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Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear friends of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung,

Brightened by sunshine, the year of 2014 comes to an end in Jerusalem. Yet, the sunshine is deceptive: The political events of the past months have led the Palestinian society deeply troubled.

The trails of the Gaza War and the continuous clashes in Jerusalem and the West Bank have dimmed the light. Slowly, the trust in an imminent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict dissolves.

As in previous years, the FES office in the Palestinian Territories has accompanied the developing political events with numerous discussion rounds, conferences and workshops with old and new partners in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

It encouraged people to participate and politically engage, supported policy consultations through providing expertise, analysed current political and economic developments and connected Palestinians, Germans and Europeans in order to create a better understanding of the political reality.

A selection of those events and visits is compiled in this Review of the Year 2014 Newsletter. Moreover, a list of publications of our partners can be found below.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We hope for peaceful developments in the Middle East and are looking forward to providing you with information about current events and our work in the future.

With the best regards from Jerusalem,

Ingrid Ross

Director of the FES Office in the Palestinian Territories



Political Developments

2014 has not been a good year for Palestine. At the beginning of the year it quickly became clear, that the negotiations under the auspices of US Secretary of State John Kerry failed. As Israel refused to free the last group of pre-Oslo prisoners from its jails, the political leadership in Ramallah turned to pursue different paths to enforce progress towards Palestinian statehood; President Abbas signed several international treaties and agreements to strengthen the Palestinians' status in the international arena.

In spring, the dark chapter of the intra-Palestinian split between West Bank and Gaza, Fatah and Hamas seemed to come to a close. All Palestinian factions signed the reconciliation agreement in Gaza's refugee camp "Shati" charting the way to new elections and reforms of the political system. After the new consensus government with the old and new prime minister Rami Hamdallah was sworn in, the de facto Hamas government in Gaza resigned.

Especially the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip were hoping that with reconciliation their siege and isolation would come to an end. Influential players in the international arena accepted the reconciliation and even endorsed it, but Israel refused to fundamentally change its policy vis-à-vis Gaza. Hopes for better living conditions of the Gazans thus were bitterly disappointed. To the contrary; they had to endure a third war with Israel in six years.

The kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenage settlers close to the West Bank's city of Hebron marked the sad turning point for a new phase of confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians in the second half of the year.

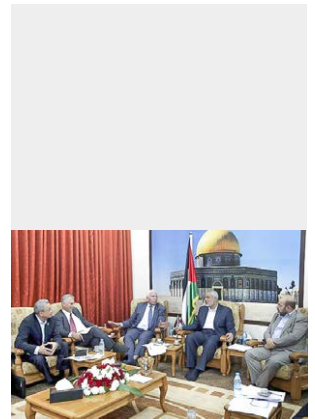
Search and arrest operations by the Israeli army in the West Bank and the gruesome murder of a Palestinian teenager in East Jerusalem by radical Israelis followed. Since then, peace and quiet has not returned to Jerusalem.

Settlers took over houses in Palestinian East-Jerusalem, nationalistic rightist Israeli politicians openly challenged the status quo on the Haram Al Sharif / temple mount, fanning the flames of further protests and clashes between Palestinian inhabitants of the city and Israeli security forces.

The summer was overshadowed by the Gaza war that claimed the lives of hundreds of Palestinians. More than 2,000 Palestinians died throughout the course of "Operation Protective Edge", about 11,000 were wounded and 100,000 were internally displaced.

There was no chance to flee from the war, since the Gaza Strip remained and remains under closure. Even before the war, the coastal enclave was suffering from chronic underdevelopment with its civilian infrastructure on the brink of collapse. The destruction and trauma brought upon the people is putting the Gazans' will for survival once more to a test.

Even if construction material and equipment would not be subjected to entry restrictions to the Strip, it would take years to rebuild what has been damaged during the war. But the siege has not been lifted and therefore the main reason for the latest escalation remains in place, thus threatening the fragile ceasefire that had been reached after 50 days of war.



Reconciliation in April raised Palestinians' hope for a better future.



Possibilities for a change of the Status Quo at the Temple Mount / Haram Al Sharif in the second half of the year invoked violent clashes between Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem.



20.000 people are still living in temporary shelters 100 days after the end of the Gaza war.

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Thus, Palestinians are confronted with immense challenges in 2015: A new phase in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been reached. President Abbas is undertaking what seems to be one last attempt to force Israel back to the negotiating table on his terms.

By means of a UN Security Council resolution Abbas aims to safeguard the two-state-solution on the basis of the borders of 1967 and bring occupation to an end within two years. But in light of the dynamics of the settlement enterprise in the occupied territories, it seems to be too late to try to disentangle settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem. It is becoming more and more difficult to find an Israeli partner who supports national self-determination and a Palestinian sovereign state.

At the same time it remains a challenge to maintain Palestinian reconciliation – that has de facto been suspended throughout the second half of the year. In order to strengthen democratic development, new elections and reforms of the political system are indispensable.

However, relations between Hamas and Fatah have been rapidly deteriorating after the Gaza war. The pragmatic moderate camp within Hamas has been weakened, while the military wing has flourished with new self-esteem.

The only ray of hope for many Palestinians is the willingness in Europe to save the two-state-solution as expressed in parliamentary resolutions for the recognition of the State of Palestine.

Even Brussels seems to finally muster the political will to place the Israeli-Palestinian conflict higher on the political agenda. The political developments in 2014 have shown that just standing by is not a con-

tribution to conflict resolution.

One has to fear that, if left alone, Israelis and Palestinians will get drawn deeper into the conflict in the near future.

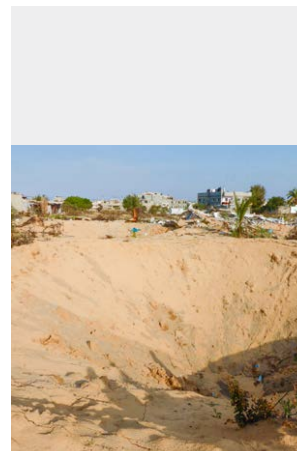
The Year in Review - Highlights

January: Launch of the Young Leaders Program “Jeel Jdid” in Ramallah

In January, FES launched its Young Leaders Program in cooperation with Palestinian Vision, entitled “Jeel Jdeed”, a New Generation. Over the course of a year and a half, 25 participants from all across the West Bank and East Jerusalem will complete a series of workshops and debates, giving them the basis on which to play a role as mobilizers for socio-political change.

As a source of inspiration to their future initiatives, Dr. Sabri Saidam, Advisor to President Mahmoud Abbas on Telecommunications and Information Technology and Mr. Jihad Shojaeha of the Palestinian Initiative for Supporting Students (ESNAD) shed light on the importance of believing in the potential of the individual and in the change a person can make in her/his society.

The group met once a month throughout the year and will continue to work on three initiatives for change in the first half of 2015. The program has evolved into a key component since it is implemented by FES in ten countries in the MENA region over the past two years.



Bomb crater in East Gaza. While rubble removal and repairs have begun, without an end to the blockade reconstruction and sustainable development are not in sight.



The group met once a month throughout the year and will work on initiatives for change in the first half of 2015.



FUTURE GENERATION
برنامج القيادات الشابة - قطاع غزة
Young Leaders Program - Gaza Strip

The Young Leaders Program was also launched in the Gaza Strip in 2014.

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February: "Towards a National Agenda for the Reform of Economic Policies in Palestine", PGFTU Publication

In cooperation with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), FES focused on an agenda for economic and social reforms in Palestine. The financial and economic situation in the Palestinian Territories has not only stagnated but effectively declined in the past years. Several socio-economic imbalances have affected large segments of the Palestinian society, especially vulnerable groups.

These in turn sparked popular protests lead by the trade unions e.g. against rising cost of living. To enable trade unions and associations to be initiators and contributors to shaping the economic and social policies of the Palestinian Authority remains a goal of FES.

The study "Towards a National Agenda for the Reform of Economic Policies in Palestine" put forward by Prof. Naser Abdelkarim set a solid base for trade unionists to engage in the policy realm. It offers recommendations for economic reforms in the short and long terms. The study seeks to help the PA to develop the national economy, ensure a dignified life for citizens, and achieve a more equal distribution of wealth and income.

March: Seminar series about the use of renewable energy sources in the Gaza Strip

The poor energy situation in the besieged Gaza Strip only worsened after the recent Gaza War. The deficient supply resulted in revolving power blackouts.

The five districts are consecutively supplied by imported electricity and energy generated by the Gaza power plant.

Consequently, private homes and public institutions increasingly depend on electricity from other sources.

To find solutions for the chronic energy crisis FES in cooperation with PalThink took stock of existing initiatives using renewable energy in the Gaza Strip.

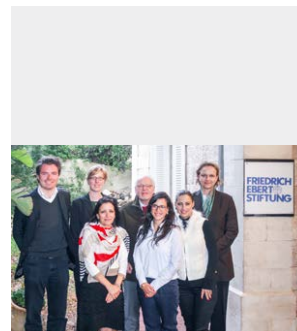
Based on these findings experts, government and private sector representatives put forward recommendations for short-, medium- and long term strategies for alternative energy sources in Gaza.

April: Members of the German parliament and a delegation from the SPD Schleswig-Holstein visited the Palestinian Territories

In April, a group of members of the German parliament of the SPD and representatives of the SPD Schleswig-Holstein visited the Palestinian Territories. Eva Högl, vice-Chairman of the SPD parliamentary group, Kerstin Griese, Chairman of the parliament's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Christian Flisek and Johannes Fechner, both members of the Committee for Justice and Consumer Protection, met, amongst others, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi of the PLO Executive Commity.

Dr. Ashrawi emphasized that the Palestinian leadership expects more international commitment to conflict resolution and asked specifically for German support after the failure of the latest negotiation initiative of the US Foreign Minister John Kerry.

Ralf Stegner, the Vice-Chairman of the SPD and regional Chairman in Schleswig-Holstein, Christian Kroening, Managing Director of Schleswig-Holstein and Serpil Midyatli, member of the State Parliament in Schleswig-Holstein, gained insight into the situation in the contested C-Areas through



In March Dr. Roland Schmidt, Director of the FES and Christiane Kesper, Head of the Department for Development Cooperation visited the FES Office in East Jerusalem.



What is the potential of renewable energy in the long term to contribute to solving the energy crisis in Gaza?



Ingrid Ross, Christian Flisek, Kerstin Griese, Hanan Ashrawi, Eva Högl, Johannes Fechner (from left to right).

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discussions with representatives of the political factions Fatah and Al-Mubadara and meetings with NGOs and experts.

The Palestinians living in those areas are confronted with a rising number of illegal settlers. Currently, 350,000 settlers and 300,000 Palestinians are living in area C according to UN-OCHA estimates.

Systematic land grab and destruction of essential infrastructure is threatening the livelihood of Palestinians – and the possibility of a two-state-solution.

May: Conference on Palestinian Reconciliation in Gaza

After seven years of rivalries and hostilities of the rivaling factions Hamas and Fatah finally signed a reconciliation agreement in April of this year. The rift between the factions had lead to a split between Gaza and the West Bank.

Shortly before the inauguration of the consensus government, the Palestinian Planning Center of the PLO organized a public conference in Gaza to discuss the challenges of reconciliation.

One of the conference's subjects was the role of the external actors like the US, Israel and the Arab States in the reconciliation process. Before the Gaza War, great hope prevailed for a change of international and Israeli policies with regards to the Gaza Strip.

Many inhabitants expected that the resignation of the Hamas government would end the policy of isolation and blockade. But in the following months, they hopes were bitterly disappointed.

June: Roundtable on the Reform of the Social Security Systems in Palestine

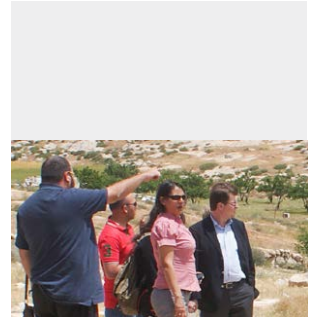
Continued Israeli occupation, limited development perspectives and the global financial crisis have had a negative impact on the Palestinian society. One of the reforms that need urgent attention is the reform of the social security system in Palestine.

Consisting of a patchwork of benefits provided by international aid agencies and the PA, no overarching concept exists to provide health, old age and social security benefits for all Palestinians. Over recent years, a law has been developed to install a pension fund for the private sector. However, stakeholders still vastly disagreed over the details of the setup.

At the roundtable organized by the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute (MAS) in cooperation with FES, Dr. Ahmed Majdalani, Head of the National Team for Social Security, Dr. Atef Alawneh, representative of the private sector, in addition to Mr. Shafer Saad, Secretary-General of the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, and Mr. Mohammed Arqawi, Deputy Secretary-General of the General Union of Palestine Workers discussed the remaining stumbling blocks for the reform of the social security system.

July / August: The War on Gaza

Hopes for a fundamental policy change after Palestinian reconciliation quickly turned into wishful thinking: On July 8th, Israel launched operation "Protective Edge" after a phase of heightened tensions between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank and Jerusalem in June.



Ralf Stegner and Delegation with Yehuda Shaul, Breaking the Silence, during a visit to the South Hebron Hills.



The Palestinian Planning Center's Gaza Forum for Strategic Policies raised much media attention, attesting to the great relevance of reconciliation for the public in Gaza.



Roundtable discussion the reform of the Social Security System in Palestine.

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The war added further destruction and despair onto the small coastal enclave. More than 2.000 Palestinians in Gaza were killed, more than 10.000 were wounded and approximately 100.000 had to flee their homes during the attacks. European governments were largely watching from the sidelines the 50-day war.

Against this backdrop PASSIA organized a roundtable shortly after the ceasefire on the EU's role after the Gaza war to put future engagement on the agenda. Ahead of the Cairo donor conference for reconstruction, Palestinian representatives shared their vision on the future development of Gaza. Representatives of the diplomatic community in Jerusalem attended the meeting.

FES followed up on the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip after the war by organizing further roundtables and debates connecting Palestinian decision-makers and policy advisers as well as representatives of civil society, some of them via video-link with participants in Gaza.

September: World Premiere of the Film "Eyes of a Thief"

At a time when Palestinians wonder which are the legitimate and successful means to end to the occupation and achieve national independence, Palestinian filmmaker Najwa Najjar chose to develop her latest movie along the storylines of the second intifada.

She strengthens the voices of non-violence by providing a focus on personal stories and choices of cooperation and non-violent resistance.. FES and the Ministry of Culture supported the premier screening at Ramallah's Cultural Palace.

October: Visit of Dr. Nabil Shaath in Berlin

In October, Fatah's Foreign Relations Commissioner Dr. Nabil Shaath visited Berlin. Dr. Shaath sought German support for the Palestinian struggle of State recognition and more engagement in the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip.

In discussions with politicians of the SPD and others parties of the German Parliament, he presented the difficult situation in the Palestinian Territories after the failure of the Kerry Initiative. In light of the immense challenges of the Gaza War and Palestinian reconciliation he called for support of the Palestinian leadership in their diplomatic efforts to solve the conflict.

The former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shaath, met Yasmin Fahimi, SPD Secretary General, members of the German Parliament Achim Post and Niels Annen and held talks at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Chancellery.

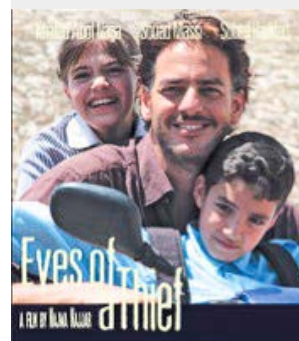
November: Survey in Jerusalem shows alienation between Israelis and Palestinians in the holy city

The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians has reached a new quality in Jerusalem. After violent acts accumulated during fall, observers referred to the increasingly tense situation as the "Jerusalem Intifada".

For decades, Israeli policy makers have structurally and systematically neglected the annexed Palestinian part of the city. This has lead to a deterioration of the living conditions with a negative impact on social cohesion. Even before the Gaza War, the revenge killing of the Palestinian teenager from Shuafat led to outrage and fear.



Speakers at the Roundtable: Dr. Mohamed Mustafa, Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Nabil Shaath, Fatah Foreign Relations Commissioner, Dr. Mazen Sinnokrot, former Minister of Economy and John Gatt-Rutter, EU Representative to Palestine.



The movie has already won a number of international prizes and has been nominated for the Oscars.



Ali Maarouf, Dr. Nabil Shaath, Achim Post, Botschafter Khoulood Daybes, Ingrid Ross, Felix Eikenberg (From left to right).

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Another aspect that ignited protests, clashes and violent attacks was the fear that the status quo on the Haram AlSharif/ Temple Mount might be put into question.

A survey conducted by the International Peace and Conflict Center (IPCC) highlights the transformation of the atmosphere in the city. 84.5% of the Palestinian respondents stated that they avoid buying Israeli goods out of political reasons and visiting Israeli neighborhoods out of fear for their personal safety. Additionally, 74% of the respondents said that they witnessed more racism, hatred and violence by Israelis. Thus, to create a perspective a shared future of Israelis and Palestinians in Jerusalem remains a challenge.

December: Roundtable with the PES delegation

On December 8th – while more and more European parliaments voted in favor for recognition of Palestinian statehood – FES organized a roundtable discussion with MEP Arne Lietz (S&D Group of the European Parliament) and a delegation of the Party of European Socialists (PES) in Ramallah on strategies for conflict resolution. The two Palestinian experts, Omar Shehabi, Legal Adviser of the PLO, and Dr. Alexander Kouttab, Visiting Fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, emphasized that the peace process is in a deep crisis.

In order to sustain the two-state solution, international engagement is urgently needed. If the European Parliament votes in favor of the recognition of the Palestinian State, this would constitute a European commitment to the two-state solution. The participants of the roundtable concluded that after the failure of the Kerry initiative a proactive role of the European Union is needed to solve the conflict.

Publications of our Partners

“Endless injustice – Palestinian Refugees 66 Years On”, publication of PASSIA, March 2014

“Political Islam at the Crossroads”, publication of PASSIA, July 2014

“PLO vs. PA”, publication of PASSIA, 2014

“Public Opinion Poll No. 81”, survey of JMCC, April 2014

“Public Opinion Poll No. 82”, survey of JMCC, October 2014

“Towards a National Agenda for the Reform of Economic Policies in Palestine”, policy paper of Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, Mai 2014

“Natural Resources and the Arab-Israeli Conflict”, edition of the Palestine-Israel Journal, September 2014

“Research paper: Renewable Energy in the Gaza Strip: Short- Mid- and Long Term Strategies”, publication of PalThink for Strategic Studies, October 2014

“Evaluation of the Implementation of Minimum Wage Policy in the West Bank”, publication of MAS, October 2014

“Seyasat Magazin Ausgabe 27”, IPP, 2014

“Seyasat Magazin Ausgabe 28”, IPP, 2014

“Seyasat Magazin Ausgabe 29”, IPP, 2014

Thank you!

We would like to thank all Junior Guest Researchers, who contributed to the success of our work throughout the course of this year: Daniel Marwecki, Louisa Mammeri, Anna Jonas, Julia Biermeier, Stefan Maetz, Theresa Krknjak and Marlene Hahnenwald. Wishing them all the best for their professional career and personal future!



In September Ralf Hexel, Head of the Middle East Department visited Palestine. Shuafat refugee camp is one of the hotbeds of the conflict in Jerusalem.



Shortly after their visit to Ramallah, the European Parliament held a vote on the recognition of Palestine.