is, at the same time, the one who holds the solution and resolution. Therefore the guests on the program are always children. Those responsible for the program believe that the dreams, needs and ideas of the young serve their peers in creating a program that provides information and covers issues in a spontaneous, simple and entertaining context that transfers the media message away from affectation and stereotypical formats.

## Case Pending in Court

### Jurists: Ban on the Civil Servant’s Union ... a political decision with a legal disguise

✎ *Haitham Al Sharif*

The Civil Servant’s Union is awaiting the ruling of the Supreme Court of Justice regarding the constitutional appeal submitted on the 30th of December 2014 against the government’s decision of 11th of November 2014 that the Civil Servant’s Union is not a legal body. This came four days after a statement by the President’s office declaring that the Civil Servant’s Union had not been set up legally and does not constitute a legal entity. The statement stressed that the presidential memorandum must be complied with and [the Union] would be liable to prosecution. The President of the Union, Bassam Zakarneh, said that they had been taken by surprise by the ban, especially as they had signed an agreement with the government two days prior to the decision being issued. He added: “The Union offices were sealed with red wax and the Ministry of Labor withheld money without any judicial order. The government also expelled members of the Union working in the Ministry of Finance and transferred the Union President to the General Personnel Council, making deductions from the salaries of employees on the grounds that they had participated in the strike. In view of this ban and pending the legal ruling, 40 thousand employees are deprived of a statutory body to defend them. The hypothetical formation of an alternative body is unacceptable and we cannot accept this because employees always seek to form an independent entity to defend their rights rather than a fake body formed by a government.”

Ghandi Rebee, a lawyer with the Independent Commission for Human Rights ICHR (Diwan Al-Mathalem, Ombudsman) adopted the cause of the Civil Servant’s Union. A constitutional appeal against the ban was submitted to

the Supreme Court of Justice and the ICHR believes that the government is mistaken to consider the Union as an illegal body. He added: “The judiciary is entitled to decide on the legality or illegality of the Union and the government should have addressed the judiciary on this issue.”

The ICHR stated: “The Palestinian Basic Law refers to the right to form trade unions. The Civil Servant’s Union established in 2003 had undergone all legal licensing procedures. It addressed the Ministry of Labor, which embraced the Union’s constituent assembly and bylaws. The Ministry had supervised the Union elections on two occasions. The Union had also signed agreements with the government to obtain independent legal status. Therefore we approached the police to investigate the reasons for the closure of the Union’s headquarters and the justifications for the detention of the President and Vice President of the Union. Unfortunately, we received no response, and when no justification is given for detention it may be termed arbitrary detention.”

The Director General of Al-Haq, Shawan Jabbarin, agreed with this opinion: “The decision is a breach of the law and is inconsistent with legal practice as it undermines the rights and freedoms to which Palestine is committed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Palestine signed this international treaty, which guarantees the right to form and run trade unions. If any violations had taken place by the Union, these could have been resolved without this assault on fundamental rights and the exercise of freedoms. Thus, an encroachment has taken place by the Palestinian executive authority and an assault against the freedom of trade unions.”

The Secretary General of the General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT),

Ahmad Suhweil, said: “The GUPT was founded under exceptional circumstances and with some deficiencies, and although there is no legal basis for the establishment of the Union, it has earned its legitimacy and legality on the ground. Therefore, a solution and a face-saving way out of this dilemma must be sought in a sensible way so that nobody is affected negatively.”

Asked whether the government decision will contribute to creating an alternative to the Civil Servant’s Union, the Secretary General of the GUPT said: “The alternative exists practically on the ground in other professional trade unions such as those for engineers, physicians, teachers, accountants and others who are, after all, public servants.”

The Undersecretary for Legal Affairs at the Ministry of Justice, Mohammad Abdallah, views the absence of a law to regulate the work of trade unions as undermining the legitimacy of these unions and making them vulnerable to any decision, even when they adopt and work according to executive procedures and mechanisms. He added: “The Union was formed at the time of the political split [between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip] to serve the employees, but it maintained destructive procedures against the government through strikes, disruption of work in public departments and reducing working hours, which was considered by the political authority to be damaging to the public interest. Hence, the decision taken by the government on the illegality of the Union has a political as well as a legal aspect.”

But did the Ministry of Justice provide a legal opinion on the legality of the Union before the government’s decision? Adallah responded: “We were not asked to provide a legal opinion. We heard the news just like any other ministry or institution did. However, the Minister of Justice

is a member of the government and is necessarily committed to its resolutions, especially as the legitimate work of trade unions should come under the umbrella of the law. As a court ruling is now pending, any decision by the court will be equally binding to the executive and the Union based on the rule of law as the arbitrator.”

The same question was also posed to the Director General of Labor Relations at the Ministry of Labor, Belal Thawabeh, who said: “We had no role in this decision politically or at a senior administrative level (Cabinet of Ministers), although we are in the ministerial committee formed to discuss the issue of trade unions. We stated that the absence of a law for trade unions does not necessarily mean the suppression of freedoms and trade unions. We also said that the Union was formed under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor and that no problem exists with respect to its legitimacy. But at the same time, we are opposed to infringements of the law and encourage the reconsideration of the legal and administrative status of any trade union. Therefore, our response to the decision was that the Civil Servant’s Union should resolve its administrative and legal offenses. In view of our commitment to the ban, we have frozen the authorized signatories for the Union’s bank accounts until the problem is over and the Union amends its administrative and legal status.” Thawabeh believes that the essence of the problem was that the Union violated the law and rules on strikes, making them liable to prosecution. “Previously, the authority did not take any political or administrative decision, where we faced problems when the Civil Servant’s Union refused to abide by the law, and now we have this decisive decision.”

Postscript: On the 5th of January, the Court adjourned the case until the 19th of January.

## Birzeit University, wins first place in the Arab world for its [engagement] in the environment, recycling and clean energy

Fadi Shatara

Universities usually compete for academic excellence and to secure a good status among other universities. Birzeit University did not settle for academic excellence alone; it also sought excellence in environmental management and was ranked first in the sixth session of the Saudi Award for Environmental Management, achieving first place among Arab countries for protection of the environment.

This award is presented by the Arab Administrative Development Organization (ARADO), an organization affiliated with the League of Arab States. The competition runs every two years and awards are made in many areas as well as the environment. The award is supervised by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Birzeit excelled after tough competition against a number of universities, government, private and civil organizations. The award jury comprises specialists and professors from several Arab countries.

### The engineer who prepared the report

This story started with a letter sent by the Ministry of Education to all universities inviting participation in the contest. The letter requested those interested to submit a report on environmental applications in their institution to the award committee. Birzeit University's Engineering Office Manager, Bishara Abu Ghannam, received the letter and initiated participation in the contest. He delegated engineer Mounir Saad with the task of preparing the report.

### Use of clean energy

Saad, an engineer, said that his report comprised a number of applications implemented by Birzeit University to demonstrate excellence and uniqueness over other institutions to contribute to winning the award. These applications concentrated on the use of clean energy, the reuse of wastewater in agriculture, solar energy, paper recycling, and creating public parks such as the recently-established Samir Oweida Park. The irrigation of gardens involves use of the wastewater

treatment station at Birzeit University. The University also uses thermal insulation, which saves about 40% of the heating bills. Engineer Saad disclosed to Al-Hal that Birzeit University has recently started using gas instead of diesel, saving around 30% of the heating costs of its premises.

### Streamlining lighting

The report included the University's plan to reduce its power consumption to an optimal minimum by using timers for outdoors lighting, especially in the evening. Inside buildings, the administration ensures that lights in any unused areas are switched off, noting that lighting consumes 45% of the electricity bill.

Those with special needs were considered in the report. Saad said that the University provides for their convenience and enables them to access and use all university facilities. The report also included a section on car parking for teachers and students; there are 600 parking lots and another 400 spaces for cars are in progress outside the campus to minimize crowding. The report concluded with a number of recommendations to be taken into consideration to upgrade environmental management and dissemination of the pioneering experience of Birzeit University.

### Green buildings

Saad highlighted that, since it was built, Birzeit University has engaged with environmental principles and has focused on green buildings to preserve the environment as much as possible. He focused on the role of the Engineering Office in informing the University of best practice for the saving and use of alternative energy. It was the realization and application of these practices by Birzeit University that was behind the success in achieving first place in this contest.

### Abu Ghannam: we deserve first place

Dr. Bishara Abu Ghannam said that Birzeit University deserved to win first place in the contest for their



Dr. Adel Zagha



Mounir Saad



Dr. Bishara Abu Ghannam

achievements and good practices in environmental preservation. They provided a working environment for students and employees conducive to the performance of their duties by providing parks, public spaces, and rainwater harvesting and reuse.

Abu Ghannam disclosed that the University conducts checks on levels of radiation caused by the [electricity and telecommunication] towers on campus. It also checks for noise pollution in places like the cafeteria in an attempt to provide a healthy environment for all those on campus.

Abu Ghannam thanked everyone who contributed to this achievement and who worked to win the award. He paid special tribute to engineer Mounir Saad, the University administration and all departments that adopted green activities and

maintained a clean and healthy environment.

Al-Zagha: the award will be used for the completion of the solar energy production project

The Vice President for Financial and Administrative Affairs, Dr. Adel Zagha, said that the University had set up an earlier plan catering for the environment and based on international standards and specifications. This includes the establishment of a wastewater treatment station, the digging of wells for rainwater harvesting, and consideration for people with special needs by providing them with programs that enable them to read and write, a process supervised by Azzem Assaf.

Zagha described participation in the Saudi Award for Environmental Management as an adventure where

winning was not guaranteed, but the University was careful to submit a world-class report worthy of its name to put it in a strong competitive position. He confirmed that environmental integration and attention to all aspects enabled Birzeit University to win first place.

Zagha also revealed that the University administration will make use of the prize money of USD 40,000 to complete its solar energy production project, initiated by the University on the roof of Samieh Darwazeh building for the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals. The project aims to use solar energy to operate the factory, a plan to be extended later to include all other University premises. There is a project underway for the production of solar energy that may be sold to the electricity company.

Al Hal is a monthly newspaper that has been issued since 2005, it's a critical daring newspaper that discuss controversial delicate issues that varies between political, economic, social and cultural themes, with the participation of a group of professional outstanding journalists in West Bank and Gaza, in addition to Media students at Birzeit University, Al Hal has contributed to uncovering lots of cases that are not being publicized in daily newspapers or being banned for censorship; subjects of Al Hal are handled through reporting, investigative reporting, articles and interviews along with criticizing caricatures in every edition, The newspaper has in parallel to the paper edition a digital version that showcases best articles in multimedia, check our newspaper website following this link:

<http://hal.birzeit.edu>

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