

What are the chances of the new Iran nuclear Deal?

Interview with Prof. Haim Bresheeth, by Vandad Alvandipour, July 26, 2015

Q. Why are Netanyahu and his party (along with American neo-cons) so much against the Iran-West nuclear deal? What do they gain from the enmity between west and Iran and an unsolved nuclear issue?

A. The best asset for any populist right-wing leader, and especially for Netanyahu, is the presence of a serious and dangerous enemy. It is clear that in the last three decades, Israel did not face any army on the battlefield, and is only fighting against resistance forces in Palestine (as well as the whole civilian population) and in Lebanon. The fact that the Israeli army is the fourth strongest army in the world, and definitely the strongest in the Middle East, and using the latest technologies in its attacks, means that Israelis understand that the small and relatively harmless attacks by the Palestinian resistance cannot be seen as a serious threat on Israel. Netanyahu needs such a threat – you will remember that Israel is a divided and unjust society – the events in the summer of 2011, when hundreds of thousands of Israelis took to the streets in protest against the government's social policies, are evidence of the time-bomb buried inside the Israeli social structure. Netanyahu has only two options – to listen to the protestors and change his policies, or to use security as a cover for his right-wing, racist and xenophobic policies, while giving the tycoons in Israel a free rein. He has chosen the second option. Only this month, he has privatized and moved into the hands of some of the richest men in Israel the huge gas reserves which are illegally occupied by Israel, though they are arguably Palestinian – they are in the sea facing Gaza – for example, in his latest move against the interests of ordinary Israelis. To justify his long-term right wing free market policy which are making most Israelis poorer, despite the huge sums of money being funneled by the US into Israel's economy, he needs a serious enemy to present as an existential danger to Israel's existence. He has chosen Iran – a country which has never attacked Israel, or any of the countries surrounding it, because of its strong military, the fact that it was considered an enemy in the US, and is easy target to sell the American Christian Right, The fact that some Iranian politicians were also making statements against Israel, in support of the Palestinians, has also played into his hands.

Iran is the perfect enemy for Netanyahu – it is a large and influential country, with a long history, and with an important role in the Moslem world as the main Shi'ia country. As such, it is seen by the other US partners in the Middle East, the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia, as a potential enemy also, so that Netanyahu is translating the Islamophobic climate in the West into an anti-Iranian, anti-Shia move, and is trying to counter the US and Western realization that Israel has dictated this agenda for too long, and that Iran is not, and should not be, an enemy. A strong, peaceful Iran, now also an ally against ISIS, is an anathema to Israel – such an Iran will put Israel in its shadow, and will reduce the role of Israel in the Middle East,

replacing it as the main ally in some situations. Hence, Iran will remain an enemy for Netanyahu, especially if the West is coming to see it as a friend and partner now. Israel has one commodity to sell: arms, military conflict, tension and enmity – more wars, more bombing of civilians, more death and destruction in the Middle East. Any move towards a more peaceful Middle East, in which it is not one of the main players is seen as dangerous to its political leaders. I cannot see this changing, before the whole society in Israel changes. Not only would Israel be losing a major enemy as far as the west is concerned, but this new Iran will be much stronger, and will have access to over \$100 billion of its frozen assets by the end of the year, Egyptian social forces got rid of Mubarak, and a new democratic Egypt seemed possible for a short while. Israel can deal with enemies because it can pose as a (Jewish only) democracy, and paints its opponents into the corner of absolutism and dictatorship, but the minute democratic forces are on the rise, this becomes impossible. An Iran which will be trading partner of the West, not to mention a partner against ISIS, is too much for Israel to accept. A strong Iran is seen as a danger to Israel, so that Netanyahu is bidding his time for an attack on Iran, either by the US – now looking much less likely – or by Israel with US collusion.

Q. What is the root of the Obama's administration disagreement with the Israeli government and Netanyahu? In what way does ISIS serve Israel and the West and fulfill their interests?

A. Obama needs Iran to fight the Wahabi influence over forces such as ISIS, that is quite clear now. The US is also realizing it has given too much power to the Saudis, and the need to balance that, is suggesting another type of relationship with Iran, and bringing it back into Middle East politics as a main player. This is understood in Britain too. Only recently, in October 2014, the ex-Foreign Secretary in the Labour administration, while speaking to the British Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) has said as much, before the Iran nuclear deal was finalized: "In my judgment not making every effort to secure agreement with Iran would be one of the biggest foreign policy blunders of the decade." And on the IS question he had this to say: "Iran could, if treated correctly by the international community in general, and the US and UK in particular, play a valuable role, now, in tackling IS and reaching a political settlement to the Syria crisis. Ten years ago the US was short-sighted enough to spurn the advances of the reformer Khatami and as a result we beget President Ahmadinejad and eight long and hard years in our relationship with the country. This time we need to strengthen the reformist president, Hassan Rouhani, and help him to help Iran end its isolation, reform, and come to play the valuable role in the Middle East I believe it can." I believe that Obama obviously shred this view, and hence the resulting agreement. But of course, the last thing Israel wants is this to happen, so Israel and Netanyahu are on a collision course, because Israeli and American interests are so different now. Israel quite rightly fears that the link between US and Iran will weaken its own role.

Now your point on ISIS is one I differ with. While the US had a role in helping ISIS grow, directly or indirectly, it is now opposed to its destructive potential, and understands that it will be impossible to control, and difficult to defeat. For this it needs Iran, as pointed out by Jack Straw above. For Israel ISIS is useful, as anything which created chaos in the Arab world is supposedly positive from their perspective. Foe a while, they managed to influence the US

on this, during the Bush presidency, but gradually Obama has been turning away from this dangerous path, and towards accommodation with Iran and against ISIS and its Gulf/Saudi sponsors. This is at the heart of the disagreement with Israel. I think the latest deal shows that US will be ready to see a larger role for Iran in defeating ISIS, rather than the other way round.

Q. Will the deal have a serious impact on Iran-US relationship, and if so, what would the effect of this be both for Iran and the rest of the region?

- what would happen if Iran had not signed the deal? I mean, what would the world powers do in that case? And what about Israel? And, is Israel really happy about the deal and all this fuss and anger from deal just a lie, or is it really angry?
- And, what would happen if an attack to Iran takes place? What would its consequences for Iran and the region?

A. This is a most complicated question, part of which I related to above, and part of which I cannot answer, of course – we cannot look into the future, and I have no crystal ball... But some things we may know about already. The US-Iran relationship is definitely going to improve if the deal goes through the US legislature. As far as the American public is concerned – and despite the hate campaign conducted against Iran for decades – most Americans support the deal arrived at, at a rate of 56% for, and 37% against (see [“If Americans support Iran deal, 56-37, what gives Israel the power to ‘croak’ it?”](#) by Philip Weiss, [Mondoweiss](#) website) – a clearer majority cannot easily be imagined. So the American people, on the whole, understand that Iran is not an enemy, and that its nuclear ambitions are peaceful. They also understand, I am sure, that it is Israel which has the nuclear weapons, and it is Israel which attacks its neighbours, not Iran.

This does not mean that the deal will definitely go through Congress and senate, of course. The Israeli lobby, mainly represented on Capitol Hill by AIPAC, and the direct pressure by Israel on Congressmen and Senators is going to be enormous and is already being applied by the US media, most of it peopled by strong supporters of whatever Israel may say, so that the US lawmakers, the great majority of whom are supported financially by AIPAC, are going to face a difficult choice, between US interests, represented by President Obama, and Israeli propaganda, represented by Netanyahu and AIPAC. I want to believe that they will make the right choice, but am not sure they will. The pressure on them is so intense, that many will indeed vote against the deal. Let us hope that most of the lawmakers will realize that the American people support their President, as well as supporting peaceful means and not the use of arms, so consistently pushed by Israel as the ‘solution’.

Thus, I feel that if Iran did not sign the deal, the way for an attack on its facilities would be open, and even if the US would not do so itself, it may have acceded to an Israeli attack, even if such an attack could not achieve its aims – to break the advance of Iranian technology and science. This is the reason that Israel is NOT happy about the deal, and will do all it can to fault it, and if they can, reverse it. Such a reversal is possible in the future, even if the deal is signed now - aright-wing President following Obama may do just that. Hillary Clinton has announced few weeks ago [“If I’m President, We Will Attack Iran”](#), so such a reversal is still

possible, unfortunately. Hence, the answer to your question: What will happen if Israel attacks Iran, is sadly – not much. They will attack with US support, if they do. At the moment this is not only unlikely, but sheer madness – Iran is an important partner in fighting ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and as the largest holder of oil stocks in the world, is a bad choice for an enemy, anyway. The US can benefit much more from a friendly Iran than from an unnecessary enmity. This is also the reason for Israel's anger – Netanyahu understands well that the deal is the beginning of long-term change in the Middle East, a change which in time will minimize Israel's importance. That this is coming at a time when the US is also rethinking its relationship with another long-term 'enemy' – Cuba – is a sign of the root-and-branch review in the State Department and the Oval Office – Obama is dropping the mistakes of decades of US diplomacy, Iran being the most serious one, with the US involved in plotting against the Iranian people for a long time, at least since Mossadegh in 1953.

Q. What is the stance of other Israeli parties on the nuclear deal and Iran-west relations? And what do the majority Israeli people think about it? (We heard that Israelis made fun of Netanyahu's persistence on Iran nukes and ignoring domestic issues of Israel.)

A. Unfortunately, there is no difference between the Jewish Right and Left parties in Israel on this question; The main contender fighting Netanyahu, Yizhak Herzog, the leader of the Zionist List, is as committed to attacking Iran as Netanyahu is. He even said: "In regards to security, I am more extreme than Netanyahu" on a recent interview, as he flew into Washington to act against the deal – see [“Amid news of Iran deal, opposition leader to fly to US”](#). The only parties not supporting Netanyahu are the *United (Arab) List*, and the tiny *Meretz*, the two parties on the total margins in Israel now. The change towards Iran will not come from within in Israel, only from the outside.

Q. Netanyahu has repeatedly declared that Israel is ready to attack Iran nuclear centers, and American neo-cons have also insisted on plans for attacking Iran. What would they gain from attacking Iran? How would such an attack affect the region? And, does the nuclear deal neutralize this plan? Or will they follow their plan even after the deal? Is Israel's threat of war against Iran real or just a bluff?

A. I have already related to some of these issues above. The *Neocons* are made of the same material as Netanyahu – they support and represent the oil and arms industry in the US, which can have an advantage by attacking Iran. They also represent the need for a serious enemy for the US Right – ever since the demise of the Soviet Union the US does not face a serious enemy, and Iran is better as an enemy than ISIS... I would like to believe that such an attack may never happen, as it is likely to cause total chaos in the Middle East, even worse than currently. Chaos of this kind can only assist the extreme forces in the region, Israel and ISIS – both will use it to advance their positions and control. Israel will use such an opportunity to ethnically cleanse the remaining Palestinians, of this I have no doubt. No other force in the Middle East can benefit from this type of disaster, and the probable use of

nuclear arms in such an attack is a danger to the whole world and the environment, well beyond the terrible devastation in Iran. It is unthinkable.

Q. It was clear that Obama government and generally US democrats tried very hard to achieve this agreement, and many Republicans are openly against it. First, what was the benefits of this deal for Obama (and democrats)? And secondly, do you think that in case of gaining power, Republicans will do something to ruin the deal and open an aggressive front against Iran again?

A. The benefits for Obama and the Democrats are real. Obama's legacy, until now very doubtful, will be as the President which brought Iran and Cuba back into the International community, and finished the pressure on both governments, an illegal pressure in my view, and also lacking any moral or practical reason, part from making the people of both countries suffer terribly for no reason.

I have already related to the fact that not only republicans such the leading candidate Donald Trump, but also Hilary Clinton, the Democratic Party leading candidate, are speaking about attacking Iran. The danger of arrogant and aggressive populism in the US is never far from us.

Q . Can US congress really impede and cancel the deal? Is it possible? And can the next US government legally reverse the deal, and generally, is the US trustworthy in keeping its pledges?

A. Yes, the deal is possible to stop in Congress/Senate vote, but it will be difficult to engineer. The Israeli Lobby (AIPAC) and the Republican Party are working on such a reversal. You can read it on many media outlets, and one of the most aggressive is of course the Israeli media, where articles such as ["How and Why to Kill the Deal"](#) by Caroline B Glick, in the Jerusalem Post. It is clear from this article that Israel and AIPAC are pulling all the stops, and employing the best constitutional lawyers in the US against the deal and the President. They will try and bring about a combined vote of both Houses on the deal, and thus use the Republican majority to stop it. It will be unwise to underestimate how much influence Israel has got in Washington – substantially more than the President, I believe – and thus this is quite likely, but is not a certain way, as many Republicans may still understand that voting against the deal is voting against US interests. However, it now looks most likely that the Israeli Lobby together with the rightwing Republicans will succeed in stopping the deal. Vice President Kerry has on Saturday, 25th July, admitted as much, by saying: "If the deal falls through, the world will blame Israel". This is like an admission that the deal has already doomed. If Congress reverses the deal, Obama said he will Veto it, which he can do. However, they will then overrule his veto in a special session of the House, where they need 2/3 of the House to vote against him. They almost have that number now, because many democrats with vote with the Republicans on this, so it is almost certain the deal will fall. If this attempt fails, then they will try and reverse it under a Republican President, if one wins against Hilary Clinton and enters the White House. For the US to reverse this treaty without reason will be a travesty of international law, but it is also possible, as the President can reverse this policy and restart the sanctions, or at least try to. I believe this will be a criminally stupid thing for a US President to do, but it will not be the first time a US President

will act this way. I think that the Western partners of the US will be very opposed to such a reversal, as will be Russia and China, so this will be not only stupid, but also dangerous and unpopular abroad. It is too early now to say how likely such a move is going to be in a year's time.

Q . You know that in Iran we have hard-liner conservatives who, like Netanyahu and the neo-cons, have been against a nuclear deal and called it a loss for Iran (whereas they supported the plans which brought years of sanctions and isolations and destroyed economy for Iran) Why the stance of them is so close to the stance of Netanyahu and neo-cons? What common interests do they follow? What do you personally think about the Iran-5+1 nuclear deal? Is it beneficial for Iran, or not? I mean, is it a so called win-win deal or not? What would happen if a deal was not signed and no agreement was reached (the thing that hard liners from both sides yearn for)? In Iran, it's clear that nuclear deal has endeared the Iranian government to the majority of Iranians. The question is how will the deal affect Iran's international and regional presence? Will it fortify Iran's stance in the region and world?

A. Right wingers in many countries have similar outlooks and similar tactics, and concentrate on enmity and conflict. The Right in Israel, the US and Iran need each other... they depend on each other for power and influence. Iran is a most important country, not just for the Middle East, but in the world as such – it is both rich in history and culture, but also a modern and scientifically-advanced country, with rich natural and human resources and huge potential, now not fully realised, because of its forced isolation. Thus, for it to suffer unjust sanctions for long decades, as well as the devastation of the terrible war started by Saddam Hussein with the support of the West, has given power to the Right in Iran, and has caused much anger against the West – an anger which is justified. If the West, and especially the US, will now try and make amends, and end this policy of isolating and punishing Iran, what must follow is that Iran will become stronger, more open and more optimistic, it will be benefitting from its resources and freely communication in the international arena. Such changes are likely to make the Iranian Right weaker, I feel and hope, while making it a stronger country with a stronger and more unified society. I think this deal has the clear potential to make Iran a full member of the international community again, a regional superpower, a major economic player, and a stabilizing force in Middle East politics. I hope such potential will be fully realised. It will help other countries in the region too, and may help to resolve the question of Palestine.

Q. How would the nuclear deal affect the regional issues like Iraq and Yemen and Syria? Will there be a close cooperation between Iran and west after the deal?

A. This is difficult to say, really. I hope that a stronger, democratic Iran, with enlightened Moslem tradition and a strong civic society can radiate positively on the whole Middle East. An Iran moving towards a leading role in the Middle East may hasten the fall of the reactionary regimes such as Saudi Arabia, and bring some sense of what a better Middle East can be like to Yemen and Syria. Of course, the situation in Syria is not of Iran's making, and is

possibly so complex that one cannot see an easy end to it in the near future. The Iranian interests in Syria are very contradictory, and one hopes that a left-leaning administration Tehran might resolve the conflicting interests in a better way. Iran has suffered much from the conflict, and has taken many refugees over the last decade, from all around it. A left-leaning government of a stronger, democratic Iran can have a dramatic effect on conflicts in the region – as long as the West avoids playing the destructive role it has for over a hundred years in the Middle East. Can one expect such a change? One can hope.

Q. Russia and China are generally considered as Iran friends, but during these years it has been clear that especially Russia have played with Iran card for dealing with the US and we can say they betrayed Iran many times and showed that they are not trustworthy friends. The question is: Are Russia and China really happy because of the deal? Aren't they worried about the new opponents who will enter Iran economy after the deal, and the exporting of Iran gas to Europe? Can we say that they don't like the deal at heart? How would the deal affect Russia (and China) relations with Iran?

A. This is another question which requires seeing the future... but it is clear that Russia and China, who were supporting Iran because of the unjust attack by the US, have not been able (or willing) to shield it from years of suffering under the sanctions. They may be worried by the deal, as you rightly suggest, but I would think that the future of Iran as a major player in the region also underwrites its importance of these two giants – Iran is unlikely to turn into a US client, I would argue, and as a large and influential player, which is also a neighbour of both Russia and China, it will continue to play an important role in both economies. Iran does not have to choose between such partners – it is important enough, big enough, and resourceful enough to preserve independence and autonomy of policies. It will be a mistake for it to become a client of any such powers, and there is also no need for such a step, I would argue.

Q. We know that Saudi Arabia and small wealthy Persian Gulf states, as well as Israel, have been seriously against a deal with Iran, but the deal took place. How this deal affect the future relations of Saudis with the US and west? Will they change their regional policies after this deal?

A. While a future democratic and strong Iran will continue to play a central role in the Middle East, the undemocratic and unrepresentative regime in the gulf may all have a short future before them. A growing modernization, brought about by media and technology, as well as by increasing trade and travel, is likely to erode the foundations of such regimes, to a point that they would lose their social base. The likelihood is that most Arab countries will become more democratic, even if in different ways from the Western model – if the Arab Spring proves anything, it proves that the wish, and the craving for democracy and modernity in the Arab World is as strong as elsewhere. There is no place in the 21st century for regimes such as these, and I think they will be replaced in the foreseeable future. Iran can play a role in advancing democratic expectations in the Middle East, and I hope it will. It is also true that such regimes, as well as Israel, will become less important to the US and the West, once the

relationship with Iran is normalized. This will further weaken the absolute monarchies, and may quicken the pace of modernization in the region.

Without Iran, much of this cannot happen. The fall of the monarchies in the Gulf will harm no one, apart from the Israelis and the ruling families, of course, and will aid the development of the region for the benefit of the many, as opposed for the few it now enriches. So, one can argue that the interests of Iran are tied to the progressive developments in the region, which it can and should assist.

Q. Let's change the subject to ISIS, which is the main threat of the ME region now. It seems that ISIS has a number of benefits for Israel. (Do you agree?) How do you see the role of Israel (and American neo-cons along with Saudis) in creating and supporting ISIS? What are the benefits of ISIS and generally Sunni-Shia conflict for Israel? According to your opinion, is there a real intention for an international confrontation with ISIS?

And does the nuclear deal show that the West has changed its strategy toward ISIS and wanting to take a firm stance toward it (considering that Iran is the main enemy of ISIS)?

Will we see a more powerful front against ISIS after the deal?

Why did ISIS gain power so rapidly in Syria and especially Iraq. I mean what paved the ground for ISIS emergence to power so rapidly and mightily. What was behind the scene hands and what have they sought? Do they want to form a new Middle East shape? And

Do you think that Netanyahu is working for the national interests and benefits of Israel? Does his policy make Israel stronger?

A. I also agree with you about ISIS, and Iran's role against it; it must have played an important role in changing the US position towards Iran – all of a sudden they understand that Iran is a stabilizing force, not an enemy! Of course, we know the role played by the Saudis and other Gulf monarchies in developing the environment and conditions for ISIS, as well as the indirect assistance by the US which made it possible. ISIS has a long future in front of it. Now, I do not believe that ISIS has a long future in front of it, despite its current successes. It wins against the divided Iraqi forces, as well as against the even more divided Syria – two failed states and societies in meltdown. I will not win against a strong democratic society, for sure. It will not win because it represents the past, not the future, and despite the deep anger in Iraq against the West which has brought about so much destruction and death, ISIS is not necessarily seen as better by most people. ISIS was fighting a ghost country in both Syria and Iraq – both societies are in a terminal state, and the West is assisting their demise, by using the worst tactics and strategy even before 2003, and even before it instigated the 1980-1989 war against Iran by Saddam Hussein. At the moment, the West has managed to destroy so much of the social fabric in Iraq, and the social reciprocity which existed, to a degree even under Saddam Hussein, that there are no serious social forces to fight ISIS – they cannot be defeated just by bombs and drones. If such societies can muster their history against ISIS, it will be quickly defeated. This is not yet on the horizon, unfortunately – the whole region is suffering from a century of damage caused by the Sykes-Picot agreement and all that followed – Zionism, the Nakba, the client regimes set up by Britain and France, the interventions of the US – it is a terribly-devastating history. But after a century, enough time

has passed for people in the region to lift up the challenge – to reverse the damage done by Imperialism and neo-colonialism – the responsibility is with the people of the region, not with its many undemocratic, unelected and unaccountable rulers. That Iran is the main enemy of ISIS I see and a sign of its strength. One hopes such strength will be used wisely.

Q. It is said that Israel (and US neo-cons) ultimate goal for the future of Iran is to balkanize (separate to small countries) it (like what they did in Iraq and are doing in Syria and maybe Libya) as there are secessionist ethnic groups active outside Iran. do you agree? If so, how can this devastating plan be neutralized and Iran's unity as a one sovereign country be kept?

A. It may well be the plan of the Israelis and the most deluded of US Republicans. I cannot see such a plan succeeding, not more than the plan to defeat Communist Russia with White Russian forces... I think that in the face of such a threat, people in Iran will unify and defeat it. Not everything which some unbalanced mind in Washington or Tel Aviv works out, can really happen. Any US President trying this ploy will be on his/her own, I reckon. We are not living in 1953, and Iran is a strong and reasonably homogenous polity – the Kurds in Iran, for example, have never acted against the government of Iran in the way the PKK had acted in Turkey, for example. I do not believe this is areal danger, even if someone works on this mad plan somewhere.

Q. And finally, what prospect do you see for Israel-Palestine peace process? Is there really anything by this name? Is there anyone in Israel want a real peace? And, according to your own opinion as a Jew, what is the solution of this nearly 70 years old conflict?

A. Well, I am sure you also know there is no peace process of any description, and what is more – there never was one, at least not since Rabin was assassinated in 1995. There is no political force in Israel which is ready for a just peace with the Palestinians, and there never was one. Zionism is the oxymoron of peace – it is a racist, supremacist colonial movement, which never meant to share Palestine with its Arab population, and has done all it could for over a century to get rid of as many of them as it could, by massacres, expulsion and continuous and brutal conflict and occupation. If you remember that that 96% of Israel's Jews have supported the latest attack on Gaza in summer 2014, it is clear that only a tiny, insignificant minority of Israel's Jews are even able to consider a just and equal peace. Thus, I think, as Jew, as an ex-Israeli, as a socialist, and as a human being, that the solution to the Palestine problem and to this long and painful conflict cannot come from Israel or Israelis, in the same way that South African Apartheid was not finished by the South African Whites. There is nothing to wait for from Israel; the world must unite, as it did in the case of South Africa, and fight against Israeli aggression, war crimes and Apartheid in similar way – using Boycott, Divestment and Sanction against Israel. This a non-violent, popular and grass-roots strategy, and it will take time, but I believe it will be successful, in the long run. We will need of course a strong resistance in Palestine itself, of the kind that existed in South Africa. Together, the two movement can defeat Israel and force it to respect international Law, the Geneva Conventions and UN resolutions.

I personally do not believe in either the need for, or the justification for a Jewish state in Palestine. I believe Israelis and Palestinians – including the refugees created by Israel, have a right to live there together, in one secular, democratic state, with no differences between Jews, Moslems, Christians, or for that matter atheists such as myself. The single democratic state of Palestine will be excellent for both communities, and will be crucial for peace in the Middle East. I know that at the moment there is no prospect of this happening, but I believe situations change over time – a concerted campaign of BDS against the Israeli state will change a lot of minds in Israel, I am sure.

Maybe a strong democratic Iran can play a role in such a solution coming about. Let us hope so.

please write 2-3 lines about your cooperation(cultural) with previous Israeli government(I heard they nullify and abate your Israeli passport. Is it right?) and if it's possible please attach one or two high quality photos of yourself

During my stay in Israel, between 1997 and 2001, I was active in trying to build relations between Gazan and Israeli universities, and by developing a Gaza centre for Media Studies – a project I worked on unpaid, and which was derailed by the Israeli attack on Gaza and blockade which followed the Second Intifada, starting in 2000. Despite my principled and well-known opposition to Zionism and to the occupation, I was invited to chair the Government Commission of Public Broadcasting, which has delivered its verdict and report in October 2000. We suggested many changes, including special channels for the Palestinian population of Israel. The report was accepted, but because of its radical nature, none of its recommendations have ever been carried out. I was also part of the Cinema Council – a body responsible for the Cinema Act in 1999, and for the amazing growth in cinematic production which followed. I left Israel at the end of 2001, as I no longer felt I can contribute to a society which rejected every possible solution to the conflict in Palestine.