

**THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AN END TO OCCUPATION,
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CLOSING PLENARY

A COMPLEX URGENT UNIVERSAL POLITICAL CAUSE

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To have been asked to deliver the final intervention in this Conference is for me a great and unexpected privilege. It was destined for my friend and colleague Professor Jacques Derrida, who has been forced to cancel his participation because of his current illness. Allow me, before anything else, to send our greetings and wishes to him. Jacques Derrida, as we all know, is one of the great living philosophers and public intellectuals of our time. A year ago, he received a degree *honoris causa* from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. When asked to join the Advisory Board of our International Network, he accepted without hesitation. In several occasions he has publicly and unequivocally expressed his commitment to the cause of the peace in Israel and Palestine through justice and the full recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and dignity. While deeply regretting not to be able to attend our Conference, he asked me to convey his warm feelings to us and express his complete solidarity. As everybody understands, I have no ambition to replace him or to express his views. I will speak in my own name, as a European academic with a story of

intellectual and political commitments on the left, who feels increasingly concerned by the insecurity and injustice in our “globalized” world (two inseparable aspects, admittedly), and who – while certainly not looking for any substitutive figure for the “lost” Proletariat or the Damned of the Earth – finds it necessary to maintain the tradition of cosmopolitanism and internationalism.

This Conference in my opinion has been a useful one. In spite of an extremely difficult situation it will, I am sure, carry good effects over time. It also had its limitations, above all the quantitative unbalance of the delegations coming from Israel and Palestine, which primarily has material causes (our colleagues from Gaza and the West Bank being forcefully prevented from traveling abroad), but also some political roots on which we should keep reflecting and asking ourselves. To conclude our debates, I will not offer a summary of the various interventions, much less a synthesis of their conclusions or a program of coming initiatives, but I will speak about the “cause” that assembles us here, by which we feel “interpellated”, and which commands our future work : the Palestinian Cause. The words in our title express the idea that “end of occupation” is indeed a necessary (if not sufficient) condition for any *peace* and *reconciliation* in the Middle-East. I shall try to explain why I see it as a *political cause* that is both *complex* and *urgent*, and which I will claim is *universal* : a major reason for us academics from different countries to hear its injunction, which calls us to build a community of solidarity, stretching far beyond our personal belongings and friendships.

First, this is an urgent cause. Almost, I must say, a desperate one. But perhaps not totally, if some of the reasons of despair can be shown to be mutable. There are three main facts, however, that impose the idea of an imminent catastrophe¹. The first is the enormous

¹ Should we avoid this rhetoric ? I don't believe so. The facts that have been described to us concerning the life of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and their political perspectives

imbalance of forces. It is so huge that the notion of a “conflict” with its strategic connotations becomes largely misleading, unless it refers to a very special kind of *dissymmetric* conflict.

The dissymmetry comes not only from the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian “conflict” opposes an established State and a state-less people : on one side a State now entirely organized around the most consistent colonial project of the late modern era (which has survived the historical process of decolonization), on the other side a people or population whose national aspirations could never take the form of independent State-building (i.e. were always prevented from undertaking it, or, when taking a preliminary shape in the wake of the Oslo accords, became rapidly destroyed). It also comes from the fact that the State of Israel rules over a wealthy country (with economic difficulties, certainly, but who does not have economic difficulties nowadays?), fully integrated in the dominant sector of the World-economy. It is also one of the world’s greatest military powers, possessing the full range of modern weaponry (from the nuclear bombs to deter its neighbors to the “smart” missiles to destroy individual targets in a so-called “low intensity conflict”), and also selling them everywhere in the world (Africa, Asia, Europe, etc.). Conversely the Palestinians are continuously impoverished, and disarmed (in spite of their use of the human body as weapon, or perhaps because of their use of it, which shows that they have hardly anything else). Finally, Israel has a broad and very effective international support, not limited to the US. It is part of the dominant core of the World-system. Palestine, by contrast, has a moral, legal, ideological international support. But this support is not very effective. And it is often counter-productive, as when non-democratic Arab States “instrumentalize” the Palestinian cause to camouflage their unpopular regimes and their dominated external politics. I am not even mentioning the negative effects of the instrumentalization by fundamentalist and terrorist movements.

impose such a definition. Citing the expression “verge of catastrophe” our friend Adi Ophir has described the situation since the Second Intifada as a “suspended catastrophe” that could precipitate at any moment.

To say that a catastrophe is pending, which means the destruction of the Palestinian homeland and society through colonization, deportation (called “transfer”), segregation, concentration in camps and ghettos, permanent harassment and physical violence, impoverishment, etc., is not to say that there is no resistance. The capacity of Palestinians to resist has been astonishing over the years, and has won recognition everywhere. As Sari Hanafi put it yesterday : “We are not victims, we are actors”. But this is precisely what is now at stake. Every popular resistance is rooted in social, moral and political structures. Israeli governments (well before Sharon, who nevertheless has reached a new level) perfectly understood this. They have systematically destroyed the territory, even the landscape. They have also exploited the weaknesses of the Palestinian nation and especially its elected “Authority”, and increased tensions within the Palestinian society (between clans, local interests, religious and secular parties) from which they draw a considerable benefit. For themselves also this process has destructive aspects, to which I shall return, but what we must notice first is the extent to which it has succeeded in uprooting not only the trees, but the people. The aim is to transform the Palestinians – already a nation with a huge proportion of refugees - into an entire people of refugees on their own land, a people that so to speak “historically vanishes”. We know that this is not yet the case, and we also know that if it were the case the “specter” of this people would keep haunting violently the historical and geographical scene. But we see that irreversible steps have been taken in that direction. It is enough to look at the geographical maps showing the progress of colonization and cutting off Palestine over the last sixty years, and how the places themselves have been transformed. Wherever the Palestinians have been chased, they could hardly return and find a “home” today.

The nihilistic aspects of this process of destruction, made possible by the gross imbalance of forces, are dramatically increased by the inclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within the global framework of the “War on terror” and the so-called “clash of

civilizations” that has now “captured” every problem of territorial sovereignty, citizenship, nationality, colonization and decolonization, affluence and poverty, religious antagonism and cultural difference in the whole region... This is a global economy of violence where the local “actors” progressively become dispossessed of their specific goals, means and interests : they lose their autonomy and the capacity to find by themselves a “settlement”, not to speak of seeking a reconciliation. This process can have, in the end, destructive effects on the Israeli State and society themselves. But for the time being it mainly serves to increase the imbalance of forces with the Palestinians.

In spite of all these negative characteristics, the Palestinian cause is a *universal* (and also a universalistic) one which has very positive dimensions. This will be my *second* point. You may indeed ask : is there such a thing as a “universal cause” in politics? Is it not a speculative, almost theological notion? Without trying to address all the aspects of the question (which also commands some of the reasons why so many people in the world – not only intellectuals – feel interpellated by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict), I shall explain why I agree that we can use such a formulation in the present conjuncture.

A major reason comes from the fact that the vindication of the Palestinian cause is a *test* for the recognition of right, and the implementation of International Law. It is indeed highly revealing that – whereas the U.S. and their allies, albeit initially against the will of the Security Council, could claim that they were enforcing a number of collective resolutions against the dictatorial regime of President Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and in the end managed to have their turned “legal” from the point of view of the United Nations – none of the Resolutions of the Security Council or the General Assembly concerning the Israeli occupation in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza has ever been enforced.² More generally,

² At the time of the Brussels Conference, we were still expecting the ruling of the International Court in The Hague concerning the building of the separation wall in the Occupied Territories. During the

when we look at the hard facts, we observe that the International Legal framework asking for two national states with equal status and dignity has been verbally invoked (as a “goal”, a “vision” for the future), but practically ignored and sabotaged. Israel is protected by international Law and institutions, the Palestinians are rebuked and derided. This explains why I suggest that our struggle is not only a support for a *just cause*, it is also a struggle *for the cause of right as such*, in a world where the “right of conquest”, i.e. mere lawless force, keeps prevailing.

But the universal character of the Palestinian cause has other aspects. It is important to highlight the fact that it involves a crucial element of *moral reciprocity*: to defend the cause of the Palestinians is also to defend the cause of the Israelis, in the sense of their genuine interest and their honor as a nation.³ Far from being a secondary aspect, this is an essential one in my opinion. A universal cause is not only the cause of victims, the oppressed, it is a cause coinciding with the long term interest of the oppressors themselves, morally and materially. All colonial nations, in particular, have had to realize this. Although it is always extremely difficult to make it visible and acceptable for them, it has to be acknowledged by the dominant people themselves. Hence the extraordinary importance of the “resistance from within” of Israeli citizens : intellectuals, activists, refuzniks..., however minoritarian they can be. Not only are they represented here by significant personalities, but they are indeed among the promoters of this conference together with Palestinian intellectuals and others. I would like to salute them and tell them our gratitude and admiration. This is, I repeat, a difficult

Conference, Mr. Pierre Galard, a member of the Belgian Senate, has rightly insisted on the importance of this coming ruling (which has now been issued, involving a complete condemnation of the Israeli position). I totally agree with his view that the reactions of governments will form a new test of their actual respect for International Law.

³ To speak of “the Israelis” is ambiguous, even misleading, but this ambiguity itself is evidence of the complexity of the “conflict” : indeed it is not the whole of the Israeli citizenry that actively supports and contributes to the colonial oppression; it is not even the whole of the dominant “Jewish” population. But, by treating the “Arab citizens” of Israel as second class citizens, increasingly oppressing them, and preventing them from keeping any relations with their Palestinian families and neighbors, the State of Israel adds to the polarization between the two ethnic groups, and continuously moves in the direction of becoming a racial State.

struggle, running against the current, against the nationalistic and racist chauvinism of the dominant people engaged in a process of elimination of their “enemies” from without and from within, and the spiral of its self-defeating victories. To get an idea of the difficulty, we only have to remember what it took for Germans to acknowledge their responsibilities and their crimes in the nazi era and the Second World War, or for the U.S. to acknowledge that their invasion of Vietnam was mistaken. Even a military defeat may not suffice : the French after the colonial wars of Indochina and Algeria never really made this move as a nation....

If the State of Israel and its Jewish majority in the end *destroy* Palestine (as a land and a nation), they will destroy the only historical possibility for themselves to win *recognition* in the world, since recognition involves reciprocity. The interests of the Palestinians and the Israelis (especially the Jewish majority of Israel) are not *the same*. But they are now inseparable, or the less they are separated, the more they have a chance to be realized. And (to mention in passing this crucial issue, which would deserve a whole discussion) this is also the condition for an effective struggle against *Antisemitism* at world scale, in all our societies – the so-called “new Antisemitism” in particular being a combination of Antisemitism and Islamophobia and Arabophobia which is really not so new.⁴

Finally I want to insist here on the fact that, at the root of any reciprocity and recognition, there is a claim of *equality*. Equality, among friends and foes alike, is an eminently universalistic principle. This is how I understand a motto often repeated by the late Edward Said : “equality or nothing”, not only as requirement but as evidence concerning the conditions of any “solution” of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whatever its technical terms. Equality, both symbolic and real, is exactly what Israeli governments consistently *refuse* to grant the Palestinians and, it must be said, what many groups and individuals on the left in the Israeli society, albeit opposing aggressive colonialist policies, are not ready to fully admit

⁴ See my essay : « Un nouvel antisémitisme ? », in *Antisémitisme : l'intolérable chantage. Israël-Palestine, une affaire française ?*, Editions La Découverte, Paris 2003, pp. 89-96.

either. No doubt, because, first of all, it would require for them to take the measure of their responsibilities in the current tragedy, and actually *retreat* from many of their unilateral positions in order to create the conditions of mutual recognition. And whether the world outside Israel and Palestine really views Israelis and Palestinians as equals in every respect is still not clear. Therefore to insist on this universalistic principle must be one of our primary tasks.

This brings me now to what I consider to be the main point : the Palestinian cause that we are advocating is a *political cause*, in the strong sense. I mean a cause in which the very possibility of political action in today's world is involved. Because it is also a difficult issue, allow me to examine some of its implications.

In our discussions, we are using different terms, such as “peace” and “resistance”, and it can appear sometimes that they contradict each other. Is this an alternative or a complementarity? The issue was raised in her intervention by Lina Yassin from Ta'yush : “We Palestinians believe in Resistance, and the word Peace only comes after”, she said. It has to be admitted that the word “peace” is an equivocal one, it can be used to cover repressive and imperialist policies. The colonizing power also wants “peace” or has plans to “make peace”. We remember Tacitus' phrase on the Romans : *ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*. Many of us insist therefore on using a more precise expression : “just peace”, but what does it mean? Are there just and unjust peaces, as there are just and unjust wars? Should we perhaps replace the notion of a “peace process” which proved so contradictory by the notion of a “justice process”, that would *include* peace, but say more about its conditions? In any case I do think that any discussion of the relationships between “peace” and “resistance” must involve this third term, justice, and take it seriously. It is perhaps the single most important aspect of our movement that it tries to connect a demand for peace with a support of resistance through a vindication of justice.

We certainly disagree on many points, but we should agree on this : “peace” in Israel and Palestine – as different from what has been called by some a “management of conflict” – is a *long term process*. But its conditions must be created immediately, and permanently rebuild against a number of opposite forces. It is a complex path which starts with *the end of occupation*, and aims at *reconciliation* (or the creation of a livable “common world”). And the word “justice” designates precisely the continuity, the “logic” of this process, the unity of its multiple elements, moral and material. But in this unity effective resistance to injustice, to the unbearable, from within and from both sides, is the driving force. Philosophers would say : it is the “immanent cause” of the whole process, since without resistance there can be no end to occupation and there will be no recognition of equal rights, therefore no reconciliation and no peace. Accordingly we shall do everything in our power, with our specific means as intellectuals, to help it and foster it.

Some people may ask : how does such an abstract idea of justice, almost a speculative one, clarify the debates on the political conditions of the “solution” of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – the “one State solution” versus the “two States solution”, for instance ? As a friend of and a foreigner to both peoples I do not feel that it is in my capacity to judge this issue, and to be honest I don’t think that solidarity movements *as such* should *take side* on this issue. This is not to say that we should refuse to discuss it, since it mirrors all the aspects of what I called a moment ago the universal character of the Palestinian cause, particularly with regard to reciprocity and equality. It is in fact the political and juridical “form” of equality and reciprocity that is at stake in this debate. Now a pessimistic view, widely shared today inside and outside the region, after the catastrophic developments in the last three years, is that neither “solution” is no longer possible, so terrible are the destructions, the mutual fear and hatred.... But perhaps we should also say : this alternative was never more than an abstraction, that does not reflect the complex and highly conflictual reality of two different peoples, with totally different histories and cultures, “thrown” or “caught” and “mingled” on

the same territory, where they can neither become *fused* nor live *separately* (or only at the price of a catastrophe). In other terms, it is not only, and not primarily, at the juridical level that we should discuss this kind of issue, but rather at the level of *political discovery*, or by exploring the new concept and the new practice of politics that is involved in any idea of a “solution” to such a singular conflict, where colonial realities (with all their unjust consequences) are combined with other heterogeneous aspects (particularly the fact that the Jewish settlers and conquerors themselves are in some sense a people of “refugees”, not only from Europe but also from the Arab world, and in any case have no “mother country” elsewhere in the world, no real metropolis – not even the U.S.).

Perhaps we could suggest, *negatively* : the absolute negation of political equality, as a condition for politics, is “apartheid”, or the segregation of populations along racial lines. In history there have been forms of formal independence as well as forms of formal integration of nations that relied on apartheid patterns and aimed at perpetuating them. Therefore, whatever the constitutional form that the relationship between the Jewish-Israeli and the Arab-Palestinian (both Islamic and Christian) “national” communities may take in the future, through whatever intermediary steps, it remains that the fates and destinies of the two peoples on one historic land are irreversibly bound together. I would say that the actual recognition of this fact is at the same time the main political problem and the unavoidable condition for any political “solution” that succeeds in recreating the political logic instead of the logic of destruction and perpetual violence. One or two states, we cannot know, especially in a world where the very content of such notions as “nation”, “state”, “dependency” and “independence” are profoundly changing – perhaps what will emerge in the long term will be something like “one and a half state”, i.e. an original form of association and reciprocity between autonomous entities. But in any case the condition will be that the conflict evolves through various forms of resistance towards the emergence of political equality and equal rights, therefore dignity.

But for the time being, alas, it is indeed the logic of apartheid that is dominant, in a seemingly irreversible process – the building of the Wall in the West Bank being its latest symbol and instrument. Some participants here (such as Adi Ophir and Sari Hanafi) have made use of a concept of the “state of exception” to describe this logic. Other notions such as “ethnocracy” and “spatio-cide” used by Oren Yiftachel, Sari Hanafi and Jad Issac when showing the maps of Israeli colonization are partially equivalent. I would insist myself on the consequence that is the *preventive destruction of the citizen*, or the political agent. And probably this is true on both sides, although in dissymmetric forms, that mirror the imbalance of forces that I mentioned earlier. The destruction of the citizen results from the domination of the political space by the combined logics of *militarization* and *humanitarian management of populations*, which is the anti-political concept *par excellence*. If I had time, I would try and elaborate on that idea, show that it is not only a problem for Israel and Palestine, but a *global problem*. Which also explains why it is so crucial for all of us to help recreate the figure of the citizen, or the conditions of democratic politics in Israel and Palestine. But let me focus on the consequences that we observe in this exemplary case.

The combination of militarization and humanitarianism aims at de-socializing and de-nationalizing the Palestinian population. But does it work? This is the decisive question for politics. An analogy has been suggested with the model of the “camp”. It is a perilous one, although Gaza is a camp, in the strict sense, and the enclaves between the green line and the separation wall such as Qalqilya are ghettos... What it reveals however is that we have to do with a “totalitarian” process in the precise sense defined by Hannah Arendt (in her *Origins of Totalitarianism*) : where the individuals are massively prepared for their own elimination as political actors or citizens through successive steps of systematic destruction of their material and moral ties with their land, their relatives, their social status and memberships, their institutions (in particular educational institutions, which are crucial both for a collective national identity and an individual professional future). This process tends to destroy their

subjectivities as citizens and push them into a subjectivity of victims, or terrorists who can be targeted by what Adi Ophir calls “violence that prevents violence”, therefore continuously creates it. The “aim” or objective result is to produce the antithesis of a nation, an independent people or a community of citizens : a mere *population* of *stateless* people or refugees on their own land, caught between the repression by the military apparatus and the aid of humanitarian organizations, i.e. being killed or being rescued and fed by external agencies.⁵ How to create a *State* with stateless people? But we may ask also : who would *create* a State, or a new form of State, if not Stateless people? This is the whole issue of resistance, and the reason why resistance – not necessarily violent resistance, but we cannot exclude this *a priori* – is the first moment in the emergence of the citizen.

Should we say that this process is also destroying “citizenship” in Israel? It is not me who is asking this question, or not me alone : it is increasingly asked in Israel in more or less equivalent forms.⁶ Not only democracy is in peril in today’s conditions, but a nation whose young soldiers are transformed into camp wardens and occupying forces can hardly remain a nation of citizens. This is why so many of our Israeli friends realize that the Palestinian resistance and the justice process with respect to Palestine concern their own interests.

A *fourth* and final issue has now to be addressed. The Palestinian cause is an urgent one, a universal political cause, in the defense of democracy, but it is also a complex one. It does not allow tepid positions, remaining half way between the “camps” or oscillating between them, but it does not show a simple way of struggle either. Allow me to illustrate this point with three typical difficulties or aporias.

One is the problem of “terrorism”. As one speaker noticed yesterday, this is one of the words that has been most instrumentalized in politics. The unrecognized enemy of an

⁵ See « The Chain Food », a film by Ariella Azoulay (Amit Goren Productions), 2004.

⁶ I am particularly thinking of recent publications by Lev Grinberg and Baruch Kimmerling.

oppressive order, especially one that claims to be based on the rule of law, is always already labeled “terrorist”. This is part of the process of criminalizing resistance, denying it the status of an equal adversary with whom there would be something to *negotiate*. This is not to deny that “terrorism” exists. Throughout history it has been vindicated as a necessary form of resistance to organized State violence by some revolutionary movements. The question is rather : what are the conditions and limits of the efficiency (including its moral or ideological efficiency) of terrorism as a form of liberation struggle? And we ask it in a situation that is further complicated by the inclusion of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a global economy of violence that takes the form of a confrontation between “Terror” and “Counter-Terror”, or “preemptive war on Terror” without legal restraints.

I do not think that we can avoid the notion of “terrorism”, while rejecting its abusive generalized use, when it is a question of bombings (“suicide” or not) aiming at civilians, particularly children, in the enemy population. And I think that, whatever the explanations that can be proposed (despair, ideology or “culture”, but above all the very imbalance of forces : the “weapon of the poor” against the “weapon of the rich”, and the symmetry of State terror with terrorist resistance), it has proved catastrophic for the Palestinian people. It perfectly played into the Israeli strategy of destruction, and it has paralyzed the forces within Israeli society which could reverse the politics of conquest and act for justice, with the sole exception of courageous but relatively isolated groups. And it had terrible moral consequences for the Palestinian people itself, a degradation of civility from which we know that it might be very difficult to recover, as previous historical experiences suggest. Therefore it has been deeply self-destructive, and this is exactly what the colonial party in Israel (which today is majoritarian or in any case monopolizes the political initiative) had wished and encouraged. Many of us, albeit not all, share this point of view. In discussions on this highly sensitive point that were sometimes difficult, I have always supported the idea that resistance in the form of terrorism in the case of Palestine today is politically counter-productive. To me,

however, the conclusion is not that the use of terrorism by some organizations and part of the Palestinian people destroys their cause in terms of rights and justice, and legitimizes unlimited retaliation from Israel, much less legitimizes the occupation itself. It is rather : the less we do to correct the imbalance of forces and the inequality of status between Israel and the Palestinians, the less we have a “right” to criticize the strategy of terrorism *from outside*. The two aspects are inseparable.

Another difficult problem concerns external pressure and sanctions, including the debate on the boycott. Why is this an aporia? From the point of view of resistance, external pressure is necessary in order to correct the imbalance of forces, to curb the will to power of Israeli colonialism, force Israeli government and society to acknowledge the rights of the Palestinians. From the point of view of democratic politics or citizenship, or the recreation of a political space within the territory of historic Palestine, however, this can have contradictory effects because it also increases the dependency of the Palestinians on a certain form of foreign protection. On the other hand, this virtual political space is not closed, and the game is not purely dual... The fact that the Palestinian’s cause be recognized and supported from outside, including in the form of pressure, can help Israelis, despite their national pride, to recognize its legitimacy. I strongly disagree with any diplomatic statement on this issue that unilaterally begins with such formulas as : “there are things unacceptable for the Israelis”. So many things unacceptable for the Palestinians are continuously imposed upon them from inside and outside....

The difficulties are increased in the case of boycott as a tactics of external pressure – especially perhaps academic boycott. This idea, I agree with many of our Palestinian colleagues, has nothing of a sacrilege *per se* (especially not if a universal solidarity of “academics”, oscillating between freedom of opinion and political neutrality, is supposed to protect academics from taking their responsibilities as citizens and control the political use of their work and institutions). Boycott was used or called for in the past against dictatorial and

oppressive regimes such as South Africa, the Soviet Union, Tchechoslovaquia and other “popular democracies”, Chile under Pinochet, etc. (but let us also remember that, in all these cases, militant intellectuals from democratic countries who supported various forms of official boycott were very committed to keep personal and collective relations alive with critical intellectuals in the targeted countries, sometimes at great risk). Personally, I am very sensitive to the argument that you cannot without inconsistency condemn “suicide bombings” as a form of military resistance and reject such non-violent forms of moral and political pressure as boycott, as I admitted in a recent discussion with Omar Barghouti and other signatories of the Open Letter supporting Academic Boycott. I am especially sensitive to the argument that Israel should not be allowed to instrumentalize the genocide of European Jews to put themselves above the Law of nations. On the other hand, I see a “performative contradiction” in demanding a boycott that includes those who most consistently act to support Palestinian resistance and express solidarity with the Palestinian population within the Israeli academia, however minoritarian they can be, or seeks to isolate them from their colleagues whom they try to influence. But, in this case even more than the abovementioned, I think that we have no right to reject such calls if we don’t offer an alternative politics. At the very least it must include a permanent pressure on “our” institutions (Universities, States, alliances such as the European Union, international organizations) to decide sanctions for the violation of International Law, the destruction of Palestine and the colonial oppression. For this reason I renew my support of the call for a moratorium on the European-Israeli agreements that include privileged cultural and scientific relations. I am aware that this is a very narrow path.

To conclude on the difficulties of the cause that we are supporting, I want to say a few words about the issue of “internationalization of the conflict”. Most of us will certainly agree that only Israelis (meaning in practice Israeli Jews) and Palestinians (including the Palestinian citizens of Israel who have been conquered against their will) can settle their *differend*, “make peace” and “build peace”. Similarly, only Israel can “end the occupation” – not in the form of

unilateral “withdrawals” that prove to be a smokescreen for the development of the bulk of the colonies, but in the form of immediate and full recognition of the national rights of the Palestinians on their land, the only basis of equality that makes it possible to negotiate on pending problems such as the issue of refugees. But everybody should also agree that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is *de facto* internationalized (and perhaps it has been internationalized since the beginning, the establishment of the “Jewish National Homeland” and the Balfour Declaration...). Which is precisely one of the reasons why it is not, or no longer, a “conflict” in the classical sense of the term. Therefore the issue is not whether it should become internationalized or not, but whether the *present modalities* of internationalization ought to be transformed, in order not to remain so utterly unilateral. And even if we agree that the “special” relationship (bordering to *integration* in many domains) between Israel and the U.S. must remain decisive (whence derives the importance of U.S. internal politics for Israeli politics and perhaps conversely), we cannot accept its monopolistic character, that largely contributed to the imminence of catastrophe and to put the conflict beyond the reach of International Law. Other “mediations” are urgently needed, first of all to *protect the Palestinian population*, but also, probably, the *Israeli population* from the effects of increasing violence. And they are urgently needed to “broker” the peace and reconciliation process, by offering suggestions and guarantees to the adversaries, hopefully in the direction of what I called a justice process. A justice process is, by definition, a process that needs mediators and witnesses, because it is not and can never be only a process in which the structures of domination are eliminated and the rights of the victims are asserted. It is also, at some point, a process in which the victims have to be recalled to the justice of *their* own cause, which makes it universal, as the whole history of decolonization has repeatedly shown.

From this I practically conclude that mediations and mediators must be imposed against the imperial power, but should remain “modest”, clearly different from the neo-colonial logic. They cannot remain verbal, but they cannot impose anything by force. This is

particularly true of the “European mediation”, or the role of the European Union with regard to the U.S. and the Arab World. In his opening discourse, Ambassador Eric Rouleau has said : “the E.U. is not a political organization.” I respectfully disagree. The E.U. is an organization full of (political) contradictions, but it is a political organization. It has vital interests in the Middle East, which are not only economic, military, diplomatic, but more profoundly come from the fact that, together with the Arab and Muslim World, with Palestine and Israel, Europe belongs to a great geo-political and cultural area, *the Mediterranean*. Permanent flows of populations and blending of cultures are taking place in this area (including the symbolic “encounter” of the three Monotheistic Religions within the same “holy places”). Europe also has heavy responsibilities in the current situation. In a sense it is the burden of these responsibilities that paralyzes its reflection and action. But I tend to reverse the question by asking : how could the construction of Europe itself remain possible, as a new political entity and a locus of democratic innovation in the world, if Europe does not play an active mediating role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in which it is already involved and interested?

This intelligent role, both active *and* modest, can be useful in a multiplicity of ways, particularly by displacing the perverse confrontation between the U.S. and the Arab nations, but perhaps the crucial issue is the role of International Law and institutions. I tend to believe that, in the current situation, notwithstanding other interventions, the main role of Europe has to do with the United Nations’ renewed function. Again, this may appear as a vicious circle : the U.N.’s role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may be seen as almost entirely negative. On the one end, we observe a blatant incapacity to enforce its own resolutions and force Israel to abide by the common Law. And this is not only the result of the U.S. pressure : why is it that other countries are unable to match this pressure, or only verbally? On the other end, we see a unilateral investment of the U.N. in *humanitarian aid* which, more than ever, produces very ambivalent results by rescuing people from starvation *and* taking the burden of its own occupation away from Israel’s shoulders... But all this – entirely fitting the new logic of the

World-System - simply proves that the future of the United Nations as an institution of collective security and international order, therefore an alternative to imperialist policies and a “peace building” agency (as Prof. Okasha adequately defined it), decisively depends on its capacity to act in an independent manner, following its own moral and political rules, in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and more generally in the Middle East. It is the direction in which we, European, American, Israeli, Arab citizens, and Palestinian future citizens must push continuously, in a situation that is likely to change in the near future, perhaps very rapidly and profoundly.

Let me finish these reflections, certainly very lacunary, with a few words on the role of intellectuals, that is *our role* as a network of academics, in this broader environment. We must permanently listen to the demands and arguments of our Palestinian colleagues, learn from them what is vital for their nation and understanding what is at stake in their discussions.⁷ We must develop a critical dialogue with Israeli academics and intellectuals by avoiding complacency and reverence as much as exclusions and anathemas, since this is the only way to preserve a common future. We must organize a “cooperation” between European and American (and other) Universities, Research institutions and groups, and the Palestinian educational system, therefore keep struggling against the obstacles to win the broadest possible international support in our professional environment. This should definitely not become another ambiguous form of humanitarian intervention, making the effects of the occupation less visible and more tolerable. It is a gesture of political solidarity with political intentions. Not only this political character of our solidarity does not destroy its moral motives, as some colleagues seem to fear, but it carries them to their logical consequences as far as it is in our limited power. However we also have our specific ways of practicing politics, not exclusive of any others, which are closely associated with the function of the

⁷ While editing this talk, I cannot but refer the reader to the « Urgent Appeal Due to Israeli Racist Imposed Hardships » posted by Palestinian Universities on July 24th, 2004 (see www.birzeit.edu, Right to Education Campaign and news Center, Birzeit University Palestine).

Academia in society, and with the importance of Academic freedom of thought and research for democracy. During this Conference, Tal Arbel from Tel Aviv University spoke of the “labor of the mind”, and Naomi Chazan urged us to move from “analysis” and critical theory to “activism” in the field of politics. But the specific element in which intellectuals can be active is discourse, and their politics is above all a politics of establishing and telling the truth. I don’t mean that I am telling the truth myself : this is a collective, a self-critical task. But I urge us to tirelessly pursue this ideal.