



March 19, 2017

## Dr. Husam Zomlot Appointed by Mahmoud Abbas as the Palestinian Envoy to the United States



Left: Dr. Husam Zomlot sworn in before Mahmoud Abbas as chief of the PLO delegation to the United States (Facebook page of Dr. Husam Zomlot, March 7, 2017). Right: Dr. Husam Zomlot (Facebook page of Dr. Husam Zomlot, September 29 2016).

### Overview

1. On March 8, 2017, Mahmoud Abbas appointed Dr. Husam Zomlot as **chief of the PLO delegation to the United States, in effect representing Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian Authority (PA)**. He will replace Maen Erekat, who has held the post since 2009. Erekat will be appointed to represent the PA in London (Rai al-Youm, October 20, 2016). Since May 2016 Husam Zomlot has been **advisor for strategic affairs to Mahmoud Abbas**. He was born in the Shabura refugee camp in Rafah in 1973. He has a BA in economics and politics from Bir Zeit University, and an MA in development studies and a PhD in political economy, both from London University.

2. **Dr. Husam Zomlot has extensive political and diplomatic experience in Western countries**. Between 2003 and 2009 he was **the PA's deputy representative in London and its representative thereafter**. In recent months, as part of his role as Mahmoud Abbas' advisor for strategic affairs, **he was responsible for liaising with American delegations in the PA**. He recently visited the United States with a PA delegation and met with members of the Congress (Ma'an, March 7, 2017).

3. Dr. Husam Zomlot belongs to Fatah's younger generation. At the 7<sup>th</sup> Fatah conference, held in November 2016, he was elected to the movement's Revolutionary Council. Before he was appointed advisor for strategic affairs to Mahmoud Abbas he was deputy to Nabil Shaath (Fatah's commissioner of international relations). When Donald Trump was elected, **Mahmoud Abbas appointed a think tank and steering committee for dealing with the new administration**, as well as with PA activities in the UN during the coming year. **Two members of the think tank were Maen Erekat, the chief of the PLO delegation in the United States, and his future replacement, Husam Zomlot** (article by Shlomi Eldar, al-Monitor, November 28, 2016).

4. Dr. Husam Zomlot's appointment as PA representative to the United States was reported as early as October 2016, before the elections. Appointing him on the eve of the 7<sup>th</sup> Fatah conference may have indicated Mahmoud Abbas' desire to inject new blood into the Fatah and PA leadership, and at the same time strengthen Husam Zomlot's position. He will take up his post in the United States on April 1, 2017, **several months earlier than expected** (Time.com. March 8, 2017). The early appointment was probably intended to foster good relations with the new American administration and give the sensitive post to a man of capability, loyal to Mahmoud Abbas and with extensive diplomatic experience in the West.



Picture posted by Dr. Husam Zomlot of himself and Mahmoud Abbas (Facebook page of Dr. Husam Zomlot, October 21, 2016).

5. **In conclusion**, the post of Mahmoud Abbas' envoy to Washington was given to a **man loyal to Mahmoud Abbas with extensive diplomatic, political and media experience in the West**. He speaks English fluently, **the Western media are sympathetic towards him and he is expected to deliver the Palestinian message very effectively**. According to his reported statements, his positions correspond to those of Mahmoud Abbas, including support for the two-state solution; opposition to compromise regarding the Palestinian refugees; opposition to unilateral measures such as expanding the settlements and relocating the American embassy to Jerusalem; support for the "popular resistance" as the current alternative to an armed struggle; and challenging Israel in the Security Council and other international forums, combined with international boycotts related to the "Israeli occupation."

## Profile of Husam Zomlot

6. **Husam Zomlot was born in the Shabura refugee camp in Rafah in 1973**. He received a BA degree in economics and politics from **Bir Zeit University** in 1996. He received an MA in development studies from **London University** in 2000 and a PhD in political economy in 2008 from the same institution. **He was deputy head of the PLO's research center and lectured at Bir Zeit University (2012-2014). He was a research fellow and guest lecturer at Harvard (2008-2010) and at London University (2000-2002)** (Dunia al-Watan, May 17, 2017).

7. Husam Zomlot's academic activities focus mainly on issues of international involvement in conflict zones. One of his studies dealt with "state-building" conceptual frameworks and concepts for economic and institutional solutions for political problems in ethnically and politically charged conflict zones.<sup>1</sup> He was a co-founder of the Palestine Strategy Group and the Oxford Research Group, which promotes itself as "an independent peace and security think-and-action-tank that promotes dialogue and common security approaches as sustainable alternatives to violent global confrontation."<sup>2</sup> His book, *Building a Palestinian State Under Occupation*, is in press.<sup>3</sup>

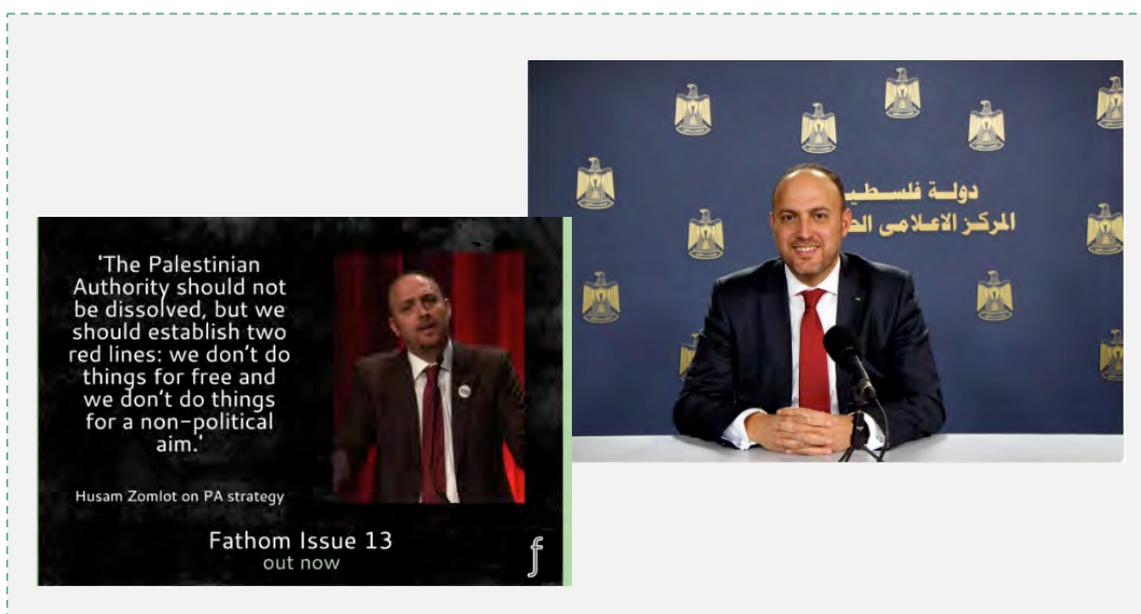
8. In addition to his academic work **he held political posts as a PA representative**. In 2011 he was a member of the Palestinian delegation to the UN which sought to achieve permanent UN status for the PA, and **the delegation's spokesman**. He was part of the media campaign in the Arab world and the international community that accompanied the move for UN membership.

<sup>1</sup> <http://bobstcenter.princeton.edu/husam-zomlot-on-the-palestines-political-strategy/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/about>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.palestinestrategygroup.ps/en/>

9. **Husam Zomlot speaks English fluently, is witty and well educated, and the Western and Israeli media are sympathetic towards him.** He has a broad academic education and a great deal of knowledge. Among the reasons he was appointed to the position were his good relations with the United States and other Western countries, and his important role as Palestinian liaison with American leaders and delegations of senior figures visiting the PA (al-Monitor, November 15, 2016). He is often interviewed by the media, foreign, Palestinian and Israeli. He is a sought-after speaker active in social networking and has his own Facebook page and Twitter account in both Arabic and English. He posts videos of interviews he has given to sites on the Internet. A selection of his statements to the Western, Israeli and Arabic media follows.



Left: Picture from the Twitter account of Dr. Husam Zomlot, July 16, 2016. Right: Picture from the Twitter account of Dr. Husam Zomlot, February 7, 2017.

## Statements Made by Dr. Husam Zomlot to the Western and Israeli Media

10. Immediately after Donald Trump entered the White House, Husam Zomlot said that "despite the apparent cold shoulder, **Ramallah is not taking for granted that Washington will shift under Trump to align with the Israeli right wing**, as many have predicted." He said the Palestinians expected that "**the long-held US policies with regards to the illegality of the settlements, the status of Jerusalem and with regards to the contours of the solution will remain.**" He added that the Palestinians expected "to be invited to the White House and State Department once the new administration is fully operative." As to the appointment of David Friedman as

American ambassador to Israel, he said, "Ambassadors do not make national policies. They are the conveyors of national policies. They are not decision makers"<sup>4</sup> (ITIC emphasis throughout).

11. Before he was sworn in as the Palestinian envoy to Washington, Husam Zomlot said **"he had faith Trump would listen to both sides in any negotiations."** He said "authorities in the West Bank stand ready to be the 'ultimate partners' in a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians." His task, he said, was **"to explain [the Palestinians] are the ultimate power, that we have done sufficient investment to be the launch pad for that deal."** He added that if **"President Trump seeks the ultimate deal, he needs to know we're the ultimate partners [for negotiations]. There will be no deal without us."** He credited Trump's interest in what the President has called "the ultimate deal," meaning the administration would listen carefully to both sides<sup>5</sup> (ITIC emphasis throughout).

## The Peace Process and Negotiations with Israel

12. In response to the regulatory law passed by the Israeli Knesset, Husam Zomlot said he welcomed the law because it adopted the agenda of the extremist settlers and destroyed any remaining chance for the two-state solution. It would, he claimed, lead to the collapse of the strategy adopted by the international community for resolving the conflict. The law, he said, forced the Palestinians to rethink their relations with Israel, but before that, **he demanded the world act against the destruction wrought by Netanyahu's administration, which ignored the entire world and international law.** It may look as though the Palestinians have lost in the short run, but in the long run everyone will lose because of Netanyahu's policies, he said (Haaretz, February 7, 2017).

13. Interviewed by the Jerusalem Post on January 28, 2017, he said that **"the peace process and its accomplishments, including mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO and the establishment of the PA, would become obsolete,** if hope to realize a two-state solution was destroyed by unilateral measures such as settlement expansion and the relocation of the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem." He added that "There are legal, political and institutional foundations of the peace process,

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.timesofisrael.com/pa-hasnt-given-up-on-trump-senior-official-says/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://time.com/4694856/husam-zomlot-palestinian-donald-trump-envoy-peace-deal/>

all of which rely on the commitment of Israel, Palestine and the international community"<sup>6</sup> (ITIC emphasis).

14. Speaking at the National University in Singapore, he attacked the Israeli government, claiming it had no plan for peace and **its existence endangered the region**. He condemned the appointment of Avigdor Lieberman to the post of defense minister, claiming that by appointing him Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu had chosen war, the continuation of the "occupation" and negating the right of the Palestinians to an independent state (Fatah's media unit in Europe, May 28, 2016).

## The Holocaust

15. Jeremy Corbyn, British Labour Party leader, gave a speech at a conference of academics where **he said Israel used the Holocaust "to justify its murder of Palestine."** He shared the stage with **Husam Zomlot, who raised similar claims on BBC radio the previous year. Husam Zomlot questioned the Holocaust itself, calling it "fabricated."** He later clarified that Israel was using both the Holocaust and the brutal murder of Western journalists by ISIS to justify its actions against Palestinians. He said Israel was "fabricating all these stories about beheading journalists in Iraq... as if they are **fabricating also the story of the Holocaust**, that it happened in Europe, [...] and using so many other examples to justify their murder of a nation"<sup>7</sup> (ITIC emphasis throughout).

16. Regarding a visit of Palestinian students from Al-Quds University, led to Professor Mohammad Dajani to Nazi death camps in Poland, Husam Zomlot said the Holocaust was a "terrible crime" but "the Nazis were responsible for it. The Palestinians had nothing to do with it."<sup>8</sup>

## The Palestinian Refugees

17. In September 2013, as a guest at a J Street conference, Husam Zomlot spoke about the issue of the Palestinian refugees, saying, "how do you want me to sign a deal with my own hands that would compromise the rights of two thirds of the nation? How am I doing to build cohesion and eternal peace on such a compromise? Why do I have to compromise? ...What do the refugees want? Some of them want to stay where they are. Some of them might want to resettle somewhere else in a third country.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Abbas-adviser-Without-hope-for-a-Palestinian-state-PA-would-collapse-479871>

<sup>7</sup> <http://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/corbyn-shared-stage-with-academic-who-said-israel-uses-holocaust-to-justify-its-murder/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/13/palestinian-professor-resigns-students-auschwitz>

**Some of them might want to come back to the State of Palestine. And some of them might want to return to their original homes.** But all of them want one thing: full recognition of the Nakba that has befallen our people"<sup>9</sup> (ITIC emphasis).

## The "Popular Resistance" and BDS

18. Asked about the "popular resistance" in a 2012 interview, Husam Zomlot said that **in many ways it was "more effective than armed resistance."**<sup>10</sup> Asked if it could be called the third intifada, he said "the popular resistance will not be the third intifada. In fact, the Palestinian people has been resisting for one hundred years, we are engaged in a continuous intifada." He added that "resistance, including armed resistance, is a right, but it is not in any way an obligation. Negotiations involve a very limited number of persons, and armed resistance involves two or three percent of the people. Popular resistance, such as a broad boycott campaign, aims to gather all fragments of the society no matter which political party they belong to, no matter their social class or their religion. But it doesn't mean political parties don't hold any responsibilities. Fatah has defined its new strategy during its Sixth Congress in 2009 during which Fatah officially gave up the armed struggle to be replaced with/by peaceful popular resistance."<sup>11</sup> And we are pleased to see that Hamas has joined us recently (January 2012). It became a point of consensus between us, and something I can't but welcome"<sup>12</sup> (ITIC emphasis).

19. Asked if he thought the BDS campaign was making a mistake by not differentiating goods coming from Israel and goods coming from the settlements, he answered that he thought **"a large-scale boycott should target all institutions implicated in occupation and illegality.** At the moment, occupation is more profitable than costly. Eighty percent of our water is either transferred to Israel or consumed by settlers"<sup>13</sup> (ITIC emphasis).

## Relations with Hamas

20. Asked about a "partnership" with Hamas, Husam Zomlot said, **"Unity is our primary objective.** To achieve popular resistance, the Palestinian society has to be united...Legislative elections...are essential to form a united government. The practice

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.tabletmag.com/scroll/147016/j-street-attendees-show-support-for-right-of-return>

<sup>10</sup> The term "popular resistance," is represented by Mahmoud Abbas as carried out peacefully, and hides PA and Fatah support for violence and popular terrorism, which have killed and wounded many Israelis.

<sup>11</sup> For further information, see the December 12, 2016 bulletin, "The 7th Fatah Movement Conference Again Legitimizes Popular Terrorism (The So-Called "Peaceful Popular Resistance")."

<sup>12</sup> <https://972mag.com/we-are-engaged-in-a-continuous-intifada-interview-with-fatahs-husam-zomlot/36867>

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*

of blackmail perpetrated by Israel can no longer be tolerated. Unity has much more value than their sanctions. The goal is to agree on what we disagree about. No party can make war or peace decisions on its own, its decisions do not only involve themselves, but the whole population. We need to work together and implement collective decisions"<sup>14</sup> (ITIC emphasis).

## Statements Made by Dr. Husam Zomlot in the Arab Media

### UN Security Council Resolution 2334

21. Interviewed by Fatah's al-Awda TV, he called Resolution 2334 an achievement for the Palestinians and a failure and "mortal blow" for Israel. That was because the United States, historically an ally of Israel, had abstained instead of voting for Israel. He claimed the achievement was only a starting point (interview apparently conducted in December 2016 and posted to YouTube on February 7, 2017).



Dr. Husam Zomlot during an interview with al-Awda TV (YouTube, February 7, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

22. During an interview with Palestinian TV about issues currently on the Palestinian agenda, he said **the PA would continue its appeals to the UN Security Council and formulate proposals for resolutions**. He said it was not a secret that American policy was biased in favor of Israel (posted to YouTube on February 7, 2017).



Dr. Husam Zomlot during an interview with Palestinian TV (YouTube, February 7, 2017).

## Relocating the American Embassy to Jerusalem

23. During an interview with al-Arabiya TV Husam Zomlot referred to the possibility that the American embassy would be relocated to Jerusalem. **He warned against such a move, which he claimed violated international law, and which he said would damage the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians**. He said Mahmoud Abbas had sent a letter to Trump warning of the consequences of such a move (Facebook page of Dr. Husam Zomlot, January 25, 2017). Speaking to Radio Monte Carlo, he said that relocating the American embassy to Jerusalem was a "red line" for the Palestinians (Radio Monte Carlo, December 18, 2016).



**Dr. Husam Zomlot during an interview with al-Arabiya TV (Facebook page of Dr. Husam Zomlot, January 25, 2017).**

24. Lecturing at the American Arabic University in Jenin, Husam Zomlot said the following about relocating the American embassy to Jerusalem:

A. Political and legally, there was no difference between east Jerusalem and west Jerusalem before a permanent status agreement had been reached between the Palestinians and Israel. When Israel annexed east Jerusalem in 1980 it did not recognize the 1967 borders, and Israeli governments, one after another, related to both parts of Jerusalem, the east and west, as the united capital of Israel. Therefore, he said, Israel's claim that the American embassy would be located in west Jerusalem contradicted its actual policy.

B. International law in general and American law in particular do not recognize Israel's control of either east or west Jerusalem. Jerusalem is one of the issues of the permanent status agreement under negotiation. The Palestinians want east Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state. If Trump keeps his promise to Israel and relocates the embassy to Jerusalem, he will collapse the foundations on which the peace process is based and make it impossible for the United States to maintain its neutrality (Wafa, January 23, 2017; website of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, January 26, 2017).

## **The Boycott of Israel**

25. Regarding the BDS campaign against Israel, Husam Zomlot said the Palestinians no longer believed the Israeli government could create peace and end the occupation

through negotiations. The solution, he said, was a combination of a popular struggle on the ground and a broad international boycott campaign, a demand that Israel be held accountable for its actions and the imposing of sanctions on the "occupation" until it was lifted (al-Hayat al-Jadeeda, December 28, 2010, quoted by MEMRI).