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Editorial

Time for US to move forward on Palestine

April 13, 2010 12:00 AM (Last updated: January 01, 0001 12:00 AM)

Editorial

It bears repeating: Palestinian civil society remains alive, even vibrant and capable, despite all the destruction of past conflicts and despite the self-inflicted wounds of the divisions between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas.

The Palestinians, while not yet ready politically, are on the ground truly ready to be partners for peace. The rule of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad in the Occupied West Bank has allowed for an abundance of examples of the robust society waiting to bloom.

For example, Palestinian entrepreneur Bashar al-Masri is undertaking the construction of the Occupied West Bank's first planned city. The project has broken ground, and the city – named Rawabi – should become home to 50,000 people. The \$700-million project, which should take two-and-a-half years to complete, is receiving one-third of the necessary funding from the Qatar's state-run Qatari Diar construction firm.

Perhaps Masri is guilty of being overly enthusiastic when he says he expects 10 buyers for every housing unit in the town rising about 9 kilometers from Ramallah, but his plans to employ some 10,000 Palestinians in order to build the city sounds more realistic – and unquestionably welcome.

There are many more like Masri in Palestine; the would-be country can boast a surplus of inhabitants capable of taking over the project of nation-building. Politically, on the other hand, the Palestinians do not yet have the needed strength to go forward. If however, the proper conditions are provided – a slowdown in Israel's settlement madness to give the Palestinian Authority some clout, for starters – the people can and will come forth to do the work of building institutions.

Too many of these people, however, have been dispersed by the major problems holding back progress on the peace process: the US failure to focus on the issue, Israel's unending and obsessive land grab and the Palestinians' own inability after the death of Yasser Arafat to develop a serious political process.

This scenario of dispersed persons should sound familiar here; the good news is that, just as in Lebanon and Jordan or any other country where the human talent has scattered because of the miserable political conditions, the Palestinians can coalesce very quickly back in their homeland if the political conditions improve.

The change of conditions depends on one external factor: whether the US will stop dithering on the peace process and focus on making progress happen. Lately an all-star cast of political veterans, such as former National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and former Secretary of State Colin Powell, has spoken out in favor of the Obama administration finally putting some muscle into its foreign policy.

If the US will take the initiative, they would find no lack of Palestinians who could run with the chance to build a state. But time is running out for the US to create the space for this latent potential to come to life.

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Spanish performance painting in Beirut


Spanish painter and graphic artist Ruben Sanchez executes a mural on a wall of the Cervantes Institute premises Wednesday. The painting performance, one of an array that have come to Beirut recently, was part of the exhibition "Grafika." 30 artists from Young Spain, which opened April 13th at Villa Audi. (Photos: Roni Said / The Daily Star)

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