

25 June

Meeting with a delegation from Centro Español de Relaciones Internacionales (CERI), Madrid

Topic: Cooperation between CERI and PASSIA

Participants: Dr. Gema Martin Munoz, Jesus Nunez Villaverde, Isaias Barrenada Bajo, Begona Valle Simon, from CERI; and Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi, Head of PASSIA.

SUMMARY

Dr. Gema Munoz explained that CERI is trying to form a team to study the Levant as there is currently little expertise on this subject in Spain. Similar to PASSIA, CERI undertakes research, publication and meetings but has focused on the North Africa region in the past. The CERI research team hopes to publish a book on the current situation in which the PNA is trying to establish a state, as well as to establish themselves as a Spanish interlocutor on this subject.

Jesus Villaverde mentioned that the goals of CERI's trip were to see who could be of help in establishing relationships for future cooperation, and to find good sources of information about the region.

Dr. Mahdi Abdul Hadi responded that the resources of PASSIA were at their disposal and that PASSIA would be very interested in cooperating on research projects.

The CERI team then introduced the foci of their respective field of study:

- Dr. Munoz - institutional development of the PNA;
- Isaias Bajo - effect of peace process on Israeli society, especially the Arab community;
- Jesus Villaverde - local, regional and domestic economy;
- Begona Valle Simon - the Islamist movement's role in Palestinian politics;
- and Alvarez-Ossorio - the Palestinian-Israeli track in its regional context.

Dr. Abdul Hadi said that Palestinians could consult with CERI and give their point of view on these subjects, and, in turn, learn from CERI's experience and knowledge. Contacts, roundtables to discuss research findings, and cooperative research would all be productive areas for cooperation.

At the request of the delegation, *Dr. Abdul Hadi* then gave a brief summary of the current political situation. He noted that pessimism prevails because of what Netanyahu's victory says about Israeli society, and especially because of the political arrogance of Netanyahu and the potential for the suffering of the Palestinian people to be exploited. He emphasized that the Palestinians must take a strong unified stand when

facing Netanyahu. The Arab summit produced good resolutions: now it is time to get the Palestinian house in order. He concluded with an analysis of the PLC, saying that the beginnings of incipient political parties are slowly emerging. There is a group of progressive, social democratic intellectuals, and there are those whose leadership abilities are the result of their activity in the Intifada. The first group has the reins of power and international support. The intellectuals are respected by the man in the street but not entirely trusted. Overall, the problem is that the groups are more interested in talking with each other and strengthening their own relationships than in becoming active on political issues.