



ANNUAL REPORT 2018

The General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific





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Front and rear cover images:

The premises of the Palestinian Delegation in Canberra.

The General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific

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The Ambassador's Foreword



Increased challenges, but many achievements

2018 witnessed significant, consecutive developments concerning the Palestine-Israel conflict that were manifested in the official positions of Australia, New Zealand and, to a lesser extent, some of the Pacific countries.

Australia took the lead in this respect when, in August, internal Liberal party tensions boiled over and precipitated a leadership change that resulted in Scott Morrison's securing the prime-ministership from Malcolm Turnbull, who had similarly claimed that office as a result of a coup against his predecessor, Tony Abbott.

This change then led to – or at least greatly accentuated – some of the chasms that exist in the party between the politically and socially conservative votaries and their more liberal, progressive colleagues over key

policy areas such as women's rights, climate change, immigration and foreign policy (including the Palestine-Israel conflict). Regarding the latter, the decision was made, after months of uncertainty following Prime Minister Morrison's initial announcement, that the Australian government would recognise both West Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish their own state with its capital in East Jerusalem. Importantly, this decision did not include, as feared in the shadow of the US precedent, the relocation of Australia's embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. However, despite this climbdown, the Palestinian leadership considered the revised Australian position to be contrary to international law and the relevant UN resolutions.

Needless to say, the decision (and the change of policy direction that it signalled) faced considerable popular and official opposition, especially from the opposition Labor party, which regarded the move as a reckless departure from longstanding and bipartisan policy vis-à-vis the two-state solution and, more specifically, the nature of Jerusalem as one of the final-status issues.

And Australia persisted, unfortunately, in showing rigid bias in favour of Israel by voting against those UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council (UNHRC) resolutions that concerned Palestinian rights. It was in this context that Australia voted against the UNHRC draft resolution in May that called for the provision of international protection for the Palestinian people, especially following the peaceful, popular demonstrations in the Gaza Strip during the preceding months that had resulted in mass casualties.

Augmenting Australia's unwavering support for Israel was the surprise decision by the Turnbull government in July to cut all direct financial assistance to the Palestinian government over the possibility of its being misappropriated to finance the stipends that are paid to the families of Palestinian prisoners and martyrs. This financial assistance was re-directed to one of the UN agencies operating in Palestine.



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2018 was also characterised by a remarkable development concerning the position of the Australian Labor party towards the Palestinian issue. During its 48th National Conference on December 16, the historic decision was made – by an overwhelming majority of delegates – to recognise the State of Palestine should the party win the 2019 federal election.

It must be said, however, that Australia continued to support the agricultural sector in Palestine through a number of Australian and Palestinian non-governmental organisations. Support for Palestinian refugees via UNRWA was likewise continued.

New Zealand maintained its longstanding position towards the Palestine-Israel conflict by both re-affirming its commitment to the realisation of a two-state solution, and voting consistently in favour of UN resolutions that concerned Palestinian rights. New Zealand also went a step further this year by officially criticising Israel's use of disproportionate force against largely peaceful Palestinian protestors in the Gaza Strip during the 'great march of return' demonstrations. It is certainly worth mentioning that New Zealand took a strong and outspoken position on the Trump administration's decision to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, claiming that it was a clear slap in the face to all Palestinians, as they consider the city to be their capital.

On the Pacific relations front, 2018 saw notable progress in the form of the successful visit that was organised by the Director-General of the Palestinian International Co-operation Agency (PICA), Mr Imad Zuhairi, and me to Vanuatu to examine in-depth the development needs and priorities of that country – and areas of potential bilateral co-operation – as part of the South-to-South development model.

Despite the considerable challenges that we face in communication and meaningful progress with the Pacific countries, important achievements were still made in the cementing of bilateral relations between certain Pacific countries and the State of Palestine.

The Delegation continued to maintain its outstanding relations with civil society in both Australia and New Zealand through a number of joint initiatives and projects. At the same time, its consultative relationship with the key Palestinian advocacy groups continued to flourish through the holding of regular meetings and, similarly, the organising of joint initiatives.

In addition to all of this, the Delegation furthered its targeted efforts to establish a co-ordination body for the Palestinian community in Australia, both to represent the community in front of all concerned parties, especially the Australian government, and to express one shared and unifying mission. These efforts still face some obstacles that I am sure can be met and overcome in 2019.

In sum, 2018 was a difficult year in that it was full of challenges and critical political developments, both positive and negative for Palestinian interests. This meant that new programs had to be added to the Delegation's mandate and strategic vision in order to meet these challenges and respond effectively.

We hope that 2019 will bring more optimism and hope, and that it will see us achieve more success in our efforts to strengthen support for Palestinian rights, especially that of self-determination, and to continue advancing the realisation of the legitimate aspiration of the Palestinian people for their own state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Ambassador of the State of Palestine

Izzat Abdulhadi



Political Context: Australia

1. Observations on Australia's stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict

a. Political shifts regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict

Following Australia's change of leadership in August, the new Australian Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, announced in October that he would consider moving the Australian embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and recognise the latter as Israel's capital. There was a broad consensus that this announcement was made at the urging of and to appease the Liberal party's conservative wing; an opportunity window that opened after the ousting of Malcolm Turnbull and his foreign minister Julie Bishop, both of whom had refused to countenance this proposal. Their removal and Scott Morrison's accession led to the resignations of a handful of Liberal MPs, resulting in the party's losing a majority of seats in the House of Representatives. Another (and an equally as strong) motive for this announcement was to achieve electoral gains in the Wentworth by-election—the seat with a sizeable Jewish population that was vacated by a disillusioned Turnbull. The announcement sparked criticism from the general public, Arab ambassadors, and from neighbouring countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, and New Zealand. This criticism centred on the argument that any gesture of recognition or embassy move before a negotiated settlement between the two parties would further inhibit progress towards a two-state solution.



The new Prime Minister Scott Morrison (right) with former prime minister Turnbull



Former minister for Foreign Affairs the Hon Julie Bishop MP (left), and her successor, Senator the Hon Marise Payne

On 15 December 2018, Mr Morrison followed up his October announcement by issuing the Australian government's revised official position. It confirms that Australia:

1. Continues to support the two-state solution with secure and internationally recognized borders
2. Will only transfer the Australian embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem after a two-state settlement is reached
3. Recognizes West Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and will establish a trade and defence centre there
4. Acknowledges the aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish a Palestinian state with their capital in East Jerusalem

In an unrelated topic, the Australian Labor Party (ALP), during its 48th National Conference, passed a final non-binding resolution on the Israel-Palestine conflict. The recommendation:

1. Notes previous resolutions on Israel/Palestine carried at the 2015 ALP National Conference and the 2016 NSW Labor annual conference
2. Supports recognition and the right of Israel and Palestine to exist as two states within secure and recognized borders
3. Calls on the next Labor government to recognize Palestine as a state; and
4. Expects the recognition of the State of Palestine to be an important priority for the next Labor government

Despite not specifying a timeframe, the resolution confirms that the recognition of the State of Palestine will be a priority, and should be discussed and decided upon by cabinet. This recommendation predictably produced a mixed bag of reactions.



Mr Kevin Rudd, former Australian prime minister (left), with Labor Leader Mr Bill Shorten at the Party’s National Conference in December

b. Voting patterns

On UN resolutions concerning Israel-Palestine, Australia’s position remained firmly aligned with Israel’s. Most notably, Australia, alongside the USA, voted against the May resolution at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to establish an independent commission of inquiry to investigate the killing and wounding of thousands of Palestinian civilians during the border-fence demonstrations in the Gaza Strip. Australia also voted against the UN resolution that called for international protection for the Palestinian people, following the mass killing of Palestinian demonstrators by Israeli soldiers. Former Australian prime minister Turnbull justified Australia’s voting pattern by indicting the Islamist group Hamas as the sole responsible party, and suggesting that it was their provocations that elicited a response from the Israeli army. In slight contradiction to this, former foreign minister Bishop called on Israel to refrain from any unnecessary or disproportionate response. She further added that the Australian government would remain firm in its support for a peaceful, two-state resolution that accords both peoples the right to live securely and peacefully in their own states on internationally recognized borders.

Country	Vote	Country	Vote	Country	Vote
AFGHANISTAN	ABST	GERMANY	ABST	RWANDA	ABST
ANGOLA	ABST	HUNGARY	YES	SAUDI ARABIA	ABST
AUSTRALIA	NO	IRAQ	YES	SENEGAL	YES
BELGIUM	ABST	JAPAN	ABST	SLOVAKIA	ABST
BRAZIL	ABST	KENYA	YES	SLOVENIA	YES
BURUNDI	YES	KYRGYZSTAN	YES	SOUTH AFRICA	YES
CHILE	YES	MEXICO	ABST	SPAIN	ABST
CHINA	YES	MONGOLIA	ABST	SWITZERLAND	ABST
COTE D'IVOIRE	YES	NEPAL	ABST	TOGO	ABST
CROATIA	YES	NEREVA	YES	TUNISIA	YES
CUBA	YES	Pakistan	ABST	UKRAINE	ABST
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO	ABST	PANAMA	YES	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	YES
ECUADOR	YES	PERU	ABST	UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN	ABST
EGYPT	YES	PHILIPPINES	NO	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	NO
ETHIOPIA	ABST	QATAR	YES	VENEZUELA (BOULVARIAN REPUBLIC)	NO
GEORGIA	ABST	REPUBLIC OF KOREA	ABST		

TOTALS: YES 29, ABST 14, NO 2

Australia's vote at the UN Human Rights Council in May against a resolution calling for an independent investigation into the mass civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip.



c. Australia's public and parliamentary positions

Rallies took place in many Australian cities to denounce the move of the US embassy to Jerusalem, the mass killing of unarmed Palestinian protestors by the Israeli military in the Gaza Strip, and Scott Morrison's mooted embassy move. In addition to the general public and various civil society groups, grass-roots members and MPs of the Australian Greens and the ALP were also present and vocal at some of these rallies.



A demonstration in Melbourne to express solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza

There was also a debate in Australia's political institutions, especially the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), regarding the cutting of Australian aid to the Palestinian Authority. The cuts were due in no small part to the allegations, peddled by the conservative wing of the Liberal party and fueled by the Zionist lobby in Melbourne, that the aid was being misappropriated to support prisoners convicted of terror-related offences and their families, instead of being allocated to the Palestinian health and education sectors as declared. In response, the Palestinian government emphasized that the disbursement of foreign aid from state donors is subject to multiple safeguards and stringent auditing by accredited third parties, and that all of this is overseen by the World Bank. Also, the Palestinian government stressed that providing welfare for the families of martyrs and prisoners is one of its core duties, and that only those families who apply and are deemed eligible receive these monthly stipends.

And on another subject closer to home, the Arab and Islamic communities, Australian solidarity groups and the Australian Parliamentary Friends of Palestine all commemorated the 70th anniversary of the 1948 Palestinian Nakba through various events across the country. Rallies, seminars and vigils were organized to call attention once again to the rights of the Palestinian people to statehood and dignity, and to remember the victims – past and present – of the dispossession and ethnic cleansing that was/is the Nakba. It was heartening to hear also from some Australian members of parliament who delivered speeches to commemorate this occasion in the House of Representatives and the Senate, expressing their solidarity with the Palestinian people and their inalienable rights.



Commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba

Lastly, there lingers a factional disagreement within the ALP over the resolution to recognise the State of Palestine, with the Victorian right stubbornly refusing to formally endorse such a move. This position, it must be said, runs contrary to the position of every faction in every other state and territory. However, because of this particular faction's leverage, the dispute reached a compromised agreement: a non-binding but prioritized recommendation. The recommendation was widely welcomed, but criticisms were still raised, especially by the Jewish and Israeli lobby groups.

d. Australia's continued contribution to relief and state-building in Palestine

Australia maintained its contribution to both the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the various Palestinian NGOs and civil society groups under the DFAT-administered AMENCA3 program. Australia made an advance payment of \$5 million to UNRWA in 2018 (in addition to its \$19-million annual contribution) to help alleviate UNRWA's funding shortfall, which was triggered by the US's decision early in the year to withdraw all its funding to the Agency. Finally, Australia continued to support working and middle-class Palestinians through the provision of academic scholarships for Palestinian students in the areas of agriculture, management and public administration.

Unfortunately, due to unverified allegations of using the Australian funds for terror-related activities, Australia suspended its financial contribution to one Australian NGO, namely APHEDA - Union Aid Abroad, and cut off aid entirely to another Australian NGO, namely Word Vision.



e. Summary

In conclusion, the Australian government failed to explain—let alone justify—the glaring inconsistency between its expressed adherence to international law and its implementation of a raft of anti-Palestine policies that did nothing to acknowledge Israel’s ongoing violations of the former. The contradiction was most apparent when the Australian government paid lip service to the two-state solution and the right of Palestinians to self-determination while both refusing to reprimand Israel for making this impossible and caving into pressure from the domestic Zionist lobby to further enfeeble the PA’s state-building program. The same can be said for the government’s bold and consistent voting pattern at UN fora against exactly this – Palestinian self-determination, and condemnation of Israel for suffocating this right and aspiration.

2. Observations on Australia’s foreign policy

Throughout the year, it has been observed that Australia’s foreign policy presently revolves around China. There were three main flashpoints that justify this observation:

Firstly, there were allegations that China, through its research centers and financial institutions in Australia, has repeatedly interfered with Australian electoral campaigns. Former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull responded to these allegations by emphasizing that Australia expressly bans foreign political donations and, by extension, influence. In response, Chinese officials urged the Australian government to abandon its prejudice against China and to instead focus on their long-established bilateral relationship. Chinese officials reminded the public of the significance of the Australia-China commercial relationship, and of the repercussions that could arise if this relationship were to become damaged due to the current political tensions.

Secondly, following China’s launch of new infrastructure projects in the South China Sea, a number of countries, including the US and Japan, were outraged. Senior US congressmen and navy commanders implored Australia to conduct its own freedom-of-navigation (FON) operations in the sea, in the hope that they would inhibit China’s illegal territorial annexations and militaristic domination in the region. In this context, and after discussions with US officials, former Australian foreign minister Julie Bishop publicly stated that to avoid escalating tensions in the sea, Australia would not conduct a FON.



Finally, China has deepened its engagement with the Pacific island countries, including through the controversial, state-largesse loan programs and the allegations of constructing military bases there. Australia denounced China's loan programs, arguing that they hinder the development of the Pacific countries and undermine Australia's development models in the region. To counter China's influence in the Pacific, Australia took measures to further strengthen its relationship with the Pacific countries, evidenced especially by Australia's commitment to finance the construction of underwater internet cables in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. Former prime minister Turnbull said that such programs will enhance Australia's influence in the Pacific. It is worth noting, however, that these development programs contradict the Australian government's plans to reduce its foreign aid budget.



Former prime minister Turnbull with Chinese President Xi Jinping



Sino-Pacific relations



3. Recent developments in Australian politics

a. Domestic changes

The Australian government planned to cut its special assistance program for refugees, which provides vetted and approved asylum seekers and refugees with a basic allowance, shelter and counselling services. Politicians across the spectrum and many in the general public branded this cut as inhuman and irresponsible.

In contrast to the current government, the ALP, if it wins the 2019 federal election, will consider an increase in the number of front-door refugees eligible for permanent settlement to 50,000. Nonetheless, it remains unlikely that the ALP will alter its position on unauthorized boat arrivals, a position that mirrors the Coalition's.

b. Australia in the Asia-Pacific

Australia strengthened its bilateral relations with the ASEAN countries through the 2018 ASEAN-Australia Special Summit, which was held in Sydney during March. The Summit gathered industry leaders and small and medium entrepreneurs (SMEs) with the aim of creating jobs and promoting investment. Australia also pledged its support for the regional alliance in its ongoing efforts and new initiatives to combat terrorism.



The ASEAN-Australia Summit in Sydney



Similarly, Turnbull's visit to the White House re-affirmed the common interest of the US and Australia to maintain the fight against terrorism, promote economic growth, and increase defense and security co-operation in the Indo-Pacific region. However, these shared interests now seem to be diverging somewhat under the increasingly erratic Trump administration and Morrison's so far low-key engagement with it. This much is clear, particularly their disagreement over free trade and the re-settlement of Australia's remaining refugees.

Australia also buttressed its regional economic co-operation by signing and selling the merits of the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, even in the face of the US decision to rescind its membership. This deal is expected to provide \$13.7 trillion worth of economic opportunities for Australian companies, giving a strong boost to the Australian export market.

Lastly, The Australian government maintained its economic sanctions against North Korea. Australia believes that this policy will eventually induce North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

c. Australia in Europe

The last six months saw a nourishing Australia-France relationship. President Macron signed a number of agreements with the Australian government on free trade, health, education, technology and other areas. The French President also addressed the submarine building program, which is being carried out by both French and Australian companies, and which is vital to Australia's national maritime security. This Australia-France relationship is of special importance to the EU because, amid the Brexit uncertainty, Australia's economic relations with the EU member states are deepening, and France is the harbinger.



French President Macron's visit to Australia this year



In an unrelated but significant development, Australia expelled three Russian diplomats/spies from Canberra after Russia was accused of attempting to assassinate one of its former intelligence officers in the UK on 4 March. Former prime minister Turnbull joined the international chorus of condemnation, describing it as a premeditated and reckless criminal act. He claimed that Russia is stridently undermining the rules-based global order.

d. Australia in the Middle East

Former Australian prime minister Turnbull expressed disappointment with the US's decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal, calling for self-restraint and encouraging other signatories to uphold it. He also re-affirmed Australia's commitment to the deal. This expression was echoed by former foreign minister Bishop, who emphasized the need to hold firm to the deal until further negotiation with Iran is possible. Due in large part to this deal, many Australian companies have looked for investments and business opportunities in Iran.



Political Context: New Zealand

a. New Zealand on the Israel-Palestine conflict

New Zealand maintained its position on Palestine-Israel, believing that the two-state solution based on international law is the only way to resolve the conflict. It criticized both the moving of the American embassy to Jerusalem and Scott Morrison's announcement to consider a similar course of action. New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern argued that Jerusalem is a contested area and that an embassy move would hinder any peace process in the Middle East. Furthermore, following the clashes in the Gaza Strip, the New Zealand Foreign Ministry approached the Israeli ambassador in Wellington to express its disappointment and concern over the mass killing of unarmed Palestinian civilians. New Zealand again took this position when it decided to vote in favor of the UN resolution calling for international protection for the Palestinian people.



Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of New Zealand

In addition to political denunciations on the international stage, New Zealand's government continues to help Palestine directly. In response to the US's complete withdrawal of funding to UNRWA, New Zealand pledged an additional \$1 million to help mitigate the shortfall. New Zealand also continued to grant two scholarships annually for Palestinian diplomats to strengthen their English skills, and sent an expert in renewable energy to support Palestinian governmental projects in this sector.

It was not only the government, but New Zealand civil society, alongside Palestinian community organizations, that played a noticeable role this year by organizing several events to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba. They also staged protest rallies against the US embassy move, the killing of unarmed civilians in the Gaza Strip and the corrosive and demoralizing effects of Israel's ongoing occupation.



b. New Zealand's foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific

The China-New Zealand relationship is a significant component of New Zealand's foreign policy. On May 27, 2018, New Zealand's Foreign Minister Winston Peters took a 3-day visit to China to meet his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi. Both parties discussed several issues, including China-New Zealand trade and economic relations. They also discussed security concerns in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly the recent developments in North Korea and the South China Sea. New Zealand stressed that North Korea must comply with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and that China should address the South China Sea disputes in accordance with international law. Most importantly, New Zealand recognizes China's global influence and believes that engaging positively with China is vital for New Zealand's trade and security interests.



Foreign ministers of New Zealand and China

Regarding New Zealand's relations with Australia and the US, New Zealand Prime Minister Ardern expressed her desire to strengthen both these bilateral economic relationships. She emphasized that international trade is a priority, and that hence, New Zealand will be striving for better market access by expanding opportunities for its local companies on the international stage. For this reason, New Zealand, like Australia, signed the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) agreement.

For the Pacific, New Zealand acknowledged the importance of these countries. It increased its diplomatic representation in the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea.



c. New Zealand's foreign policy in Europe

The New Zealand government pushed this year for stronger engagement with the EU and the UK, most notably through the consideration of a free-trade agreement with both these entities. This consideration came amid Trump's imposition of tariffs on US imports; New Zealand, like the vast majority of countries, was not exempted from these tariffs. Considering New Zealand's historically consistent and more marked alignment in support of Palestine, its burgeoning interactions with the EU and the UK will, it is hoped, indirectly benefit Palestine and her diplomatic aspirations.

d. Domestic policy

New Zealand's Prime Minister announced in her speech on foreign policy that New Zealand would re-establish the position of Minister for Disarmament, re-affirming its commitment to nuclear non-proliferation.

Moreover, New Zealand has committed to having an emissions-free economy by 2050. In this regard, the government has taken an interim step to adopt a fully renewable electric grid by 2035. Through this, New Zealand aims to encourage more innovations and investments in green technology.



Political Context: the Pacific Countries

Vanuatu

The Ambassador stressed the importance this year of improving the relations between Palestine and the Pacific countries. Both he and the Director-General of the Palestinian International Co-operation Agency, Mr. Imad Al-Zuhairi, visited the Republic of Vanuatu to kick-start further engagement between the two countries. The visit resulted in the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Palestine and Vanuatu, which will allow for future development co-operation in health, education and agriculture. This marks the first official co-operation agreement between Palestine and a Pacific country. It should be noted, however, that the original itinerary for the trip also included visits to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Due to unforeseen circumstances, visits to these countries were postponed to 2019.



The Prime Minister of Vanuatu also visited Israel and announced that his country would consider recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel during the coming spring. However, an official position has yet to be taken.

East Timor

On May 12, East Timorese residents cast their votes in a parliamentary election, following a heated and tense campaign. This came after the president of the republic dissolved the parliament earlier this year. Many political analysts believe that after 10 months of a political stalemate and the absence of a functioning parliament, this election heralds the future of a truly democratic East Timor. The parliamentary elections saw four parties in parliament, with the 'Alliance for Change for the Sake of Progress', led by Xanana Gusmao, obtaining an absolute majority.



Parliamentary and presidential elections in the Republic of East Timor

Despite the fact that East Timor has obtained an international judicial ruling allowing it to control more than 80% of the maritime border with Australia and possess massive gas and oil resources, it remains one of the world's poorest countries. This prompted the government to sign an agreement with Australia, hoping to invest more in various sectors and to take control of its own oil wealth. East Timor, therefore, has broad prospects for economic development.

Papua New Guinea

The State of Papua New Guinea hosted the two-day Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in November 2018. The forum ended without a final communique due to disputes between the US and China over free trade, the latter's controversial 'Belt and Road Initiative', the clash of geopolitical ambitions in the Pacific, and the reforms of the World Trade Organization (WTO). During the forum, the US re-affirmed its partnership with Australia by building a naval base on Manus Island in response to China's plan to develop a deep-water military site there. Despite APEC's failure in reaching a final agreement, it is worth mentioning that the United States signed an agreement with Australia, New Zealand and Japan to provide electricity to 70% of Papua New Guinea by 2030.

Fiji

A parliamentary election took place in Fiji on November 18. The Fiji First party, under Prime Minister Josiah Voreqe Bainimarama, won the election. Regarding the Palestine-Israel conflict, one of the electoral candidates pledged to strengthen the diplomatic relations between Israel and Fiji by establishing the first Pacific embassy in Israel. It is also worth mentioning that Israel has a consulate in Suva, the capital of Fiji. This political development may threaten Fiji's long-standing impartiality on the conflict, turning it into a more pro-Israel nation.



Other Pacific countries

With the Pacific region rising in geopolitical importance, China will, in the next seven years, spend US \$1.26 billion in aid for the Pacific countries, ranking second after Australia, and followed by New Zealand and then the USA. Likewise, Palestine acknowledges the increasing centrality of these countries, and, therefore, the Ambassador and the embassy's staff met on multiple occasions with the ambassadors of Pacific nations to Australia. The meetings mostly discussed potential areas of bilateral development co-operation between Palestine and these countries, especially Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goal for this year was to enhance and strengthen the status and legitimacy of the GDOP as both the diplomatic representation of the State of Palestine and the credible partner for all interested stakeholders in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

The strategic objectives to achieve this were as follows:

1. Further enhance and institutionalise bilateral relations with the foreign affairs ministries and policymaking bodies of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific
2. Strengthen relations between the GDOP and the Arab and international diplomatic corps
3. Further enhance and institutionalise relations with civil society in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific
4. Further enhance and institutionalise relations with the Palestinian, Arab and Islamic communities in Australia. The Delegation also strives to improve its ability to operate efficiently and effectively through the streamlining and institutionalisation of managerial, financial and consular processes

Mode of Operation

1. To initiate and engage in regular and robust strategic dialogue with Coalition government members, including the current Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Marise Payne, as well as DFAT officials. The Coalition's foreign policy is unlikely to be sympathetic towards the Palestinian situation. For this reason, a position paper that discusses the main components of Australia's foreign policy and its impact on the Israel-Palestine conflict will be prepared, and future dialogue with the government will be based on it. The GDOP believes that a clear position, agreed upon by the GDOP, Palestinian civil society and Palestinian business societies, must be determined before the GDOP approaches the new government to initiate official dialogue.
2. To create and sustain a more effective relationship with the New Zealand government through robust dialogue and the development of a clear working plan that engages all stakeholders.



3. To work closely with the Pacific island states, with more direct visits and improved bilateral co-ordination with their representatives in Canberra. The implementation of an active and inclusive regional strategy by Palestinian missions in the Pacific region would substantially improve relations between Palestine and various regional actors. Stronger lines of communication between the GDOP and the UN observer missions in both New York and Geneva would also lead to marked improvement in relations with relevant states. The GDOP hopes to participate more directly in discussions already taking place in New York and Geneva.

4. To develop an institutionalised strategy and implement an active method to engage with various Palestinian advocacy groups. The GDOP hopes that such a strategy will specify a clear, overarching political vision and definite, unanimous political messages that can be impressed upon decision-makers in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. Furthermore, developing an information-sharing mechanism on Israeli human rights violations and other issues of concern will support these groups in their advocacy.

5. To empower and encourage the Palestinian community to take a stronger role in political life in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. A politically adept Palestinian community would theoretically form strong bonds with decision-making agencies, such as parliaments, ministries of foreign affairs, civil society groups and other institutions. Organising the Palestinian community and working to improve the leadership skills of its members are high priorities for the GDOP. In this regard, the GDOP will particularly focus on youth groups, which are integral to the community's future. The GDOP aims to assist in establishing an Australian Palestinian community council as a framework of representation for the Palestinian community, also to be used as a model for the region. Such a council should facilitate the community's ability to play a more prominent role in the political life of Australia. The council should also provide beneficial social services to members and assist with local-level engagement with other councils and institutions.

6. Given the considerable influence of the Jewish community in Australian society, maintaining a productive and amicable relationship between this community and the GDOP is extremely important. The GDOP believes that robust and earnest dialogue with the Jewish community will lead to greater common understanding. Such dialogue could potentially influence and moderate the political positions of the Jewish community. Ultimately, a sustainable strategy for engagement could eventually lead to important, long-term changes in the positions and policies of the Jewish community in regard to the Palestinian question.



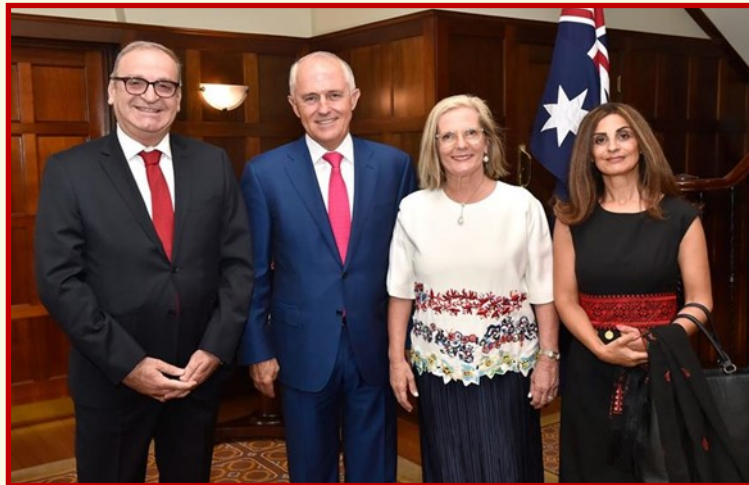
7. The GDOP has worked diligently to connect with media and has made some progress with print media, resulting in the publication of numerous articles and interviews. The GDOP is pleased with this (albeit limited) outreach, achieved without a dedicated media department. However, the GDOP believes that a dedicated media strategy would help to generate a much stronger impact, and would be far more effective at influencing public opinion within Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. At present, the capacity and strategy include little more than a contact list for various media representatives in Australia and New Zealand. Undoubtedly, it is essential to involve the media and to keep them, and therefore the public, informed and interested. Furthermore, the proper utilisation of social media on platforms like Facebook and Twitter is essential, particularly if the GDOP hopes to connect directly with the public in any meaningful and influential way.

8. To prioritise those events and tasks within the GDOP's program that have the most impact, in a bid to manage constraints on the GDOP's financial and human resources. In order to respond further to these constraints, the GDOP runs a program to engage volunteers/interns who are able to offer their valuable expertise in exchange for experience. These volunteers, most of whom are recent university graduates from a variety of fields, have been engaged to cover particular areas of work through a focus on research. The involvement of volunteers — all of whom work under guidance of the GDOP's professional staff—could significantly alleviate the human resources problem facing the GDOP, especially if coupled with effective general management of the GDOP's program, annual plan, and targeted outcomes.



Bilateral Relations with Australia

1. On 1 January, Ambassador Abdulhadi met with Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP, one of the four co-chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, at Parliament House in Canberra. They discussed the group's annual plan and schedule of activities, and special attention was given to the efforts to secure recognition of the State of Palestine at the Labor Party's National Conference in December. The possibility of arranging another Parliamentary trip to Palestine was also discussed.
2. On 29 January, Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in an Australia Day reception hosted by former prime minister Malcolm Turnbull at his residence in Canberra. The prime minister delivered a speech in which he acknowledged the importance of multiculturalism, indigenous people and their contributions to Australian society, and maintaining free international trade.



Palestinian Ambassador Mr Izzat Abdulhadi and Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon at the official celebration of Australia Day with former prime minister the Hon Malcolm Turnbull and his wife Lucy



3. On 20 February, Ambassador Abdulhadi met with a number of parliamentarians in Canberra. He presented them with an overview of the latest political developments concerning Israel-Palestine, including President Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the implications of this decision, the US's subsequent withdrawal of \$380 million to UNRWA, and President Abbas's new peace plan.



Left: the Ambassador with members of the Australian Federal Parliament



Right: the Ambassador with the Premier of New South Wales, Ms Gladys Berejiklian, in Sydney

4. On 7 March, Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in the inauguration of the Anzac Memorial's *International Soil Project* at NSW Parliament House in Sydney. The Ambassador oversaw the presentation of Palestine's contribution; that is, a sample of preserved Palestinian soil, and later met with the Premier of New South Wales, Ms Gladys Berejiklian MP. This symbolic initiative, as articulated by Premier Berejiklian in her speech, intends to recognize further and appreciate the sacrifices made by Australian soldiers, including in the Middle East, by enshrining the earth on which they fought and died as a source of reflection and value for future generations.
5. On 28 March, Ambassador Abdulhadi met with Ms Sussan Ley MP at Parliament House in Canberra to discuss the possibility of her re-assuming the position of one of the four co-chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine. They also talked about recent political developments concerning Israel-Palestine, and some initial ideas and planning strategies for the 2018 Parliamentary trip to Palestine.



6. By the end of March, the Palestinian Delegation had sent a number of official letters to the former Australian foreign minister, the Hon Julie Bishop, addressing issues such as Israel's newly minted *Loyalty Law*, which subjects Palestinian Jerusalemites to further profiling and unjustified scrutiny, Australia's consistently disappointing voting record at UN fora, especially at the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), Israel's killing of unarmed demonstrators (including paramedics and journalists) during the Gaza Strip protests, and the repercussions of President Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

7. On 'Land Day', 8 April, Ambassador Abdulhadi and First Secretary Noura Saleh attended a symposium organized by NSW Labor MP Shaoquett Moselmane in Sydney. Mr Moselmane delivered a speech in which he highlighted the significance of Land Day and its enduring relevance to Palestinians and their unresolved plight. The Ambassador also addressed those present to emphasize the role of the Day in unifying the Palestinian people, including – and especially – the Palestinian citizens of Israel. He also praised this community for its steadfastness in defending its national identity, despite all the Israeli attempts, both historical and ongoing, to expropriate Palestinian lands and dilute their rights. Finally, the Ambassador also acknowledged and reflected on the demonstrations in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.



Land Day symposium in Sydney



- On 11-12 April, the Palestinian Delegation organized and oversaw a visit by an Australian delegation to Palestine, which comprised prominent Christian and Muslim figures in Australia, to participate in an international conference in Ramallah. The conference was hosted by the Palestinian government under the title 'Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Palestine', and followed President Trump's unilateral and provocative declaration that Jerusalem (in its entirety) is Israel's capital. Upon arrival at the Allenby Bridge crossing, however, the four Australian delegates were prohibited by Israeli forces from entering Palestine after it became clear to the latter that they intended to participate in a Palestinian Authority-organized event that sought to counter Israel's narrative on Jerusalem. After returning to Amman, the delegates issued a press release in which they both reiterated that East Jerusalem is the capital of a future Palestinian state, and condemned the continued human rights violations in the occupied territories.



Two of the delegates explain their position on Jordanian TV after being barred from entering Palestine

- On 17 April, the Ambassador, accompanied by Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon and Program Officer Mr Cameron Brady, met with the new First Assistant Secretary of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) Middle East and Africa Division, Ms HK Yu, at the Department's premises in Canberra. They discussed the latest political developments in Israel-Palestine, particularly the violence on the Gaza perimeter fence, and how President Abbas's new peace plan seeks to break the deadlock in negotiations. At the end of the meeting, Ms Yu said that the relevant officials in her division would study this plan and ask the Delegation for further information if it were required.



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas during the presentation of his Middle East peace initiative at the United Nations

10. On 14 May, Ambassador Abdulhadi was invited for an interview with the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) television station. He answered questions about the worrying political developments in and concerning Palestine, especially Trump's embassy move, peaceful demonstrations being met with lethal force in the Gaza Strip, Netanyahu's determination to continue expanding settlements, and the Trump administration's upcoming 'deal of the century' and what it will likely mean.



The Ambassador's opinion regarding the US embassy move to Jerusalem being sought by ABC News



11. On 16 May, Ambassador Abdulhadi, together with First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh and Program Officer Mr Cameron Brady, met with Mr Luke Wild, Director of the Middle East Development Section at DFAT. They reviewed Australia's aid for Palestine, particularly the status of the AMENCA 3 program which funds agricultural development projects in Palestine, as well as some proposals submitted by Palestinian academics and PhD students seeking Australian funding to launch their projects in the Palestinian agricultural sector. During this meeting, Mr Wild informed the Ambassador that the foreign minister had some concerns about Australian aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA), citing allegations that this aid was being misappropriated to pay stipends to convicted terrorists/martyrs and their families. The Ambassador clarified that all aid to the PA was administered through a World Bank multi-donor trust fund, and that it was subject to both its inherent safeguards and regular third-party audits. He also clarified that monthly stipends were in fact social-welfare payments available only to next-of-kin relatives of the deceased or incarcerated who could prove that the loss of their/one of their main breadwinners had left them in financial need. Another topic of discussion was the possibility of extending or re-focusing Australian aid to Palestine's education sector.
12. On 22 May, the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, in co-operation with the Palestinian Delegation, organised a screening of the documentary film *From Under the Rubble* at Parliament House in Canberra. Co-chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, Ms Maria Vamvakinou, opened the event with a speech in which she expressed her dismay at Israel's use of live ammunition on unarmed civilian protestors in the Gaza Strip. The Ambassador also gave a speech in which he thanked the film's director, Ms Anne Tsoulis, and spoke briefly about the Gaza violence and how it made this film even more relevant. The screening was attended by a number of parliamentarians, representatives of Australian NGOs, advocacy and civil society groups, and members of the Arab and international diplomatic corps, and was followed by a Q&A session with the director.

The staff of the Palestinian Delegation with the film's director (centre) and one of the co-chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine (far left)





13. On 24 May, the Palestinian Delegation, the Arab and international diplomatic corps, departmental officials, and community and religious figures attended a DFAT reception to mark the beginning of the holy month of Ramadhan.

The Ambassador with His Eminence the Grand Mufti of Australia, Sheikh Abdul Azim al-Afifi



14. On 12 June, at the initiative of the Turkish Ambassador in Canberra, Ambassador Abdulhadi and the Chargé d'Affaires of the Indonesian Embassy met with the First Assistant Secretary of DFAT's Middle East and Africa Division, Ms HK Yu, at the Department's premises in Canberra. The Ambassador raised the issue of Australia's anti-Palestine voting pattern at UN fora, and urged the Australian government to consider carefully the forthcoming resolution in the General Assembly that called for an international protective mechanism for the Palestinian people in the context of the Gaza violence. Unfortunately, but unsurprisingly, Australia, alongside the United States and Israel, voted against this resolution, claiming it was 'biased' against the Jewish state.
15. On 3 July, the Ambassador met with several Arabic-speaking Australian diplomats to discuss the latest developments regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict, particularly the US embassy move and Trump's subsequent decision to slash funding to UNRWA. During the meeting, the Ambassador also clarified the Palestinian government's position in response to American and Australian concerns that it pays stipends to terrorists/martyrs and their families. It is worth mentioning that in regard to both Australia's final decision to withdraw all its aid to the Palestinian Authority, and its consistently anti-Palestine voting pattern at UN fora, the Delegation issued several press releases in which the Palestinian government's policy positions and views were made clear.



16. On 8 August, by invitation of DFAT, First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh attended a screening of the film *Song Keepers*. It is about Indigenous Australians and their ongoing attempts to preserve their languages by passing on traditional songs to the next generation.

17. On 14 August, Charge d’Affaires Ms Suheir Gedeon, First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh, and Mr Cameron Brady attended a lecture organised by the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine and the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) to shine a light on Israel’s use of military courts to try and sentence Palestinian children. This lecture, held at Parliament House in Canberra, was jointly presented by the co-founders of Military Court Watch, Australian lawyer Dr Gerard Horton and Palestinian human rights advocate Dr Salwa Duaibis. Military Court Watch is an NGO that monitors these trials and advocates for the rights of children in Israeli detention. They provided a detailed outline and analysis of the arbitrary procedures, non-transparency, and generally poor conditions for minors in Israeli detention facilities. They also highlighted the routine violations of international human rights law in these facilities, focusing in particular on the methods employed to extract ‘confessions’, and urged the Australian government to pressure Israel to reform these institutions and to put an end to such malpractices. Dr Horton and Dr Duaibis were on an Australian speaking tour organised by APAN.



First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh (left) and Charge d’Affaires Ms Suheir Gedeon (right) with Dr Salwa Duaibis



18. On 21 August, Counsellor Suheir Gedeon and Mr Cameron Brady met with two of the four co-chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, the Hon Sussan Ley and Ms Maria Vamvakinou. They discussed further the plan and areas of co-operation for the 2018 UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at Parliament House in November. They also revised the progress made thus far regarding the Parliamentary trip to Kuwait and Palestine, focusing in particular on strategies to attract as many federal MPs from different parties as possible.

19. On 22 August, Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon, First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh, and Mr Cameron Brady attended a book launch entitled *Tears for Tarshiha* by Mrs. Olfat Mahmoud. Mrs. Mahmoud is a Palestinian who was born and raised in one of the refugee camps in Lebanon. She documents her family's experience of dispossession and their memories of their ancestral town, Tarshiha, which is today inside Israel. She also details the daily indignities of life for refugees, drawing on her own experience of privation and insecurity to give an intimate and true-to-life insight into their plight. The event was hosted by the Hon Sussan Ley and Ms Maria Vamvakinou, both of whom emphasized the importance of this book in covering both Palestinian identity and the enduring pain of the 1948 Nakba. Mrs. Mahmoud's Australian tour was sponsored by APHEDA-Union Aid Abroad.



Mrs. Olfat Mahmoud's book-signing session



- On 23 August, the Delegation's staff participated in a charity dinner in Canberra, which was hosted by APHEDA-Union Aid Abroad to honor Mrs. Olfat Mahmoud. It should be noted that Mrs. Mahmoud had the opportunity to visit the Palestinian Delegation where she was warmly welcomed by all the staff. They discussed the issue of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in more depth, and focused on Australia's position on both this and the broader Palestinian question.



Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon (left), Mrs. Olfat Mahmoud, and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh at the Palestinian Delegation

- Ambassador Abdulhadi held several public meetings in Canberra to brief attendees on the current position of Australia towards the conflict, and how and to what extent it has changed following the cessation of US aid to UNRWA, the forced closure of the Palestinian mission in Washington, DC, and the withdrawal of Australia's aid to the PA based on unsubstantiated claims. He also answered questions.
- The Ambassador met with Ms Maria Vamvakinou at a working dinner in Canberra. They discussed the progress made thus far towards the recognition of the State of Palestine by the federal Labor Party, and the likelihood of a resolution calling for just that being carried at its National Conference in December. Also discussed were the key objectives and the tentative program of the January 2019 Parliamentary trip to Kuwait and Palestine, as well as some workable strategies to further empower the various Palestinian solidarity groups.



23. The Ambassador, accompanied by First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh, participated in the symposium entitled *Reforming the Rules-Based International Order and the Importance of International Law in Entrenching International Relations* at Parliament House in Canberra. The speakers at the event discussed the importance of international law (and of the treaties and conventions that underpin it) in maintaining amicable and productive international relations, which are often (and accurately) characterized as a crude power-contest. Speakers also highlighted the importance of revising and reforming Australia's foreign policy, especially as it relates to military intervention in the Middle East.

24. On 5-6 November, the Ambassador attended the meeting of Palestinian ambassadors in Asia, which was held in Baku, Azerbaijan. The attendees, including the Palestinian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Dr Riad Malki, discussed the best diplomatic strategies to improve Palestine's bilateral and multi-lateral relations in the region. Focus areas in which there is the most potential for Palestine to expand its reach and maximize the impact of its political activities were also discussed.



The Ambassador at the conference of the Palestinian ambassadors in Asia, in Baku, Azerbaijan



25. On 15 November, the Delegation participated in a symposium that addressed both the concerning political developments in Palestine and the position and role of various Christian churches in the occupied territories. It was organised by the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine in co-operation with the Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Network (PIEN). Ms Areej Masoud, a representative of a Palestinian interdenominational Christian advocacy group, spoke about the important role played by the churches in denouncing the ongoing Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights. She also highlighted the challenges faced by Christians under Israeli occupation, especially in Bethlehem, where the separation wall restricts their movement and economic freedom.



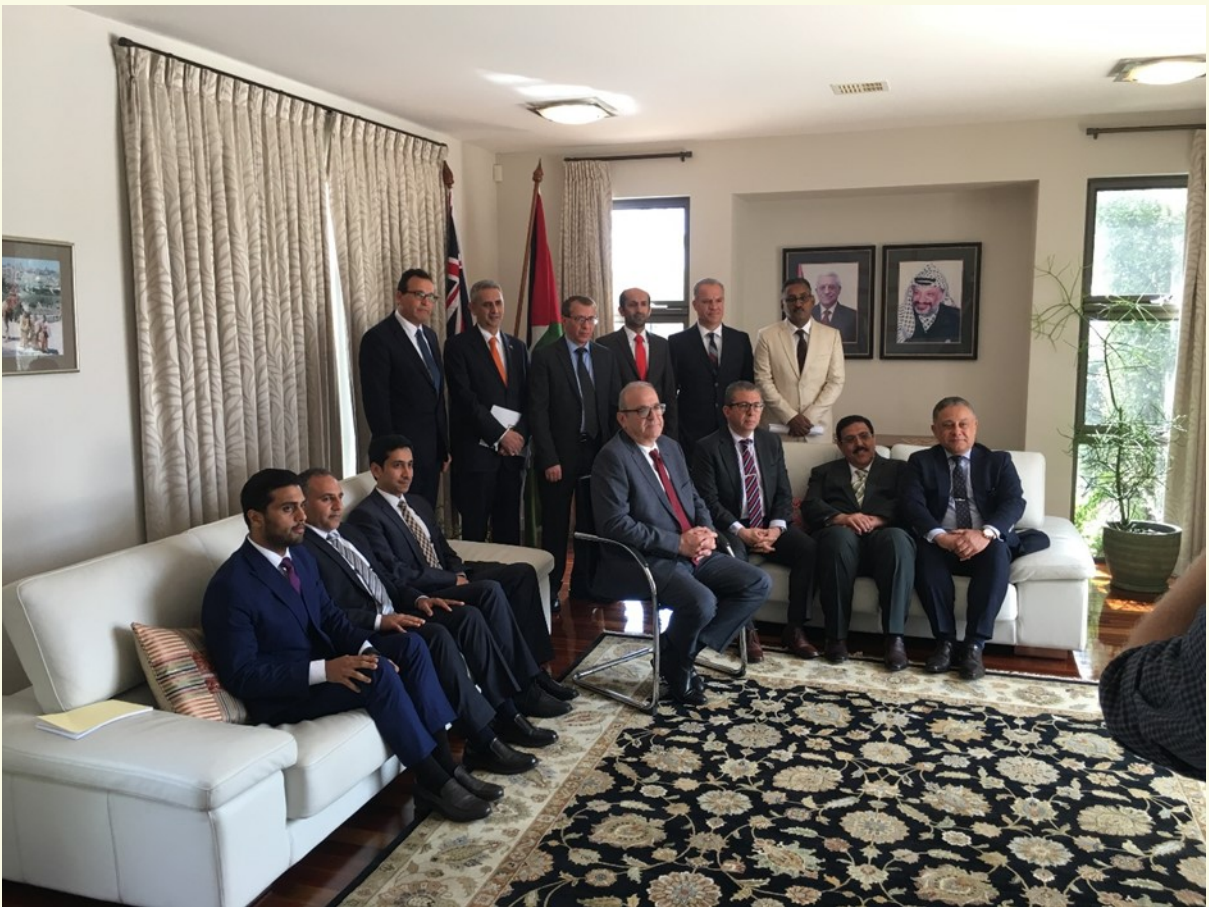
Left: The Delegation's staff and some MPs and senators after Ms Masoud's presentation at Parliament House in Canberra

Right: Carols in the atrium at DFAT's Christmas celebration

26. On 11 December, the Ambassador attended a Christmas and New Years celebration, hosted by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The new Foreign Minister, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, delivered a speech in which she catalogued the diplomatic achievements of the Department throughout the year and put forward the plan for 2019, which includes holding more meetings with the international diplomatic corps. The event was attended by members of the Arab and international diplomatic corps, departmental staff, former foreign ministers, parliamentarians, and some prominent Australian figures.



27. Prior to and following PM Scott Morrison's final decision on Jerusalem on 15 December, the following activities were carried out:
- The Delegation convened an emergency meeting in October with the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Canberra to discuss the meaning and implications of this announcement.
 - The Council and the President of the OIC Heads of Mission group in Canberra, the Indonesian Ambassador, held an emergency meeting with Ambassador Abdulhadi. They then issued a press release and wrote an official letter stating their concerns about this announcement to both the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs.



The Ambassador with the Arab ambassadors in Canberra at the Delegation's premises following PM Scott Morrison's initial announcement on October 16



- c. The Delegation issued a press release.
- d. The Delegation published an article on this subject in Fairfax media titled 'What an embassy move would really mean'.
- e. The Delegation contacted the Palestinian solidarity groups and the Arab and Islamic communities in Australia to provide them with the best materials and arguments to counter Australia's shifting position on Jerusalem. They also suggested some effective lobbying strategies that they could use to influence key decision-makers.
- f. The Delegation contacted representatives of the Australian Islamic community to explain the issue. In response, these representatives wrote letters to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, urging them to re-consider such a controversial move and not to breach international law and the rules-based international order.



Left: The Ambassador being interviewed by Australian media at the Delegation
Right: The Ambassador on live TV at the ABC News studio in Canberra

- g. The Ambassador participated in various English and Arabic media interviews in which he stated the Palestinian position and imparted his own analysis on the issue.



28. Prior to the Australian Labor Party's commitment at its December 18 National Conference to recognise the State of Palestine should it win the 2019 federal election, the Delegation did the following:
- Prepared policy briefs and factsheets for all federal and state Labor MPs and senators
 - Participated in and contributed to all the political forums concerning this matter
 - Published an article in *The Australian* promoting the recognition of Palestine
 - Held meetings with some key and receptive members of the federal Labor Party to argue for the recognition of the State of Palestine.



The Hon Tony Burke MP speaking on the resolution to recognise the State of Palestine at the Australian Labor Party's National Conference



29. On 21 December, members of the Council of Arab Ambassadors, specifically, the Palestinian, Egyptian, Lebanese and Jordanian ambassadors visited DFAT to meet with the First Assistant Secretary of the Middle East and Africa Division, Ms HK Yu. The ambassadors briefed her on the outcomes of the Arab League's most recent meeting, which was held to discuss PM Scott Morrison's final decision on Jerusalem. Echoing the League's position, the ambassadors expressed their concern at the announcement, pointing to the fact that it gives Israel a significant concession (recognition of its capital in West Jerusalem), while failing to do the same for Palestine in the city's East.



More diplomatic engagements attended by the Palestinian Ambassador





Bilateral Relations with New Zealand

1. In February, Ambassador Abdulhadi completed a four-day visit to New Zealand, meeting the Palestinian community and some key advocacy groups there, as well as members of the New Zealand Middle East Business Council. The Ambassador also attended the official celebration of 'Waitangi Day' in Auckland and met with the Secretary of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Jeff Langley, in Wellington to discuss Trump's embassy move, its ripple effects so far, and NZ's position on the US withdrawal of its funding to the Palestine refugee agency, UNRWA. Finally, he was able to meet briefly with New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Governor-General Patsy Reddy, and several senior officials from the Foreign Ministry to discuss New Zealand's aid to Palestine and to explore potential avenues of New Zealand-Palestine co-operation in areas such as agriculture and technology.



Ambassador Abdulhadi with some Palestinian community members in Auckland, New Zealand

The Ambassador with the Secretary of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Jeff Langley





Top left: A special performance by the indigenous Maori people of New Zealand in Auckland at the Waitangi Day celebration

Top right: The Ambassador with New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern

Above: The Ambassador with New Zealand Governor-General Patsy Reddy at the Waitangi Day celebration

Right: The Ambassador with some New Zealand Foreign Ministry officials





2. At the end of March, the Palestinian Delegation sent a letter regarding the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territories to the Foreign Minister of New Zealand, Rt Hon Mr Winston Peters. It brought to his attention such issues as Israel's discriminatory 'Loyalty Law', which unfairly targets Palestinian Jerusalem-ites, its use of live ammunition on unarmed demonstrators in the Gaza Strip, and the repercussions of President Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.
3. On 11 May, Ambassador Abdulhadi and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh attended a meeting organized by the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra. Mr Vangelis Vitalis, the undersecretary of the New Zealand minister of foreign affairs, was the keynote speaker. He underscored the manifold challenges presently facing multinational institutions, and addressed the state of regional relations, especially in the economic and commercial sectors. He also ran through New Zealand's concerns with Trump's import tariffs and reviewed his country's relations with China, the Pacific countries, and the European Union.



Left: The Ambassador with Mr Vitalis after the latter's address at the New Zealand High Commission in Canberra

Right: The Ambassador at the working lunch with Mr Stuart Horn and the Council of Arab Ambassadors in NZ

4. On 14 June, the Head of the Middle East and Africa Division of the New Zealand Foreign Ministry, Mr Stuart Horn, the Council of Arab Ambassadors in New Zealand, and New Zealand's Ambassador to Australia, Mr Chris Seed, examined in-depth the existing relations between New Zealand and the Arab countries. Specific topics ranged from how to expand these relations and in which areas, to the series of troubling political developments in and relating to Israel-Palestine.



5. On 22 August, Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon attended a lecture given by Rt Hon Winston Peters, the New Zealand Foreign Minister, at the country's embassy in Canberra. Mr Peters elucidated the key features of New Zealand's foreign policy and the current challenges in international politics. Following the lecture, Ms Gedeon met with Mr Peters for a short period of time, briefing him on the political developments concerning Palestine, especially Trump's embassy move and aid withdrawal. She also thanked him for New Zealand's longstanding and principled support for Palestinian rights.



Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon speaking with Rt Hon Winston Peters, Foreign Minister of New Zealand



Bilateral Relations with the Pacific Countries

1. On 5 March, Ambassador Abdulhadi and the Director-General of the Palestinian International Co-operation Agency (PICA), Mr Imad Zuhairi, visited the Republic of Vanuatu to initiate formal, bilateral co-operation between the two countries. The visit resulted in the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Palestine and Vanuatu for future development co-operation in various sectors, especially health. This marks the first official co-operation agreement between Palestine and a Pacific country. It should be noted that the original itinerary for this trip also included visits to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and that similar agreements were expected to be signed with these two countries. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, they were postponed to 2019.



The Ambassador during his visit to the Republic of Vanuatu

The Ambassador with the Director-General of PICA, Mr Imad Zuhairi (right), and the Education Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu





The Ambassador, Director-General of PICA, Mr Imad Zuhairi, and the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

2. On 25 August, Ambassador Abdulhadi was invited by the High Commission of Vanuatu in Canberra to attend a reception to welcome the Prime Minister of Vanuatu to Australia. The Prime Minister delivered a speech, praising the close and esteemed bilateral relations between Australia and Vanuatu, and acknowledged that Australian aid to his country had helped both strengthen its economy and facilitate a number of development projects. The meeting was attended by government officials and representatives from the diplomatic corps in Canberra.

The Ambassador with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu





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3. Ambassador Abdulhadi and the embassy's staff met on multiple occasions with some of the ambassadors of Pacific nations to Australia. The meetings mainly discussed areas of potential co-operation between Palestine and these countries, especially Palestine's capacity and willingness to carry out needs assessments and to prepare implementation strategies for bilateral, 'South-to-South' development co-operation. Of particular focus on this front were: Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea.



Relations with the International and Arab Diplomatic Corps

1. On 15 February, the Ambassador and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh attended the symposium, organised by the Australian National University in Canberra, titled 'United Nations in the Pacific: Supporting Pacific Island Countries to Attain the Sustainable Development Goals'. The lecture was presented by various UN officials who had first-hand experience with the challenges faced by — and the opportunities available to — Pacific Island nations.
2. On 1 March, Ambassador Abdulhadi, as the Vice President of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC) Heads of Mission group in Canberra, participated in the group's annual conference at the Indonesian embassy. The representatives of member missions discussed the components of the Organisation's annual plan, which included meetings with Australian officials, interfaith dialogue sessions, and the Ramadhan iftar. They also ran through the implications of President Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and consequently decided to focus their attention moving forward on the holy city and to make it the theme of future events.



Left: Representatives of the member missions of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Canberra
Right: The guests at the dinner. Seated are Ms HK Yu (left) and Mr Matthew Neuhaus (right)

3. On 9 March, the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E. Mr Mohamed Khairat, hosted a farewell dinner for the outgoing head of DFAT's Middle East and Africa Division, Mr. Matthew Neuhaus, at his residence in Canberra. The dinner was also an opportunity to welcome the new First Assistant Secretary of this Division, Ms HK Yu. Ambassador Abdulhadi and other Arab ambassadors were in attendance.



- On 21 March, the Ambassador attended a working lunch with the Governor-General of Victoria at the residence of the Ambassador of Kuwait in Canberra. This esteemed guest delivered a speech in which she encouraged greater co-operation between the state of Victoria and the Arab world, especially in education and tourism. She also expressed her wish to hold future discussions with Arab ambassadors to develop more joint programs.



Left: At the residence of the Ambassador of Kuwait, featuring the Arab ambassadors and the Governor-General of Victoria (centre)

- On 26 March, The Australia Arab Chamber of Commerce and Industry organised a working lunch in Canberra. President and National Chairman Mr Roland Jabbour led the lunch and discussion. In attendance were the First Assistant Secretary of DFAT's Middle East and Africa Division, Ms HK Yu, and most Arab ambassadors, including Ambassador Abdulhadi.

- On 26 April, the Palestinian Delegation in Canberra hosted a meeting of the Steering Committee of the OIC Heads of Mission group which was attended by representatives of the relevant Arab and Muslim-majority diplomatic missions. The meeting's agenda focused largely on the annual activities and future plans of the OIC, including the celebrations of the annual Ramadan iftar and the OIC day. It was suggested and agreed that clerics from al-Azhar in Cairo should be brought to Australia as part of a program to inform Australians of all faiths and none of the true, moderate face of Islam.

Right: Steering Committee of the OIC group in Canberra at the Palestinian Delegation





7. On 9 May, the Ambassador attended an ordinary meeting of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Canberra, which was chaired by the Ambassador of the State of Kuwait. The meeting discussed several issues like President Trump's embassy move, the 2018 Arab Summit, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's new peace initiative, and the likely implications of the US's upcoming 'Deal of the Century'.



Left: Meeting of the Council of Arab Ambassadors at the residence of the Ambassador of Kuwait in Canberra. Also in attendance was prominent Palestinian-Australian businessman Mr Khalil Shahin

Right: The Ambassador attended the Africa Day event in Canberra

8. On 23 May, the staff of the Palestinian Delegation participated in 'Africa Day', an event held by the African Group of States in Canberra. Some high-profile MPs, among them Penny Wong and Mark Coulton, and representatives from the Arab and international diplomatic corps attended the event. The Dean of the Council of Arab Ambassadors delivered a speech in which he mentioned the unfolding and serious developments in Israel-Palestine.
9. On 7 June, the working group of the OIC in Canberra, led by the Embassy of Kuwait, organised an iftar dinner that was attended by more than 200 people, including some local political figures and members of the general public. The iftar had sixteen food stalls serving the traditional foods of the participating countries. Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon was selected to be the MC of the ceremony. Ambassador Abdulhadi, as the Canberra OIC's Vice President, delivered a speech in which he acknowledged the significance of the holy month of Ramadan and praised the commitment and self-restraint of the Muslim community in Australia in its observance. He also spoke about Ramadan's many meanings, and reflected on the sad reality that sees most Palestinian Muslims barred from entering Jerusalem to offer their Ramadhan prayers at the al-Aqsa Mosque.



Ms Suheir Gedeon was the MC of the ceremony

The Palestinian stall



10. On 23 June, the Ambassador and many representatives from the international diplomatic corps attended the commemoration of World Refugee Day in Canberra. The representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) delivered a speech in which he urged those present to reflect on the suffering and misery of many of the world's refugees, and called upon their host countries to honour their commitments under international law and to provide them with basic facilities and services so that they may live in dignity.

11. On 25 June, the Ambassador attended a book launch and brief film screening at Parliament House in Canberra hosted by the Parliamentary Cyprus Friendship Committee. The event featured a new book by renowned academic Dr Michalis S. Michael (husband of federal Labor MP Ms Maria Vamvakinou), titled *Cyprus and the Roadmap for Peace*, which seeks to re-asses the conventional wisdom regarding conflict resolution and peace building on the island, and to offer alternative and feasible pathways. This event was attended by various MPs, Dr Michael and co-author Dr Yucel Vural, the Ambassador of Cyprus to Australia, and a number of representatives from the international diplomatic corps.



Top: A speaker on stage at the UNHCR event in Canberra

Bottom: Ambassador Abdulhadi with the Ambassador of Cyprus (third from right) and members of the Parliamentary Cyprus Friendship Committee





12. The Ambassador and the Delegation's staff participated in the national days of the countries of the Arab and international diplomatic corps. They also attended many diplomatic farewells, receptions, books of condolence, movie screenings, lectures, luncheons, etc. throughout the year.
13. On 11 July, the Ambassador attended a culture and art festival organised by the High Commission of Pakistan in Canberra. The Pakistani Charge d'Affaires warmly welcomed Ambassador Abdulhadi and stressed Pakistan's unfailing support for and solidarity with the Palestinian people and their cause. On display were many paintings, artifacts and handicrafts that showcased Pakistan's historical, cultural and artistic traditions.



14. On 25 July, the Ambassador met with His Excellency the Ambassador of Kuwait Mr Najeeb al-Bader at the Kuwait Embassy to discuss some preliminary preparations for the 2019 federal Parliamentary delegation to Kuwait and Palestine. The Ambassador presented a concept paper that included the key objectives and the tentative program of the trip. They agreed that such a visit by federal MPs would be both important and timely. Funding arrangements were also locked in.

Top: One of the displays at the festival

Right: Ambassador Abdulhadi (left) with the Ambassador of Kuwait





15. On 27 July, the Ambassador attended a farewell lunch at DFAT for the Ambassador of Iran and, on 17 September, for the UAE Ambassador.



Farewell lunch for the UAE Ambassador



Farewell lunch for the Iranian Ambassador

16. On 16 August, Charge d’Affaires Ms Suheir Gedeon attended the OIC Steering Committee’s meeting at the Moroccan Embassy to discuss and begin preparations for the annual OIC Day. The relevant representatives prepared a running sheet and agreed on the activities to be included in the Day. Unfortunately, due to time constraints and several unforeseen circumstances, the event was later re-scheduled for early 2019.

17. On the same day, First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh attended a dinner organised by the Council of Latin American Ambassadors at the Hyatt Hotel in Canberra. The event, titled ‘Latin American Flavours Festival: Venezuelan Table’, featured a smorgasbord of traditional food from this country. Guests were also treated to a series of dance performances and cultural exhibitions that showcased the diversity and multiculturalism of Venezuela and Latin America.

Right: First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh (rear) with the Ambassador of Venezuela and his spouse at the Latin American Flavours Festival





18. On 15 August, Chargé d'Affaires Ms Suheir Gedeon delivered a letter of appreciation on behalf of Ambassador Abdulhadi to the Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia in Australia, H.E. Mr Jaime Bueno-Miranda, expressing the Palestinian government's sincere gratitude to the Colombian government for its recent decision to formally recognise the State of Palestine.



Colombia is the 137th state of the 193-member United Nations to take this principled and courageous decision to restore diplomatic and international legitimacy to Palestine and its people. The decision to recognise the State of Palestine as a “free, independent and sovereign state” on 1967 borders was made by former president Juan Manuel Santos on 3 August during his final week in office, and was ratified last week by his successor President Ivan Duque.

19. On 20 August, First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh attended a video screening and live conference entitled ‘Pacific Waves’. It was hosted by the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) in Canberra, and focused on the environmental challenges facing the Pacific countries as well as the strategies being implemented to protect these small island nations and their peoples from the natural disasters that have been occurring with alarming frequency in recent years.
20. At the invitation of the Ambassador of Morocco, the Ambassador met with a handful of visiting Moroccan parliamentarians. They discussed the objectives and anticipated outcomes of their visit, especially those concerning the bilateral talks with their Australian counterparts. Other topics of discussion included the present threats to multilateralism and the rules-based international order, and the troubling political developments in and relating to the Israel-Palestine conflict. To honour these visiting parliamentarians, a lunch was then held at the residence of the Ambassador of Morocco in Canberra.



The discussions with the Moroccan parliamentarians who were visiting Australia and New Zealand

21. On 20 September, the Ambassador attended a reception organised by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See in Canberra (Apostolic Nunciature) to join the representatives of the delegation of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue. The speakers at this event emphasized the role of inter-faith dialogue in achieving regional and international peace.



Left: The Ambassador with the delegates at the Holy See's diplomatic mission in Canberra



Right: The celebration of the UN Day of Peace in Canberra

22. On 21 September, the Ambassador and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh participated in a ceremony organised by the UNIC in Canberra to commemorate the UN International Day of Peace. The Day is dedicated to promoting the value of peace among the world's nations. This year's celebration focused in particular on equality and co-operation between men and women, as well as methods to accelerate female empowerment and leadership in local communities.



23. On 27 September, the Ambassador and the Delegation's staff met with Mr Christopher Woodthorpe, Director-General of the UNIC in Canberra, Ms Julia Dean, National Information Officer, and some of the Centre's other staff. They discussed the preparations for the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which is held on 29 November annually. They agreed on the theme: 'supporting the Palestinian refugees and UNRWA' (in response to President Trump's complete withdrawal of funds to the Agency), and firmed up the arrangements regarding the venue (Parliament House) and the logistics.



24. On 16 October, the day that Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced the potential move of Australia's embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and recognition of the latter as Israel's capital, the Palestinian Delegation convened an emergency meeting at its premises with the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Canberra, which attracted many journalists and media outlets. Following the meeting, both the Delegation and the Council issued a press release, expressing their concern and disappointment with the announcement, and later sent a joint letter to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, urging them both to consider the potential repercussions of such a move (especially how it would affect Australia's national interests and security), and to uphold their obligations under international law.

Right: Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne during the October 16 media conference in which the former announced a possible policy shift on Jerusalem





25. On 17 October, the Delegation's staff attended a briefing organised by the UNIC on the state of human development in the Pacific countries at its headquarters in Canberra. UN regional experts took the attendees through the complex political and social factors at play in these island nations, explained the set of human development indicators vis-à-vis the Pacific, and compared these countries' national development plans with the UN Millennium Development Goals.
26. On 24 October, the Delegation's staff attended the celebration of the United Nations Day at Old Parliament House in Canberra. UNIC Director Mr Christopher Woodthorpe gave a speech in which he evaluated the achievements of the United Nations, especially those that have advanced international peace, security and development.
27. On 7 November, the Delegation's staff attended the symposium organised by the UNIC and hosted by the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA representatives reviewed and analyzed their most important activities in the Pacific region throughout 2018, particularly their disaster relief management and training, which enable more timely and efficient responses to natural disasters, which, in turn, save more lives.
28. On 8 November, Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon attended a dinner and lecture on the role of Egypt in the First World War at the Embassy of Egypt. Dr Ashraf Sabry, who gave the lecture, is a renowned academic who specialises in modern military history at the Nasser Military Academy. The event was attended by diplomats, members of the Egyptian community in Australia, and some local academics.
29. On 12 November, the Ambassador attended a meeting of the Council of Arab Ambassadors that was hosted by the Lebanese Ambassador, H.E. Mr Milad Raad, at his residence. The meeting was of particular importance owing to the time that had lapsed since the group's last meeting. They discussed the latest developments in Israel-Palestine (including Palestine's appointment to the Chair of the UN G77), recent and upcoming elections in Australia, and assessed the present state of — and suggested strategies to strengthen — Arab-Australian relations.



30. On 17 November, the Ambassador and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh visited the 2018 Indonesian Cultural Festival, which was held by the Embassy of Indonesia in Canberra. The festival included several artistic and dance performances that showcased the depth, intricacy and traditions of Indonesian cultural history. Various Indonesian foods, textiles, embroideries and handicrafts were also exhibited. The Indonesian Ambassador, H.E. Mr Kristiarto Legowo, thanked Ambassador Abdulhadi for his attending the cultural festival on stage, informing the audience of the deep and long-standing relationship and solidarity between Indonesia and Palestine.



Top left: The Ambassador at the Indonesian Cultural Festival, which was held at the Indonesian embassy in Canberra

Above: The Ambassador with his Indonesian (centre) and Lebanese (left) counterparts



31. On 29 November 2018, the United Nations Information Centre for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, in partnership with the General Delegation of Palestine to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, the federal Parliamentary Friends of Palestine and the Council of Arab Ambassadors, hosted a reception to observe the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People at Parliament House in Canberra.

Among the attendees were federal MPs and senators, members of the international and Arab diplomatic corps, representatives of local and national advocacy and civil society groups, and Palestinian community members. This year's theme was Palestinian refugees and the important work of UNRWA, with a particular focus on the Agency's current financial crisis and the consequent impact this has had on the well-being of and opportunities for the vulnerable people it serves. Speakers included co-chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine the Hon Sussan Ley MP and Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP, UNHCR Regional Representative Mr Thomas Albrecht, Dean of the Council of Arab Ambassadors H.E. Mr Mohamed Khairat, and Head of the General Delegation of Palestine H.E. Mr Izzat Abdulhadi. The event also featured a special recorded message from UNRWA's Commissioner-General, Mr Pierre Krähenbühl, and a video of *Dabkeh*, the folkloric Palestinian dance.



The Ambassador and Delegation's staff at the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People event at Parliament House in Canberra



Top left: the Ambassador with some federal MPs and Arab ambassadors at the event

Top right: Ms Suheir Gedeon (left) with Ms Noor Rjoub

Bottom left: Ms Noura Saleh (left) with a guest in front of the photo exhibition

Right: The Ambassador speaking at the event



32. On 6 December, the Ambassador bade farewell to the Ambassador of Turkey at a farewell lunch at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).



Top left: the Ambassador and some staff from DFAT's Middle East and Africa Division during the farewell lunch for the Turkish Ambassador

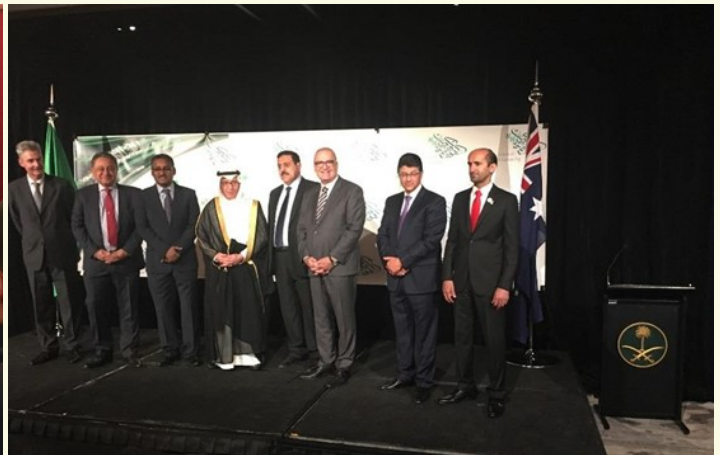
Top right and left: the Ambassador at some diplomatic end-of-year celebrations

33. On 7 December, the Ambassador participated in an end-of-year celebration hosted by the Ambassador of Morocco at his residence. On the following day, he participated in another, similar event that doubled as a Christmas party; it was organised by the Ambassador of the Republic of Lebanon at his residence.



34. On 9 December, Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon participated in an important symposium at the UN Information Centre on the status of women in the Pacific countries' labor markets. Discussed were the current strategies that were being implemented both to enhance female involvement in a range of sectors, and to increase their competitiveness with men. The symposium was attended by a number of academics and researchers who were engaged with the subject, as well as representatives of the diplomatic missions in Canberra.

35. Extensive preparations were made to facilitate the January 2019 Australian federal Parliamentary delegation to Kuwait and Palestine. Eight parliamentarians and three others (spouses and staffers/advisors to other MPs) took part in this trip. It was a valuable opportunity for these federal parliamentarians – who were from four different parties – to gain first-hand exposure to the political realities on the ground in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and to confer with Palestinian officials about pertinent issues ranging from the daily indignities of the Israeli occupation to economic development and investment in Palestine.



More diplomatic engagements attended by Ambassador Abdulhadi and the Delegation's staff



Relations with Civil Society

1. In early February, the Palestinian Delegation contributed to the screenings of the Arab Idol film, Mahboob al-Arab, which were organized by the Middle East Culture Society (MECS) at the Australian National University. The Palestinian Delegation provided traditional food to be enjoyed by the attendees.
2. The Delegation, represented by Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh, participated in 'Harmony Day' at Hughes Primary School in Canberra. The Palestinian stall was characterized by an impressive display of ceramic products, olive-wood carvings and handicrafts, and traditional Palestinian embroidery. This gave the school's students and staff the opportunity to acquaint themselves with Palestinian art and culture, and what makes them distinct. There was also a photographic exhibition on Jerusalem on display titled 'Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine'; it had been prepared following President Trump's 2017 Jerusalem declaration.



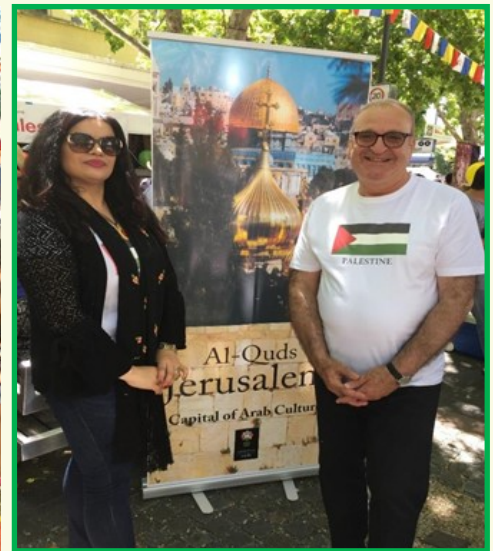
The Palestinian Delegation at the Harmony Day event at Hughes Primary School in Canberra. Left to right: Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon, Ambassador Mr Izzat Abdulhadi, First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh



3. On 18 February, the Palestinian Delegation, other embassies and diplomatic missions, and civil society and cultural groups participated in the annual National Multicultural Festival in Canberra to celebrate Australia's diversity and multiculturalism. There were over 300,000 visitors and the festival lasted for three full days. The Delegation was a returning stallholder, and decided that this year's theme would be the city of Jerusalem. The aim was to present the cultural and historical life of Jerusalem in a vibrant and engaging way, and to shine a light on its significance to the three monotheistic faiths. This theme was also part of a concerted pushback against Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

In this context, the following was arranged:

- a. A photo exhibition under the theme 'I am Jerusalem'. The boards were decorated with the historical and touristic places of interest in Jerusalem, and the daily life of Palestinians in the city, in particular, was showcased
- b. Posters and flyers with the same title to provide information on Jerusalem and Palestine
- c. T-shirts and caps
- d. A display of Palestinian embroideries, handicrafts, textiles, ceramics and food
- e. An adjoining stall managed by 'Palestine Fair Trade', an Australian NGO, to promote Palestinian produce and to encourage responsible trade practices, including the boycotting of goods produced in Israeli settlements
- d. The Palestinian *Dabkeh* troupe performed the traditional dance







- On 27 March, Ambassador Abdulhadi and First Secretary Noura Saleh met with Ms Stephanie Bull and Ms Sara Ozolins, Chief Operating Officer and International Programs Officer respectively, at the National Museum of Australia. They discussed a potential partnership with the Palestinian Museum in Ramallah in various fields such as capacity building and visiting/loan exhibitions. The Ambassador pointed out that many of the latter's exhibitions focus on the preservation of culture and identity, the 'human face' of life under occupation, and how art and literature are employed by Palestinians to resist the corrosive and demoralizing effects of dispossession. Despite their having a full schedule for the next five years, they expressed genuine interest in the proposal and would consider it further in due course.

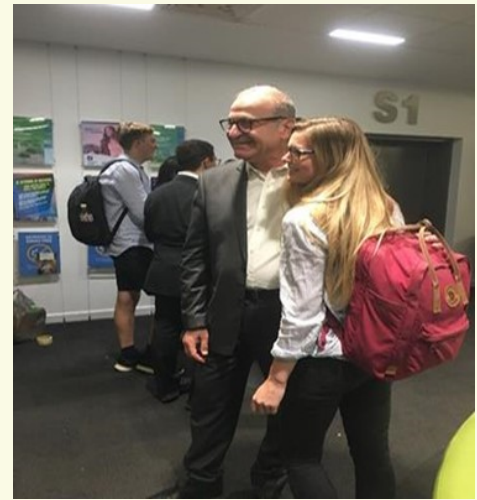


Some of the items on display at the Palestinian Museum in Birzeit, Palestine





- On 10 April, Ambassador Abdulhadi gave a lecture on Palestinian politics and history at Monash University in Melbourne. It was organized by the International Relations Association of that university and garnered a lot of interest from students.



The Ambassador with a student after the lecture (right) and with the board members of the International Relations Association at Monash University

- On 19 April, the Ambassador attended an exhibition opening at the National Museum of Australia, in cooperation with the UAE embassy, titled 'Yemen and Culture in the FSU'. This exhibition displayed traditional musical instruments, ceramics, jewelry, and more.
- On 21 April, the Canberra Palestinian community and the staff of the Palestinian Delegation participated in a peaceful rally and advocacy event held by the Australians for Justice and Peace in Palestine group. They expressed their condemnation of the apartheid-like status quo in the occupied West Bank, and decried the recent killing of unarmed demonstrators in the Gaza Strip, calling on the Australian government to take a firmer stand and to support the forthcoming UN resolution to provide Palestinian civilians living under Israeli occupation with more effective protection.



Right: The Delegation's staff at the rally



- On 12 April, the Ambassador participated in the annual gala dinner of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA), a private research institution on foreign policy in Canberra. The Director welcomed the Ambassador and expressed her desire to one day see the Palestinian people have a state of their own.



The Ambassador at the AIIA function in Canberra

- On 4 May, Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon attended the opening ceremony of Canberra's Sheikh Sabah Hamad Mosque alongside Arab ambassadors and representatives of the Australian Arab and Muslim communities. The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait delivered a speech praising the efficiency with which the mosque was built. He explained that it is a building of tolerance and brotherhood, and that it would welcome people of all faiths as is characteristic of moderate Islam.



Sheikh Sabah Hamad Mosque in Canberra. Its construction was financed by the State of Kuwait



10. On 8 May, Ambassador Abdulhadi and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh participated in the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the International Red Cross at the Swiss embassy in Canberra. The Swiss Federal Ambassador delivered a speech praising the work of the organisation, especially its provision of assistance to victims of natural disasters and arbitrary conflicts and violence. At the event, volunteers of the Red Cross outlined their current focus areas and projects.



Left: Celebrating the work of the Australian Red Cross at the Swiss embassy in Canberra
Right: The Ambassador (far left) alongside fellow diplomats at the Australian National Museum's exhibition opening (12)

11. On 18 May, Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh attended a Ramadan iftar celebration hosted by the Bluestar Intercultural Centre at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. Ms Gedeon addressed the audience and acknowledged the importance of the Muslim community's observance of this holy month. She also spoke about its meaning of reflection and tolerance, stressing how important these values are within Australia's multicultural society.
12. On 19 April, the Ambassador participated in a cultural exhibition launch organised by the Australian National Museum in Canberra in co-operation with the embassy of the United Arab Emirates titled 'Faith and Culture in Islam'. This exhibition included the presentation of traditional costumes, musical instruments and handicrafts, among other items of cultural and historical value.



13. On 20 April, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba, First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh participated in a joint event that also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the 'Association of Islamic Projects, Dar al-Fatwa' in Sydney. It was attended by members of the federal Parliament and featured a speech by NSW Labor MP Shaoquett Moselmane in which he underscored the significance of the Palestinian Nakba and its enduring legacy.



Left: Ms Noura Saleh and some attendees at the Ramadan iftar and Nakba commemoration event in Sydney
Right: Welcoming Mr George Azumah (second left) at the Palestinian Delegation in Canberra (15)

14. On 29 May, Ambassador Abdulhadi and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh participated in a Lowy Institute symposium in Canberra. It was held to launch a much-anticipated book published by the Institute, entitled 'Remaking the Middle East: how a troubled region may save itself' by Anthony Bubaloa. Several topics were discussed, particularly the situation in Egypt after the Arab Spring and its implications for the Palestine-Israel conflict.
15. On 6 June, the Ambassador and staff welcomed Mr George MacLean Azumah, CEO of Med-Connect, to the Delegation in Canberra. They discussed his plans for a trial project in a Palestinian city to implement a comprehensive online health service through which local GPs could share general and specialized advice with registered patients. It would be based on a successful pilot program in Australia. They exchanged relevant documents and information to assist with the realization of this program.



16. On the same day, the Ambassador and Ms Noura Saleh participated in an annual iftar dinner hosted by the Lebanese Future Movement of Australia in Canberra. Arab ambassadors and members of the Australian Arab and Muslim communities also attended the iftar. Mr Mohamed Barghag, the party's local representative, thanked the audience and explained the history and the mission of the Movement. He also expressed his concern about the recent political developments in and regarding Palestine.



17. On 14 June, the Palestinian Delegation welcomed a travel journalist, Ms Diana Streak, who had decided to write an article on tourism in Palestine for the online publication *Time to Wander (The Travel Collective)*. The Delegation provided her with an overview of the most salient points of historical and cultural interest in Palestine, and passed on some insider tips (including the locals' favorite eateries, bookshops,

etc.) to help give her article an 'edge'.

18. On 22 June, the Ambassador participated in a roundtable discussion, organized by the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies (CAIS) at the Australian National University. The seminar was hosted Ms Basma Qadami, a representative of the Syrian opposition, who presented a comprehensive analysis of the Syrian crisis and outlined practical and equitable ways to resolve it. The seminar was attended by a number of academics at the ANU as well as members of the Arab and international diplomatic corps.



19. On 9 August, Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon participated in a workshop organized by the director of the National Multicultural Festival in Canberra. It was an opportunity to evaluate all aspects of the 2018 festival and to discuss the preliminary preparations for the next one, including strategies to overcome the identified encumbrances of 2018.
20. On the evening of Wednesday 8 August, a delegation from the *Association for the Development of Arabic Poetry and Heritage*, headed by Dr Bahia (Betty) Abou-Hamad, visited the Palestinian Delegation so that their guest of honour, Professor Rifaat Obaid, Foundation Professor of Semitic Studies at the University of Sydney, could offer his gratitude to Ambassador Abdulhadi for his ongoing support for the Association and its efforts to amplify the voices of Arab intellectuals and poets in Australia. Professor Obaid had received a certificate of recognition from Ambassador Abdulhadi acknowledging his many contributions and achievements in the fields of literature and language studies. As Chargé d’Affaires, Ms Suheir Gedeon received the fourteen-strong delegation on Ambassador Abdulhadi’s behalf, and discussed with them some key issues relating to the Association’s work and activities. She also extended her appreciation for their warm conversation.



Prof Obaid receiving the award from Ms Suheir Gedeon on behalf of the Palestinian Delegation



21. On 23 July, the Ambassador met with Mrs. Caroline Graham, President of the Northern Beaches Committee for Palestine, an active solidarity group based in Sydney, at the Palestinian Delegation in Canberra. They discussed some of the strategies of solidarity groups in Australia, and their relationships with the Australian government and key decision-makers. She also updated the Ambassador on the outcomes of her organization's meeting with the former Australian foreign minister, the Hon Julie Bishop. She explained that the meeting focused primarily on Australia's voting pattern at the UN Human Rights Council, which has been consistently anti-Palestine.



The Ambassador and some of the Delegation's staff with Mrs. Caroline Graham

22. On 30 July, the Ambassador agreed to an interview with a visiting German PhD scholar, Mr Bernd Hirschberger, at the Palestinian Delegation in Canberra. Mr Hirschberger's research focuses on the different representations of Palestine on social media, and how different Palestinian institutions (especially diplomatic missions) use social media and for what purpose. He sought information about the Delegation's media strategy, its target groups, and the contents of its newsletters/public reports.



23. On 20 September, the Ambassador and the Delegation’s staff met at Australian Parliament House with representatives of Oxfam, a non-governmental and international aid group. Oxfam is currently running a programme to support Palestine’s agricultural sector using funds provided through the Australian government’s AMENCA3 initiative. The local representatives briefed the Ambassador on both the progress of the programme and the impediments encountered so far, especially regarding access to and supply in the Gaza Strip. Both sides also raised their concerns regarding Australia’s recent cuts to and suspensions of these types of programmes. All agreed to strengthen co-ordination to ensure that the existing programmes continue to be implemented as effectively as possible.



The Ambassador and some of the Delegation’s staff with Oxfam representatives inside Parliament House in Canberra

24. On Thursday 20 September, Ambassador Abdulhadi attended the opening of the National Museum of Australia’s (NMA) latest exhibition, Rome: City and Empire, in Canberra. The reception was attended by around 300 people, including members of the international diplomatic corps, and featured Dr Thorsten Opper, Senior Curator at the British Museum and head of its Roman section, and NMA Director Dr Mathew Trinca, both of whom formally inaugurated the exhibition by speaking about both the significance of the Roman Empire’s status as the world’s first superpower and its enduring legacy.





25. On 22 September, the Ambassador attended the African Awards Ceremony, which celebrates the achievements in education, business, civil society, etc. of members of Australia's African communities. The event included traditional foods and cultural performances, and speakers praised the contribution of African communities towards promoting harmony and multiculturalism within Australian society.

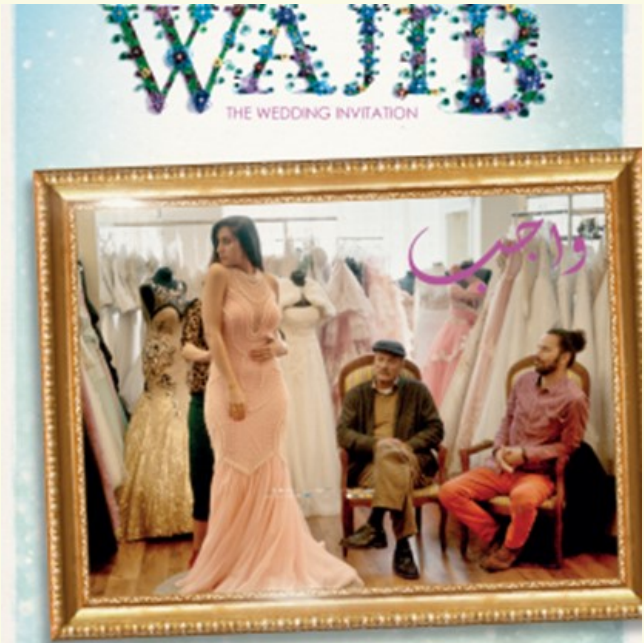


The Ambassador at the Awards Ceremony and dinner event in Canberra

26. On 26 September, First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh participated in a meeting of the Women's International Club (WIC) in Canberra; its membership includes a number of female diplomats and business leaders.



27. On 18 October, the Palestinian Film Festival was launched in Canberra. The Festival was organised by the Palestinian Delegation in conjunction with the Foundation for Cultural Media, a Palestinian non-profit organisation. The Festival attracted diplomats, local Canberrans, members of civil society groups, Australian government officials, and members of the Arab and Palestinian communities. The Ambassador delivered a speech before the premiere screening of the film *Wajib – The Wedding Invitation* in which he briefly charted the development of Palestinian cinema, highlighting how its productions continue to reflect the political and social realities in Palestine.



Above left: (from left) Ms Noura Saleh, Ambassador Izzat Abdulhadi, Ms Noor Rjoub and Ms Suheir Gedeon at the film's premiere in Canberra





28. On 20 October, Ambassador Abdulhadi participated in the annual dinner of the Islamic Museum of Australia in Melbourne. The dinner was attended by members of the international and Arab diplomatic corps in addition to a large group of people from Melbourne's Arab and Islamic communities.



Right: the Ambassador with guests at the dinner

Left: the façade of the Islamic Museum of Australia



29. On 9 November, the Ambassador and First Secretary Noura Saleh met with Tim Costello, Chief Advocate of World Vision Australia, at a working dinner in Canberra. During the meeting they discussed several topical issues of concern, including the position of the US towards the Israel-Palestine conflict, the reductions of Australian aid to the Palestinian National Authority and some Palestinian NGOs, the implications of these reductions, and the stagnant peace process. They also discussed the consequences of the suspension of World Vision's funding by the Coalition government as a result of spurious and yet-to-be-proven accusations that people whom the charity organisation employs have previously supported/funded terrorism.



Right: Rev Tim Costello's meeting with the Ambassador and First Secretary Noura Saleh



30. On 26 November, the Ambassador and Ms Noura Saleh met with Mr Kevin Bray, President of Australians for Justice and Peace in Palestine (AJPP), at the Palestinian Delegation. They discussed and evaluated the 'Run for Palestine' event and reviewed the recent activities spearheaded by his organisation, especially those that focused on expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people. In addition to this, they discussed the steps that must be taken to ensure that the next Labor government recognize the State of Palestine.



31. On 1 December, First Secretary Noura Saleh attended the launch of a Canberra-based Islamic superannuation fund at the Hyatt hotel. The project, which is an initiative of the Australian Capital Islamic Investment (ACI) group, aims to establish superannuation and property investment funds that comply with Islamic law. It was also announced that the group would expand its accounting, auditing and asset management services to the community. Representatives from the international and Arab diplomatic corps were also in attendance.



32. On 2 December, the Ambassador and First Secretary Noura Saleh participated in the celebration of the annual Dar ul-Fatwa/Islamic High Council of Australia Multicultural Mawlid concert in Sydney. This event, which is held at Sydney Olympic Park, places great emphasis on its multicultural character, and brings together people of all backgrounds to celebrate the Prophet's birthday in a spirit of harmony and inter-faith understanding.



Above and below: The Ambassador participating in the Mawlid event in Sydney





33. On 13 December, Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh attended the 2019 Australian of the Year exhibition, which honors hardworking, talented, compassionate and community-focused Australians, at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. Many dignitaries, representatives of civil society groups and members of the international diplomatic corps were also there. One highlight of the event was the speech, which was delivered by the Director-General of the Museum, praising the awardees for their professional achievements.



More civil society activities in which the Delegation participated



Relations with the Palestinian Community

1. On 24 February, after nearly all the consultative workshops with the Palestinian community in each Australian state, the Delegation arranged the final workshop in Adelaide. The participants discussed the main challenges facing the Palestinian community in South Australia, as well as possible programmes that could enhance cohesion and engagement. Regarding the latter, the Ambassador stressed the importance of organizing regular social activities that promote the Palestinian national identity and emphasize the importance of teamwork. Collaborative effort would also be required, he said, to lobby Australian decision-makers to adopt an even-handed position – and one that is consonant with international law – towards the Palestine-Israel conflict.



Left: the Ambassador speaking at the workshop, which was organized by the Palestinian community in Adelaide
Right: the Palestinian Ambassador with participants at the Brisbane community workshop

2. On 3 April, the Ambassador participated in a Palestinian community workshop in Brisbane. The co-ordination committee of the QLD Palestinian community oversaw the proceedings, which included finalizing the annual strategic plan that lays out their community development programmes, governance procedures, lobbying strategies, networking and advocacy initiatives. The Ambassador delivered an informal speech in which he thanked both the sponsors and those who developed the strategic plan.



- On 24 March, the Palestinian community in Canberra organised a social event to welcome new members. It was also an opportunity to celebrate Easter and to honour the Palestinian football team which won the local championship. The Ambassador was there to especially congratulate the members of the Palestinian *Dabkeh* troupe for their extraordinary performance at both the 2018 National Multicultural Festival and the 2017 UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.



Above: the Ambassador and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh at the Palestinian community picnic in Canberra

- On 10 May, Ambassador Abdulhadi and a group of cadets were invited by the President of the Palestinian Engineers' Association in Sydney, Mr Mohammed Khaled Abu Mohammed, to hear an address about the activities and plans of the association. There was also a focus on ways to improve communication between the Association and the Palestinian Delegation in Australia.



Right: The visit of the Palestinian Engineers' Association to the Delegation in Canberra



- On 18 May, Ambassador Abdulhadi attended a Ramadan iftar that was hosted by the Palestinian General Workers' Union and the Palestinian Club in Sydney. The event also commemorated the 70th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba. On this occasion, the Ambassador, former NSW premier and federal senator the Hon Bob Carr, and Club representative Mr Eddy Zananiri all delivered speeches. They acknowledged the importance to Muslims of observing the holy month of Ramadhan, explained its different meanings, and spent time reflecting on the plight of Palestinians since the 1948 Nakba. They also condemned the policies of the Netanyahu and Trump administrations towards Palestine, and shone a light on the determination of the Palestinian people to maintain their national identity and to resist Israel's ongoing attempts to fracture and supplant it.



Above left: the Ambassador and former Australian foreign minister the Hon Bob Carr (third from right)

Above: the Ambassador delivering a speech at the ceremony

Right: the Ambassador at the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba, which was organized by the Palestinian Club and the Palestinian General Workers' Union in Sydney



- On 20 May, Ambassador Abdulhadi attended a Ramadan iftar hosted by Mr Khalil Shaheen, a prominent Palestinian businessman, in Adelaide. Mr Shaheen spoke about his own family's experience of the Nakba and how, despite all the loss and grief that followed, they were able to establish a successful business in Australia.



The Ambassador with religious figures and diplomatic personnel at the well-attended Adelaide iftar

- On 23 May, Counsellor Ms Suheir Gedeon and First Secretary Ms Noura Saleh attended Ramadan iftar celebrations hosted by the Canberra Palestinian community. Ms Gedeon delivered a speech congratulating the Palestinian community in Canberra for its forbearance during the observance of another Ramadan, and highlighted its meaning of spiritual reflection and tolerance—two important qualities that contribute to Australia's being a harmonious, multicultural society. She also spoke about the recent political developments in and concerning Palestine, and how this iftar had coincided with the 70th anniversary of the Nakba.



Right: Ms Suheir Gedeon and Ms Noura Saleh at the Palestinian community iftar and 70 years of Nakba observance event in Canberra



- On 13 July, the Palestinian Delegation welcomed Ms Rana Cobbin, President of the QLD Palestinian community and advocacy group *Falesteen*. They discussed some practical strategies to enhance both the reach and effectiveness of the activities of the Palestinian community in Queensland, and their relationship with the Palestinian Delegation in Canberra. Ms Cobbin also identified some key challenges that face the QLD Palestinian community, and propounded some workable solutions to overcome them. Following the discussion, both parties attended a dinner with the Palestinian community and members of local advocacy groups in Canberra.



The Ambassador (centre) and the Delegation's staff with Ms Rana Cobbin (second from right) and her husband Paul (second from left) at the Delegation's premises in Canberra

- In early August, Ambassador Abdulhadi visited Palestine and met with some Palestinian officials, including the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Riad Malki, and the Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister, Dr Kheriya Rasas. He also met with Mr Majdi al-Khalidi, Diplomatic Advisor to President Mahmoud Abbas, and the Assistant Ministerial Secretary for Asia, Africa and Australia, Mr Mazen Shamiyah. The Ambassador briefed them on the current, internal political developments in Australia, New Zealand and some Pacific countries, as well as the present state of bilateral relations between Palestine and Australia. He also visited the Palestinian International Co-operation Agency (PICA) and spoke with the Director-General, Mr Imad al-Zuhairi, about the progress of Palestine's fledgling development relations with some of the Pacific countries, especially the implementation of a medical co-operation program with Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands that would see a team of experts travel to these countries and complete a comprehensive needs assessment for funding and project commencement. He also visited some West-Bank Palestinian towns and villages, including the city of Dura near Hebron where he met with the president of the municipal council and discussed the possibility of partnering Dura (through a friendship agreement) with an Australian city of similar size.



Above right: Ambassador Abdulhadi with the Palestinian Foreign Minister, H.E. Dr Riad Malki

Above: Ambassador Abdulhadi during his meeting with the mayor and officials of the Municipal Council of Dura, near Hebron



10. On 14 November, the Ambassador and the Delegation's staff attended the celebration of Palestinian National Day at NSW Parliament House in Sydney. The event was organised by the Palestinian community in Sydney and was attended by state parliamentarians, Arab and international diplomatic corps members, and representatives of civil society groups. During the event a number of speeches were delivered; among the most important were those by the former Australian foreign minister, the Hon Bob Carr, the chair of the NSW Parliamentary Friends of Palestine, Ms Julia Fenn MP, NSW Labor MP Mr Shaoquett Moselmane, the Palestinian Ambassador Mr Izzat Abdulhadi, and a representative of the Palestinian community, Mr Eddie Zananiri. The speeches highlighted the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, especially those of return and self-determination. They also criticized Trump's decisions on Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees via UNRWA. Also accentuated were Australia's recent anti-Palestine positions in both its foreign policy and its voting pattern at UN fora, and how this would almost certainly change under a Labor government, especially if it commits to recognise the State of Palestine.



Ambassador Abdulhadi flanked by Ms Suheir Gedeon and Ms Noura Saleh (who were both in traditional Palestinian dress) on stage at the Palestinian National Day celebration at NSW Parliament House in Sydney



11. On 18 November, the staff of the Palestinian Delegation participated in the Run for Palestine project around Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra. This project is organized and implemented annually by the Australia Palestine Advocacy Network (APAN) and aims to raise the awareness of the Australian public of the Palestinian cause through a community-based recreational activity.



The Delegation's staff participating in the Run for Palestine event on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra



Organizational Development at the Palestinian Delegation

1. On 17 and 18 December, the Palestinian Delegation held a strategic planning workshop for its staff, who were joined by the current interns. An evaluation of the programmes and the administrative procedures over the past two years was developed and analyzed. Based on this, a comprehensive program for the next two years that addressed the identified weak spots and deficits was proposed and agreed upon, ensuring that all activities will have some political impact. The staff also surveyed 2018's political trends and developments in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific, and spotlighted those programs that most effectively responded to them.



The Ambassador with two of the GDOP's 2018 interns, ANU politics and international relations students Nadia Setianto and Natalia Siahaan, at December's strategic planning workshop



- The Palestinian Delegation continued to host a number of interns through the Australian National University's Internship Program (ANIP) who apply their research skills through small-scale projects and have the opportunity to be involved in the execution of the Delegation's programs, gaining familiarity with its mandate. Within the last three months, two interns have been preparing a policy brief on the Indo-Pacific region. It aims to recommend approaches that the State of Palestine can take to increase its political and economic engagement with the region.



Left: farewell lunch at the GDOP for 2018 interns Nadia and Natalia with the Delegation's staff



Left: the Ambassador and the Delegation's staff with Semester 2, 2018 ANIP interns Ian and Campbell during their farewell lunch



3. The Palestinian Delegation continued to prepare regular reports on important political topics in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.
4. The Delegation continued to provide quality consular services to members of the Palestinian community and others.
5. The Delegation continued to enhance its procedural performance through the issuance of program documents and annual plans, and through the holding of monthly staff meetings to discuss the management of programs and projects, including their planning, implementation, follow-up and evaluation.
6. The Delegation promptly and methodically responded to all correspondence from the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including sending several official letters to relevant stakeholders in the region. The Delegation also contacted all stakeholders to promote Palestine's accession to international organizations such as Interpol, the World Trade Organization, and others.
7. The Delegation prepared several reports on the development needs and priorities of certain Pacific island countries in order to start implementing a targeted programme of professional development co-operation between the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Palestinian Agency for International Co-operation and the group of relevant countries.





Evaluation

1. Relevancy

Has the General Delegation of Palestine responded through its programs and activities to the political environment in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific?

We strongly believe that most of the Palestinian Delegation's programs and activities responded in one way or another to the important political developments in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. The Delegation was also able to implement a number of appropriate and tailored programs for these political developments and variables, many of which were unanticipated.

Possibly the most notable program on this level was the Delegation's campaign to respond to and confront any attempt by the Australian government to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to that city. Prime Minister Morrison announced in October that he would launch a review into Australia's long-standing and bipartisan position, and that all options would be considered.

The selection of these counter-programs, which were aimed specifically at averting these two possibilities, was very careful and particular, and included: the convening of urgent meetings of the Council of Arab Ambassadors in Canberra and the heads of the diplomatic missions that are members of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), the issuing of official statements/press releases following these meetings, and contacting the relevant civil society and solidarity groups to liaise and co-ordinate. The Delegation also wrote an article that was published in Fairfax Media, and held a number of important meetings with key decision-making bodies in Australia.

The Palestinian Delegation responded promptly to this important but unanticipated political variable in Australia's foreign policy in 2018.





2. Effectiveness

Were the implemented programs and activities effective?

It is certain that most of the implemented programs and activities achieved in part or completely the intentions and stated objectives of the Palestinian Delegation in Canberra. This is because there was not only a connection, but a strong relationship, between the implemented activities and these stated objectives.

An indicative example is when the Delegation decided to strengthen the development and professional co-operation between the State of Palestine and some of the Pacific countries. This was one of its most important goals for 2018.

In this context, representatives of the Delegation convened a number of meetings with diplomats and heads of mission of these Pacific countries, at their embassies and high commissions in Canberra, to initiate and follow up on memorandums of understanding between these countries and the State of Palestine.

The Delegation also held a number of meetings and corresponded extensively with the Director-General and staff of the Palestinian International Co-operation Agency (PICA) in Ramallah to set the parameters of these memorandums, and to determine the specific details of the co-operation.

It was in this context that Ambassador Abdulhadi and the Director-General of PICA visited Vanuatu to conduct a scoping study to determine the country's development needs and priorities, and to develop tailored programs for development co-operation. As of now, a memorandum of understanding between the Republic of Vanuatu and the State of Palestine has been signed by both parties, and the implementation of these programs should commence shortly.

On this same point, it must also be mentioned that the Delegation did not achieve the required level of success, most likely due to external factors concerning both the weight of its authority and, more specifically, the intervention by some third parties to put pressure on these Pacific countries to refuse development co-operation with the State of Palestine. Similarly, after an agreement to visit the Solomon Islands to identify their development needs and priorities had been made, it was abruptly cancelled at the last minute due to third-party interference, as later explained to us by some officials of that country. This is an irritating example of the impact of factors that are beyond our control on the effective implementation of the Delegation's programs.



3. Efficiency

Was the implementation of the Delegation's programs and activities at its highest level of efficiency?

When the Delegation's outputs are measured against its inputs, an excellent equation can be seen in which a number of outputs, compared to largely consistent and limited inputs such as human and financial resources, were heightened.

It is noticeable just from the annual report that more than 120 activities were implemented through the Delegation's different programs, not including a number of additional cultural activities, or those that responded directly (and on a regular basis) to the instructions of the Foreign Ministry.

Possibly for this reason, the Delegation's staff were not able to execute all the activities that were included in the monthly plans within their specified and ideal timeframes. Where this was the case, some of the activities were carried forward to the following month/s.

Another reason for some activities not being completed on time can be found in a lack of effective time management and planning. Despite the outstanding level of efficiency that the staff applied in general, there were still some weak spots, mostly in terms of their professional abilities, that reduced the required level of efficiency for consistent work achievement.

Building further on what has been said, one of the important program components, which wrapped up the 2018 year, was the strategic planning workshop that involved all the Delegation's staff, and sought to develop further their professional skills. It was also an important opportunity to improve the planning process for all programs and activities.





4. Sustainability

It can be stated with accuracy that the program outputs during the past year continued to expand, especially on the main-program level, i.e., in bilateral relations, relations with the international and Arab diplomatic corps, and relations with civil society and Palestine advocacy groups.

In this framework, one of the most important tools that continued to be used this year was the Australian Parliamentary Friends of Palestine group, which regularly organised and co-ordinated Palestine-related activities and events. This group is considered by the Delegation to be one of its most valuable diplomatic resources.

Additionally, the relationship between the Delegation and the various Palestine solidarity groups took on, quite recently, a renewed co-operative dimension through organisational meetings, exchanging useful resources (such as concept papers, policy briefs, factsheets, etc.), and joint activities. It should be noted that the relationship with these groups was maintained and strengthened despite the difficulties that most of them face at the leadership level. The relationship between the Delegation and the various Palestinian community groups likewise continued to be enhanced through similar meetings and joint initiatives. The same also applies to the relationship with the Arab ambassadors (and those of Muslim-majority countries) through, for example, regular meetings of the Council of Arab Ambassadors and the OIC Heads of Mission group in Canberra.

In this context, it is necessary to point out that the relationship with other areas of Australian civil society remains quite weak, especially with regards to trade unions. Conversely, the relationship with religious organisations and the Arab and Islamic communities continued to develop, largely because of the convening of official joint meetings, and the Delegation's participation in these communities' activities.

That said, the managerial, financial and consular work of the Delegation progressed remarkably well, and reached yet a higher degree of institutionalisation.





5. Impact

Did the implemented activities create a notable impact on the political environment in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific?

We are not able to measure precisely the extent of influence that the Delegation in Canberra had on the relevant decision and policy-making establishments and processes in Australia, New Zealand and those Pacific countries with whom it engages. The same is also true for the various civil society organisations.

To accurately measure this impact would require important research tools and quantitative and qualitative indicators that are presently unavailable to the Delegation. However, it is certain that the Delegation had a positive influence in general on the political level in Australia. For example, the parliamentary trips that the Delegation organises annually to Palestine have a clear impact on the political position of the participating Australian parliamentarians vis-à-vis the Israel-Palestine conflict. A number of these parliamentarians have since delivered speeches in the federal Parliament supporting the rights of the Palestinian people, and many of them have joined the Parliamentary Friends of Palestine group after witnessing first-hand the daily realities in Palestine. This is especially true of members of the National Party, which is in a coalition with the conservative Liberal Party, and thus, generally more supportive of Israel.

Another example is the campaign that the Delegation led against the Morrison government's proposal to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to move Australia's embassy from Tel Aviv to that city. This campaign had a considerable impact, and no doubt contributed to the government's final decision not to proceed with either full recognition or an embassy move. The Delegation brought together all the ambassadors of Arab and Muslim-majority countries through various meetings, and sent urgent letters to the Australian Prime Minister and his Foreign Minister urging them not to move Australia's embassy to Jerusalem. The Delegation was, therefore, able to play a central and key role.

Similarly, the plan that was developed and implemented by the Delegation to encourage the Labor Party's 2018 National Conference to adopt a positive position in relation to the recognition of the State of Palestine had a significant impact on the Conference's decision to overwhelmingly endorse this resolution. The Delegation sent letters and factsheets to more than 800 state and federal Labor members across Australia, providing them with evidence-based and convincing reasons to vote in favour of recognition.



The intensive use of social media also helped to influence the Labor Conference's decision to recognise Palestine, as did the publishing of a number of reports on the subject and the convening of a number of relevant and official meetings.

Also worthy of mention here is the clear impact that the Delegation had on the unification of and enhanced co-ordination between the various Palestinian communities in different Australian states through the initiative of consultative workshops. These workshops were able to serve as platforms on which joint programs for the Palestinian communities could be proposed, discussed and implemented, and their organisational structures agreed upon. It must be said that while these efforts on the Delegation's part did not succeed completely, they raised the awareness in the Australian Palestinian community of the undeniable importance of these leadership and co-ordination committees in every state.

A co-ordination committee in each state was successfully established with its own clear mandate and programs, and the healthy participation of youth and women in these committees is to be commended.





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